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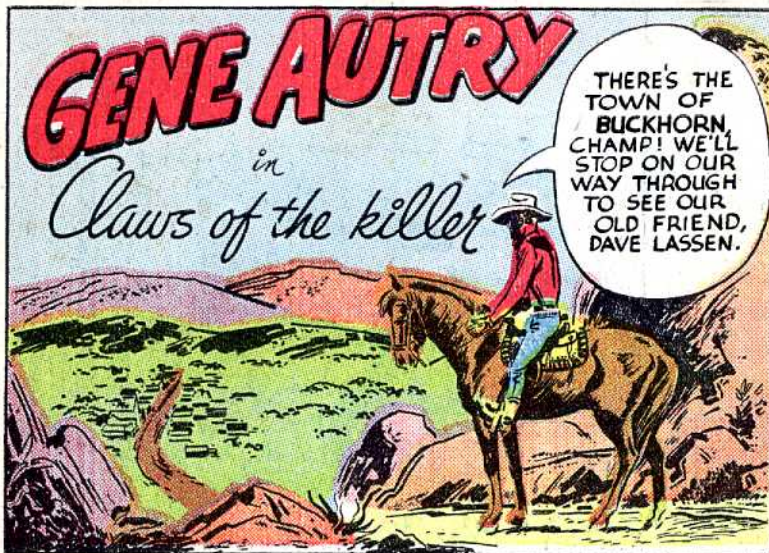
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GENE AUTRY

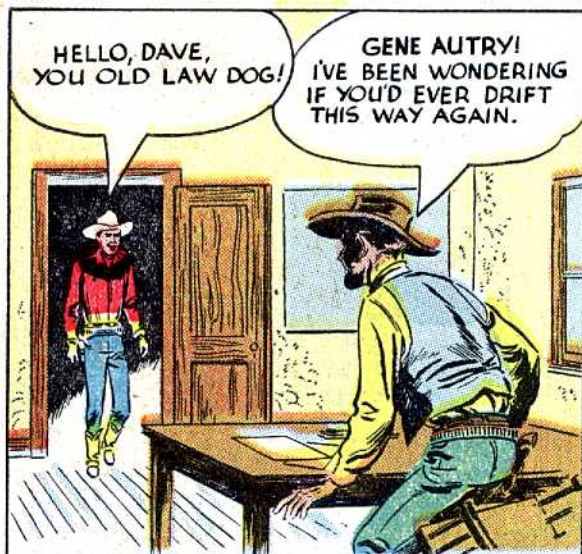
in
Claws of the killer



THERE'S THE TOWN OF BUCKHORN, CHAMP! WE'LL STOP ON OUR WAY THROUGH TO SEE OUR OLD FRIEND, DAVE LASSEN.



IF DAVE IS STILL SHERIFF, WE'LL FIND HIM HERE.



HELLO, DAVE, YOU OLD LAW DOG!

GENE AUTRY! I'VE BEEN WONDERING IF YOU'D EVER DRIFT THIS WAY AGAIN.



HOW IS MAN-HUNTING THESE DAYS?

AS TAME AS TABLE CROQUET, GENE! BUCKHORN HAS GOT PROSPEROUS AND PRISY SINCE YOU AND I SHOT IT OUT WITH BADGER PETE'S GANG AT THE STAGE STATION.



THERE'S OUR NEW BANK, DOWN THE STREET... WALDEN COATES IS THE PRESIDENT---

HOLD ON! THAT TEAM PULLING UP AT THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE LOOKS LIKE TROUBLE, DAVE.



SA-AY! SPEAK OF THE DEVIL--- THAT'S COATES ON THE WAGON SEAT --- WITH HIS FOREMAN, HORSEFACE HARDY, DRIVING....



MISTER COATES MUST HAVE BEEN PRETTY CLOSE TO NOYES WHEN HE HEARD THE SHOTS, HARDY.

YEAH? HOW D'YOU FIGGER THAT?

WHY---EASY! THE BEAR DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO MAUL THE MAN HE'D KILLED.

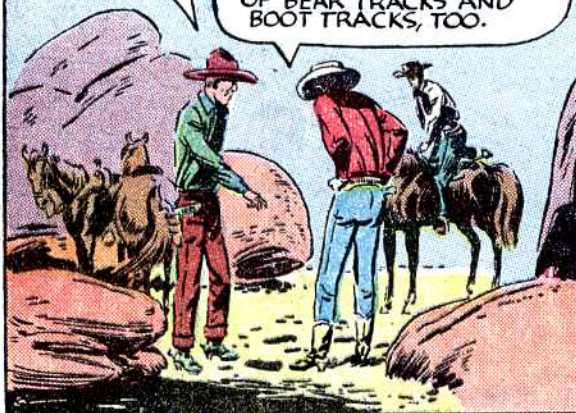
THAT'S RIGHT, GENE...MOSTLY A GRIZZLY WILL USE ITS TEETH TO FINISH A MAN.

WE'RE CLOSE TO THE PLACE NOW---NOT FAR FROM THE CIRCLE C LINE.



RIGHT THERE IS WHERE WE FOUND BERT'S BODY...YOU CAN SEE THE MARK IN THE DUST.

UH-HUH...PLENTY OF BEAR TRACKS AND BOOT TRACKS, TOO.

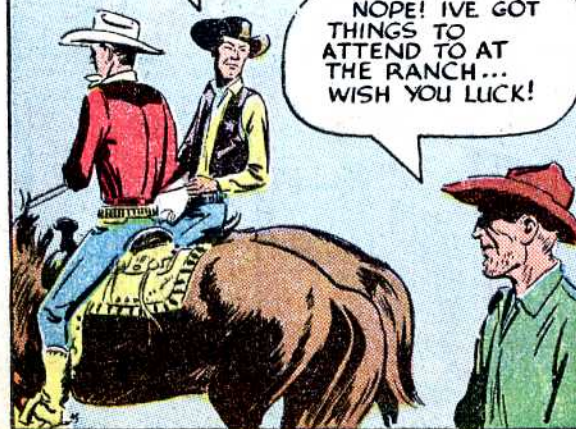


BETTER CLIMB BACK ON YOUR HORSE, DAVE---WE CAN FOLLOW THIS TRAIL WITHOUT LEAVING THE SADDLE...FOR A WHILE, ANYWAY! PLAINEST BEAR TRACKS I EVER SAW.



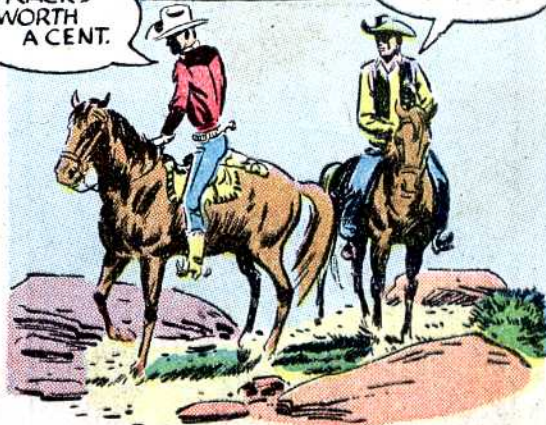
YOU TRAILING ALONG WITH US, HARDY?

NOPE! I'VE GOT THINGS TO ATTEND TO AT THE RANCH...WISH YOU LUCK!



HERE'S WHERE THE TROUBLE BEGINS, DAVE---ROCKS DON'T SHOW BEAR TRACKS WORTH A CENT.

NO CLAW MARKS, EITHER? THIS IS SOFT ROCK...



THE TRACKS STOP COMPLETELY HERE-- WITH A FEW FAINT CLAW MARKS. IT ISN'T REASONABLE, BUT IT'S A FACT!



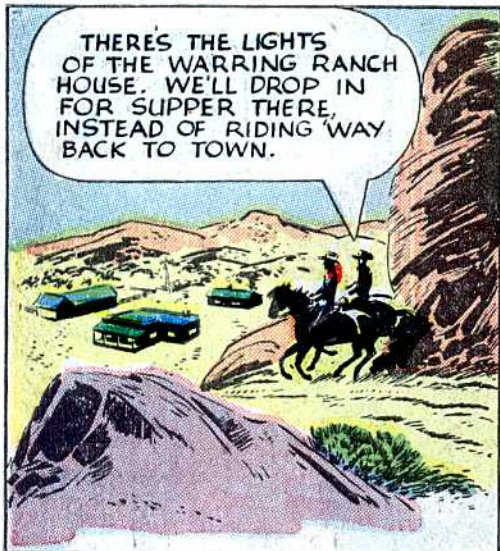
GENE, WE'VE BEEN HUNTING FOR FIVE HOURS NOW--- WITHOUT FINDING ANOTHER BEAR TRACK! IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.



YOU'RE RIGHT, DAVE. THE ONLY TRACKS WE'VE SEEN SINCE LOSING THE BEAR TRAIL WERE MADE BY COATES'S AND HARDY'S HORSES. WE'D BETTER TURN BACK.

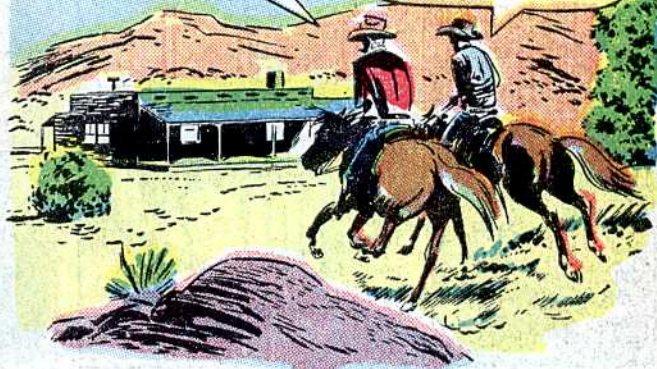


THERE'S THE LIGHTS OF THE WARRING RANCH HOUSE. WE'LL DROP IN FOR SUPPER THERE, INSTEAD OF RIDING WAY BACK TO TOWN.



IT'S A MIGHTY PROSPEROUS LOOKING OUTFIT, DAVE.

BEST IN FIVE PINES COUNTY --- BETTER THAN WALDEN COATES'S SPREAD... AND OWNED BY A GIRL OF 21!



A GIRL RUNS THIS RANCH? HOW COME?

VERA WARRING'S FATHER LEFT IT TO HER, A FEW MONTHS AGO... SHE'S A TOP HAND IN ANY MAN'S LANGUAGE --- AND PRETTY, TOO.



DAVE LASSEN! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN KEEPING YOURSELF?

HARD AT WORK, I RECKON, VERA. MEET MY OLD SIDE KICK, GENE AUTRY.



UNITED STATES MARSHAL
GENE ALTRY--- ISN'T IT?
DAVE IS ALWAYS TELLING
US SOME NEW STORY OF
OUTLAW-HUNTING WITH YOU.

DAVE LASSEN IS A TALKING
MACHINE, MISS WARRING---
ALL YOU'VE GOT TO DO IS
WIND HIM UP, AND HE'LL GAB
ALL DAY!



WE'D ALL BETTER QUIT
TALKING AND GO INSIDE.
MOTHER HAS SUPPER
HOT, AND SHE'S LAID
EXTRA PLATES FOR
YOU--- SAW YOU COMING!

WE NEED SOMETHING
LIKE THAT TO COMFORT
US AFTER TODAY,
I RECKON.



I HEARD THAT LAST
REMARK, DAVE!
WHAT'S GONE WRONG
THAT YOU NEED
COMFORTING?

A FRIEND KILLED
AND A TRAIL LOST, MA!
I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT.



THE BEAR THAT KILLED BERT NOYES
MUST HAVE WEIGHED ALL OF HALF A TON!
HIS TRACKS WERE DEEPER THAN MOST---

---AND THEN THEY
STOPPED... AS IF HE'D
GONE UP IN SMOKE!

COULDN'T
HE HAVE
KEPT TO
THE ROCKS?



NO! THERE
WASN'T ENOUGH ROCKS
IN THAT SECTION FOR
HIM TO TRAVEL ON,
ALL THE TIME... IT'S
JUST ANOTHER CUSS'D
MYSTERY!



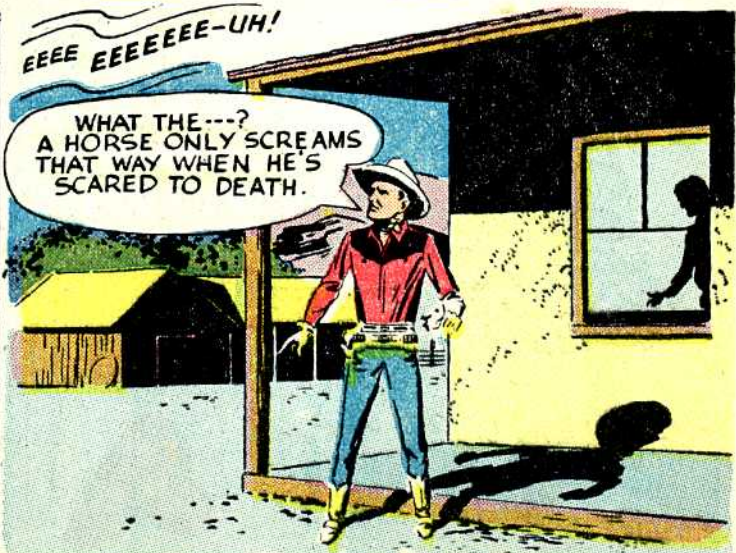
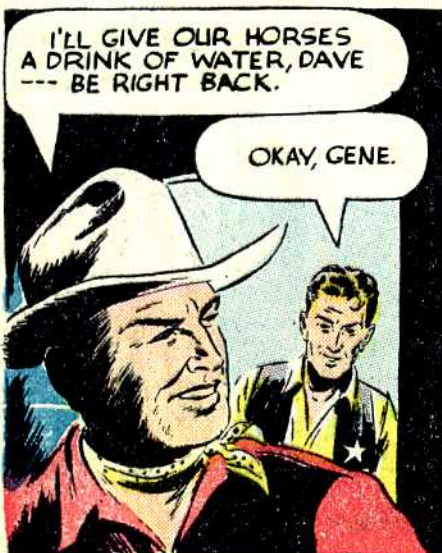
EVENING, FOLKS! I'M ON MY
WAY TO THE MINE, FROM FIVE PINES---
BUT I HAD TO DROP IN FOR A MINUTE.

SANDY MCGOWAN!
DON'T YOU EVER DARE TO
PASS US UP! PULL UP
A CHAIR.



MARSHAL
ALTRY MEET
SANDY---
OWNER OF
THE SILVER
WING MINE.





DAVE! WHERE DID THAT
AWFUL HORSE SCREAM
COME FROM?

FROM THE ROAD TO THE
SILVER WING MINE---
THE WAY SANDY MCGOWAN
WENT.



GET YOUR HORSES! WHAT
ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
IT'S THAT KILLER BEAR!

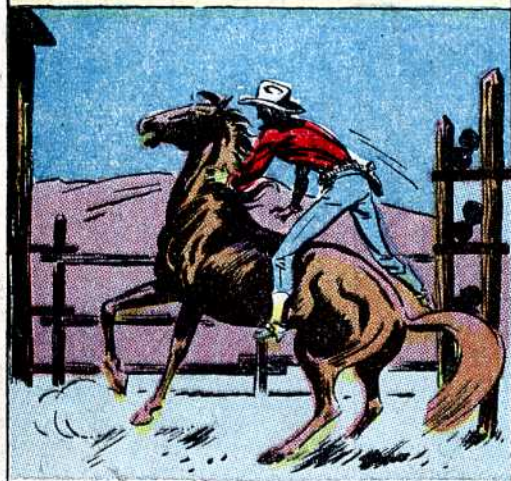
I RECKON
SHE'S RIGHT,
DAVE.



DON'T STOP TO SADDLE
UP, GENE---OR THAT
GIRL WILL GET THERE
AHEAD OF US.



WHILE LASSEN IS CATCHING HIS HORSE,
GENE JUMPS ABOARD CHAMP..



... AND, GUIDING THE GREAT HORSE
BY KNEES ALONE, PASSES VERA
AT THE BARN.



GOOD THING THE MOON
IS BRIGHT, CHAMP...EASY, BOY!
I SEE SOMETHING!



WHOA, CHAMP! IT'S MCGOWAN
--- AND HIS HORSE!





SANDY! SANDY!



OH, MY DEAR, MY DEAR!

HE'S ALIVE, VERA---
BUT I THINK HIS SKULL
IS FRACTURED... THE BEAR'S
PAW CAUGHT HIM ON
THE TOP OF THE HEAD.



HERE'S A QUEER THING,
DAVE--- MCGOWAN'S GUN WAS
IN HIS HOLSTER---UNFIRED!

WHAT? HOW COULD A
GRIZZLY SURPRISE A
RIDER THAT QUICK---ON
THE OPEN PRAIRIE?

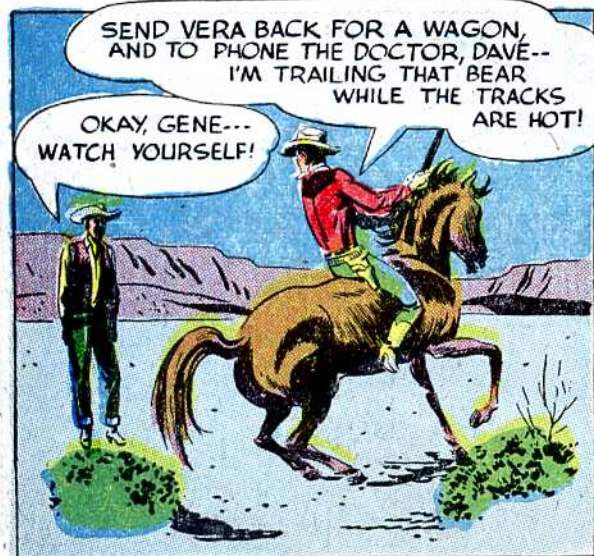


YOU TRY TO FIGURE
THAT ONE OUT, DAVE! I
WANT A LOOK AT HIS
HORSE, NOW.

UMPH! IT SURE
BEATS ME!

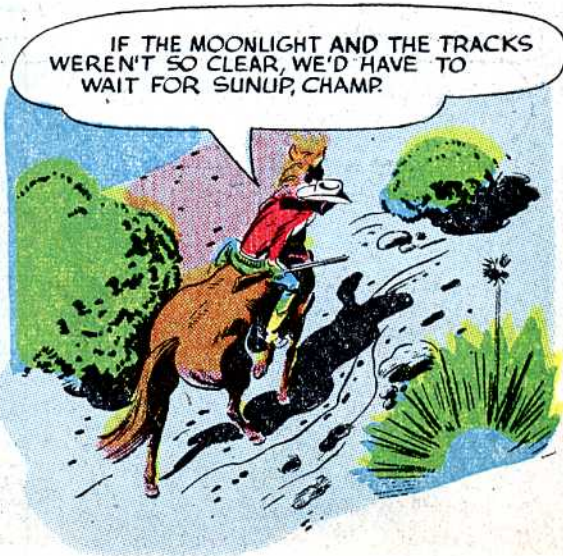


NECK BROKEN
WITH ONE PAW-BLOW!
I'VE HEARD OF SUCH
THINGS, BUT THIS IS THE
FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN IT.



SEND VERA BACK FOR A WAGON,
AND TO PHONE THE DOCTOR, DAVE--
I'M TRAILING THAT BEAR
WHILE THE TRACKS
ARE HOT!

OKAY, GENE---
WATCH YOURSELF!



IF THE MOONLIGHT AND THE TRACKS
WEREN'T SO CLEAR, WE'D HAVE TO
WAIT FOR SUNUP, CHAMP.

MAYBE WE'LL STILL HAVE TO DO THAT---IF THOSE CLOUDS BLOT OUT THE MOON.



SAME OLD STUNT--LOSING HIS TRAIL AMONG THE ROCKS, WHERE EVEN A HORSE WOULD HAVE TROUBLE TO FOLLOW!



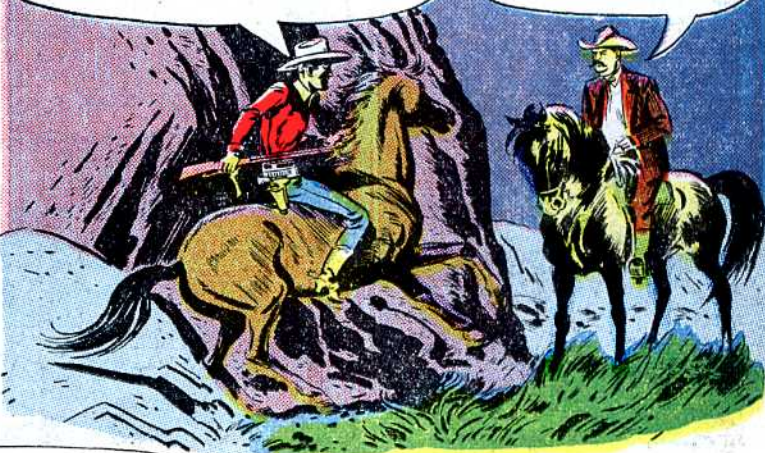
WE'LL CIRCLE AROUND THIS PATCH AND LOOK FOR SIGNS IN THE SOFT GROUND BEYOND.



WE OUGHT TO PICK IT UP AGAIN---ABOUT HERE...



HI! WHO'S THAT---COATES?



YEAH! THAT MARSHAL AUTRY?

NEARLY RODE INTO YOU, AUTRY... SAY---WHAT'S WRONG? WHERE'S YOUR SADDLE?

AT WARRINGS! WE HEARD A HORSE SCREAM AND RODE FOR THE PLACE... IT WAS YOUNG MCGOWAN---NEARLY BRAINED BY A BEAR'S PAW. I'M TRAILING THE DEVILISH---



HEY! THESE HORSES MUST SMELL BEAR--- THE WAY THEY'RE ACTING!



QUI--QUIT IT, CHAMP!
DOGGONE YOUR HIDE!
YOU KNOW I'M RIDING
WITHOUT EVEN A
SURCINGLE! WHOA!



THAT'S BETTER---BUT
WHAT THE DEUCE MAKES
YOU TREMBLE THAT WAY,
BOY? I NEVER SAW YOU
SO SCARED!



COATES! HI---COATES!
(WHERE'D HE GO TO?)



TWO PISTOL SHOTS! AND
THE MOON'S OUT AGAIN!
COATES MUST HAVE BEEN
CRAZY, OR IN A BAD JAM, TO
SHOOT THAT GRIZZLY
WITH A SIX GUN!
FASTER, CHAMP!



MISSED HIM, CLEAN! BIGGEST GRIZZLY
I EVER SAW! WENT THAT WAY.

YOU CAN BE WHOOPING
GLAD YOU DIDN'T HIT HIM,
COATES! IF YOU HAD, I COULDN'T
HAVE GOTTEN HERE IN TIME,
WITH THIS RIFLE.



I RECKON I WAS A FOOL, AULTRY---NO
PISTOL HAS POWER ENOUGH TO STOP
A THOUSAND POUND BEAR... BY THE WAY,
DID HE KILL POOR MCGOWAN?

NO...BUT THE BOY IS IN BAD
SHAPE---UNCONSCIOUS, OF
COURSE...I'D SAY A HOSPITAL
IS HIS ONLY HOPE..



I WAS ON MY WAY TO
WARRINGS---TO TELL THEM
ABOUT NOYES. I'LL SEE IF THERE'S
ANYTHING I CAN DO THERE, NOW...
SO LONG!



WAIT HERE, CHAMP!
I'LL SEE IF I CAN PICK
UP MISTER GRIZZLY'S
TRACKS WHERE
COATES SHOT
AT HIM...

NOT A SIGN OF A
TRACK! EITHER COATES
FIRED AT A SHADOW
OR THAT BEAR'S
GOT WINGS.

THERE'S ONE MORE CHANCE
---IF THE MOON COMES OUT
AGAIN---I'LL SEARCH THE
GROUND NEAR WHERE THE
BRUTE SPOOKED YOU INTO BUCKING,
CHAMP.

IT WAS JUST ABOUT
HERE---GOOD! THE
MOON'S CLEAR NOW!

THERE THEY ARE---
CLEAR AS PRINT! BUT,
WAIT A MINUTE---

THIS IS THE SAME SPOT
WHERE I NEARLY RAN INTO
COATES...I'LL SWEAR IT
IS! RIGHT BY
THIS BIG ROCK...

BUT THE ONLY TRACKS I CAN
FIND ARE CHAMP'S AND THE BEAR'S!

SUCH THINGS DON'T HAPPEN---THEY JUST
CAN'T HAPPEN---BUT THAT'S WHAT THESE
TRACKS SAY: IT WAS BEAR, NOT COATES,
THAT MET ME AND WALKED AWAY AGAIN!
MAYBE I'M CRAZY....

OH! OH, MY
AUNT HEPSIBAH'S
PICTURE HAT! WHY
DIDN'T I NOTICE THAT
BEFORE? IF IT'S TRUE,
THEN I'M NOT CRAZY---



THAT'S HOW IT COULD HAPPEN,
BUT I WISH I COULD GUESS
THE WHY OF IT! IF I DON'T GET
THE ANSWER PRETTY SOON,
THERE'S NO TELLING WHERE
THE KILLINGS WILL STOP!



COME ON, CHAMP!
THE QUICKER WE
GET BACK TO WARRINGS,
THE BETTER I'LL FEEL
ABOUT SANDY MCGOWAN'S
CHANCES TO GET WELL.



THERE'S DAVE'S HORSE
IN THE CORRAL, CHAMP---
BUT NO SIGN OF COATES'S...
MAYBE HE PUT HIM IN
THE BARN.



GENE! MAN---AM I GLAD
TO SEE YOU BACK!
HOW CLOSE DID YOU
GET TO THAT KILLER?

CLOSE ENOUGH
TO CURL MY
HAIR---THAT'S ALL!
WHERE'S BANKER
COATES?



COATES? HE HASN'T BEEN
HERE...DID YOU SEE HIM?

UH-HUH...HE SAID HE
WAS HEADED FOR THIS
PLACE... QUEER WHERE
HE WENT TO! TELL
ME---HOW IS YOUNG
MCGOWAN?



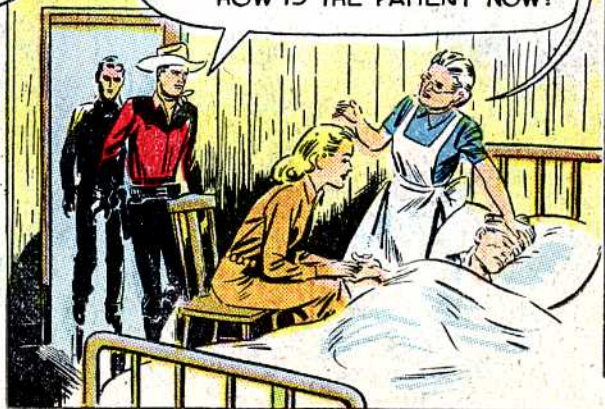
IN THIS ROOM ...
VERA AND HER MOTHER
ARE WITH HIM... HE'S
STILL UNCONSCIOUS.

HE WOULD BE
---IT'S A WONDER.
HE'S ALIVE!



OH---! I THOUGHT YOU WERE
THE DOCTOR, MISTER AULTRY.

I WISH I WERE, MRS. WARRING!
HOW IS THE PATIENT NOW?



I'M TERRIBLY WORRIED ABOUT SANDY! THE PULSE IS FAINT AND THE BREATHING ROUGH...HE DOESN'T KNOW ANYBODY, AND YET ANY SUDDEN SOUND DISTURBS HIM! IF ONLY DOCTOR GREEN---

THE FRONT DOOR JUST CLOSED! PERHAPS HE'S COME NOW.



COATES! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?



SULTAN---MY HORSE ---DUMPED ME AND RAN FOR A MILE! SMELLED THAT BEAR AGAIN, I RECKON... I WAS LUCKY--TO CATCH HIM! UH---HOW'S SANDY MCGOWAN?

IN BAD SHAPE! ONLY A DOCTOR CAN GUESS HOW BAD... BETTER NOT GO IN THERE, COATES--- NOISE, EVEN VOICES COULD MAKE HIM WORSE.



HUMMM! THAT'S SURE BAD NEWS! DOC GREEN IS COMING OUT, OF COURSE?

HE OUGHT TO BE HERE NOW. ALL WE CAN DO IS WAIT, WALD.



THE CLOCK'S SLOW-MOVING HANDS HAVE COVERED JUST AN HOUR, WHEN---



SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO DOCTOR GREEN, BOYS! I JUST TELEPHONED HIS OFFICE---HE LEFT THERE MORE THAN TWO HOURS AGO. WE'RE GOING NOW TO LOOK FOR HIM!



HUSTLE! I'M CALLING OUT THE MEN IN THE BUNKHOUSE.

COME ON, DAVE--- COATES! WE'VE WAITED TOO LONG.



THERE ARE THREE WAYS FROM TOWN, AND DOC COULD HAVE TAKEN ANY ONE OF 'EM... YOU AND VERA RIDE BACK ALONG THE SHORT CUT, GENE--- WALD COATES AND I WILL HEAD TWO OTHER SEARCH PARTIES.

ALL RIGHT, DAVE.

WHAT'S COOKING, MISS VERA?

MAN HUNT, STEVE! DOC GREEN'S IN TROUBLE SOMEWHERE ON THE WAY FROM TOWN---AND THERE'S A KILLER GRIZZLY ON THE PROD!

FOR A FEW MOMENTS THE BIG HORSE CORRAL IS A SCENE OF FAST AND FURIOUS SADDLING.



LET'S GO, BOYS!
WE TAKE THE SHORT CUT.



THE BEAR MAY HAVE SPOOKED DOC'S HORSE OFF THE ROAD---SO WE'LL SEARCH BOTH SIDE AND THE MIDDLE.

I'LL TAKE THE ROUGH GROUND TO THE LEFT.



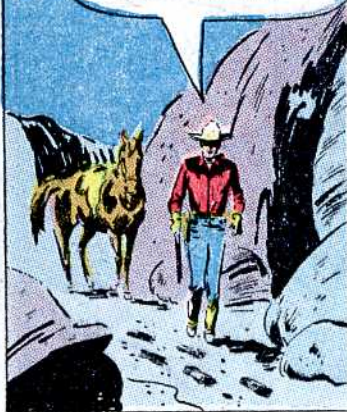
DOCTOR GREEN CAME TO GRIEF PRETTY NEAR THE RANCH--- THAT'S CERTAIN, FROM WHAT I KNOW!



BEAR TRACKS!
MY HUNCH WAS RIGHT!



IF I FOLLOW THIS
TRAIL, IT'S BOUND TO
LEAD ME TO
DOC GREEN ---



OR WHAT'S
LEFT OF HIM!



DEAD! THERE ISN'T A
THING WE CAN DO NOW!



DOC'S HORSE MUST HAVE
GOT AWAY... CHAMP! WHAT DO
YOU SMELL, BOY?



THIS MIGHT BE
THE SHOWDOWN---



ZZZZ-I-P!



AN INSTANT LATER, CHAMP, WILD WITH FEAR AND
FLURY, REARS UP TO FIGHT FOR HIS LIFE.



MISS VERA!
YOU HEARD
THAT SHOT---?

YES---AND A
HORSE SCREAMED!
OVER THERE WHERE
GENE AUTRY WENT!

COME ON!!

AS RIDERS FROM ALL THREE
SEARCH PARTIES HEAD FOR
THE ROCKY GROUND...



EASY, MISS
VERA! LET
ME GO AHEAD!



IT'S CHAMP---GENE AUTRY'S HORSE!

HE'S BEEN
CLAWED!

WHICK-ER-EEEE!



HO-HO-HO-O-O!

CHAMP! IF THE OLD DEVIL
RIPPED YOU LIKE THAT,
WHAT DID HE DO TO GENE?



UNCLE WALDEN!
HAVE YOU SEEN---

AUTRY? YES---
BLIT I'M AFRAID
I DIDN'T GET HERE
IN TIME! HE'S
HERE, IN THIS
CREVICE, WITH
DOCTOR GREEN!



I SAW THE BEAR RAISE UP
FROM BEHIND A ROCK TO
STRIKE AUTRY--- AND I SHOT
FAST! I MUST HAVE HIT
HIM, BECAUSE HE
LEFT AUTRY LYING
AND CHARGED
THE MARSHAL'S
HORSE. MY OWN
SULTAN WAS
CUTTING UP SO
I COULDN'T
SHOOT AGAIN...



...UNTIL I GOT OFF HIM...THEN I FIRED AGAIN! THE GRIZZLY TURNED AND DISAPPEARED AMONGST THE ROCKS.

ARE THEY BOTH--- DEAD?

WE'LL LIFT THEM OUT AND SEE.... COME ON, COATES!



GENE! GENE! WAKE UP! HE'S COMING TO, VERA.

OH---THANK HEAVEN!



WHAT---HIT ME? A BULLET?

NO! THE BEAR, GENE! YOU'RE LUCKY THE ONLY DAMAGE WAS FOUR CLAW MARKS ON YOUR SCALP. HERE - LET ME PATCH YOU UP.



UMMMMM! I RECKON FALLING INTO THAT CREVICE SAVED ME FROM WORSE... POOR GREEN DIDN'T FALL IN QUICK ENOUGH... WHERE'S CHAMP?



WHICKER--WHICKER-EEE!

CHAMP OLD BOY! YOU GOT HURT, TOO? LET ME SEE!

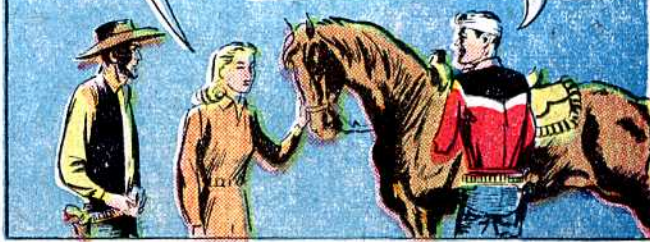


POOR PONY! YOU SURE GOT RAKED! BUT MOST HORSES FACING WHAT YOU HAD TO FACE WOULD HAVE BEEN KILLED.



GENE, WHAT WOULD YOU DO ABOUT GETTING HELP FOR SANDY... DAVE LASSEN SAYS TELEPHONE FOR ANOTHER DOCTOR... I SAY TAKE HIM TO A HOSPITAL---NOW!

THAT'S MY ADVICE, VERA--- TAKE HIM TO A HOSPITAL TONIGHT--- UNDER GUARD!



BY THE WAY, DAVE---WHERE'D
WALDEN COATES GO?

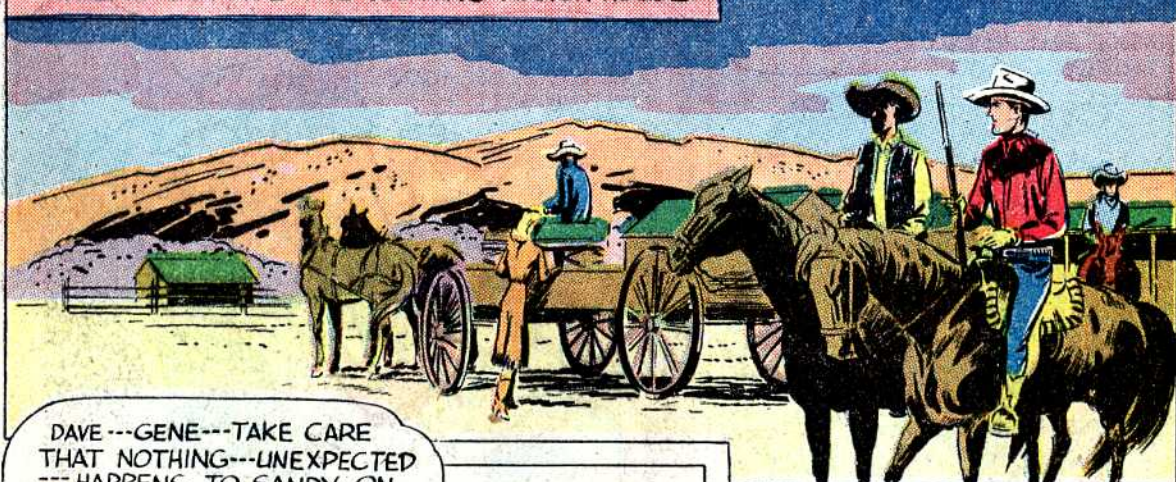
TO LOOK AFTER HIS HOSS,
I RECKON---AFRAID THE
CUSS HAD BUSTED HIS
BRIDLE AND GONE
HOME...WHY?



WHY? OH, NOTHING MUCH, DAVE...IT
JUST STRIKES ME QUEER THAT HE
SAW A BEAR AS BIG AS A BEEF COW
KNOCK ME DOWN BEFORE I SAW
ANYTHING!



AN HOUR LATER A GRIM LITTLE CAVALCADE
GATHERS OUTSIDE THE WARRING RANCH HOUSE.

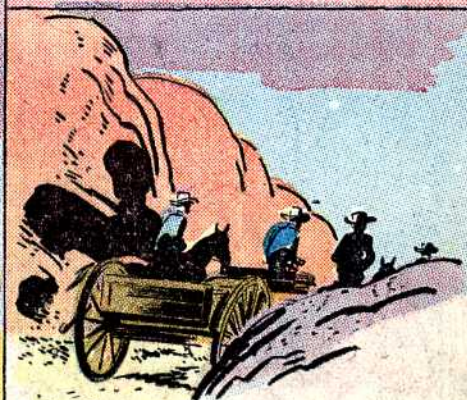


DAVE---GENE---TAKE CARE
THAT NOTHING---UNEXPECTED
---HAPPENS TO SANDY ON
THE WAY! I DON'T KNOW WHY,
BUT I'M JUST HORRIBLY
AFRAID FOR HIM!

WE'LL PROTECT HIS LIFE
WITH OURS, IF IT COMES
TO THAT.

THANKS, BOYS!
MOTHER AND I
WILL BE WAITING
FOR---FOR YOUR
PHONE CALL!
SO LONG!

DAWN FINDS THE WAGON AND ITS
GLIARDS IN HILLY COUNTRY,
HALFWAY TO THE HOSPITAL
TOWN OF CANYON FALLS.



I RECKON THE DANGER'S OVER,
GENE--EXCEPT FOR A TICKLISH
PIECE OF ROAD, JUST AHEAD...I'M GOING
TO RIDE ON THE WAGON AND WATCH
THE BRAKE.

ALL RIGHT, DAVE---I'LL
RIDE CLOSE IN FRONT OF
THE TEAM.

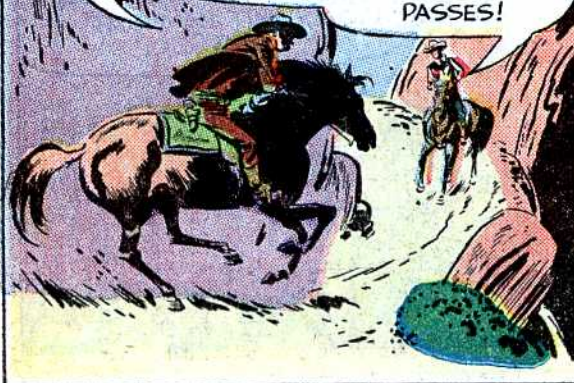


EASY, BOY...EASY
HERE! DON'T GIVE THE
PONIES BEHIND US
ANY EXCUSE
TO RUN!



HULLO, AUTRY! HOW'S MCGOWAN
MAKING OUT?

COATES! WHERE DID YOU
COME FROM? GET BACK
TILL THE WAGON
PASSES!



VERA'S SO ANXIOUS
ABOUT SANDY---I TOLD
HER I'D FIND OUT
HOW HE IS AND
TAKE THE NEWS
BACK TO HER... IS
HE CONSCIOUS?

NO! GET
BACK, COATES!



YOUR HORSE IS SPOOKING THE WAGON
TEAM, COATES---IN THE WORST PART
OF THE ROAD! GET BACK!

WHO-O-OA! STEADY, YOU
PONIES!



TELL ME FIRST WHAT MCGOWAN'S
CONDITION IS, AUTRY!

HE'S ONE CROW-HOP FROM DESTRUCTION
---THANKS TO YOU! CLEAR OUT---OR
I'LL SHOOT THAT CRAZY
HORSE FROM
UNDER YOU!



OH, ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SO
PRODDY, THOUGH, MARSHAL.



WHOA! YOU ORNERY CAYLISES!
BACK UP!

BACK, CHAMP!



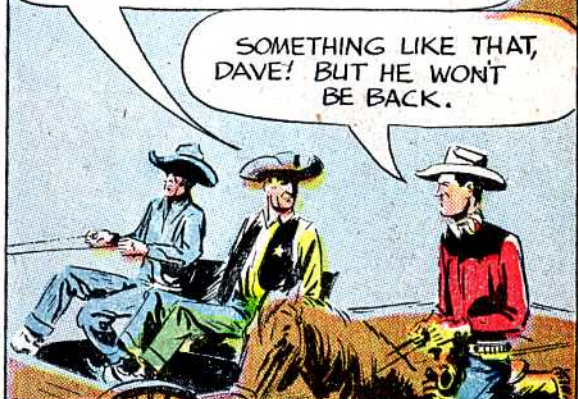
OKAY, DAVE, COME ON EASY! COATES HAS
GONE, AND THE TEAM WILL HANDLE NOW.

Y-YEAH! THEY'RE CALMING DOWN,
SOME.

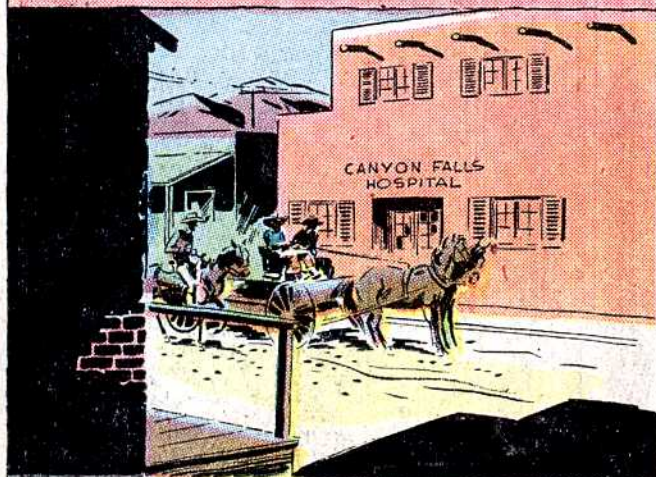


GENE, WHAT IN THE COCKEYED
WORLD OF WONDERS MADE WALD
COATES PULL THAT STUNT?
HE MUST HAVE GONE PLUMB LOCO!

SOMETHING LIKE THAT,
DAVE! BUT HE WON'T
BE BACK.



AT MIDMORNING THE LONG SLOW TRIP
ENDS---SAFELY FOR THE UNCONSCIOUS SANDY.



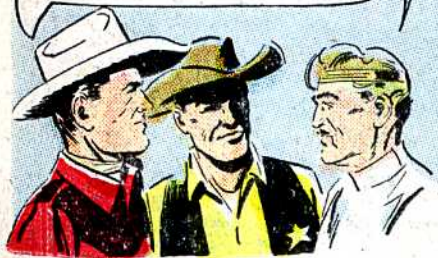
AFTER AN HOUR IN THE HOSPITAL'S
WAITING ROOM.....

HERE COMES THE HEAD SURGEON,
DAVE--TO TELL
US WHAT HE
FOUND!



THERE'S A BIT OF BROKEN BONE
PRESSING ON YOUNG MCGOWAN'S
BRAIN...IF WE OPERATE
IMMEDIATELY, THERE'S A CHANCE
FOR HIM.

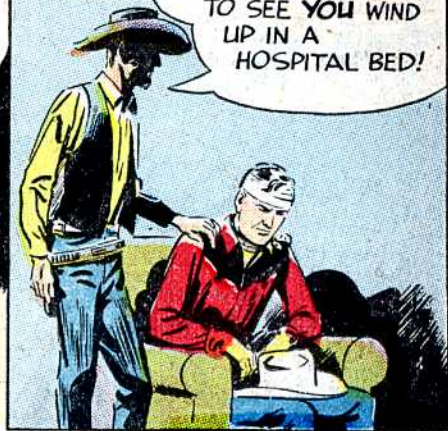
WE'LL WAIT AROUND
TO LEARN HOW THINGS GO,
DOCTOR...THERE'S A MIGHTY
FINE YOUNG LADY WAITING TO
HEAR... BY PHONE!



I UNDERSTAND!
I'LL SEE YOU
GENTLEMEN AGAIN
--- AS SOON AS
IT'S OVER.



AND WHILE WE'RE WAITING,
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE
THAT HEAD WOUND DRESSED,
GENE... I DON'T AIM
TO SEE YOU WIND
UP IN A
HOSPITAL BED!



HUMPH! A BEAR'S CLAWS COULD HAVE
MADE **THREE** OF THESE WOUNDS IN
YOUR SCALP, MARSHAL AUTRY--
BUT NOT THE
FOURTH ONE.

WHY NOT ?



WHY NOT ? BECAUSE THAT ONE IS
THE MARK OF A BULLET!

A BULLET, HMM?
I GUESSED IT,
BUT I'M SURE
GLAD TO
KNOW IT.

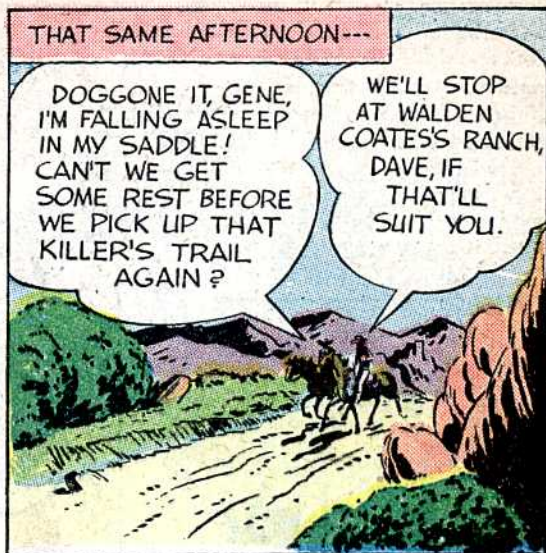


MEANWHILE, IN THE HOSPITAL'S SILENT
OPERATING ROOM, A SURGEON'S SKILL
BATTLES FOR THE LIFE OF SANDY MCGOWAN.



AND IN THE WARRING RANCH HOUSE A
SLEEPLESS GIRL WATCHES THE CLOCK,
WAITING FOR A TELEPHONE CALL THAT
DOES NOT COME.





WHY--DANG IT---THEY'RE BEAR PAWS!
MADE OF IRON AND LEATHER!

MADE TO FASTEN ON
SULTAN'S HOOFS!
THAT'S WHAT I WAS
SURE WE'D FIND,
SOMEWHERE, DAVE.



I RECKON
HORSEFACE HARDY
MADE 'EM, GENE--
HE'S A WIZARD AT
BLACKSMITHING
AND LEATHER WORK
--- THESE PLAIN
LEATHER PADS,
TOO--



DAVE--LOOK OUT!



EEEE - UNH!



GENE! DUCK---



WITH DEADLY JUSTICE, SHERIFF
LASSEN'S SHOT FINDS ITS MARK.



SULTAN WAS THAT RARE THING---AN
INSANE HORSE! CHAMP AND THE TEAM
HORSES SENSED IT... WALDEN COATES
KNEW IT--- AND USED THE BEAST TO
COMMIT MURDER... BUT WHY?

WE WON'T
KNOW TILL WE
GET COATES
HIMSELF TO
TALK,
I RECKON...
LET'S GO,
GENE!



BUT AS SUNSET PAINTS THE HILLS ABOVE HER RANCH, VERA WARRING IS UNAWARE OF DANGER.

IT'S TERRIBLE, UNCLE WALDEN, THAT YOU FELT YOU HAD TO TAKE MONEY FROM THE BANK'S FUNDS...



WITH ONLY MOTHER AND MYSELF TO CONSIDER, I'D GLADLY GIVE YOU THE AMOUNT YOU ASK... BUT SANDY MCGOWAN AND I ARE GOING TO BE MARRIED... I CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT HIS APPROVAL.



THAT'S JUST WHAT I FIGURED! WELL—I HAVE A CHECK IN MY POCKET! WILL YOU SIGN IT NOW, OR---

NEVER! NOT IF YOU KILLED ME! MMMMMMMMMH!



YOUR KILLINGS ARE FINISHED, COATES...

A-A-A-AH!



...AND SO ARE YOU!



DAVE! GENE! DID YOU HEAR WHAT HE SAID?

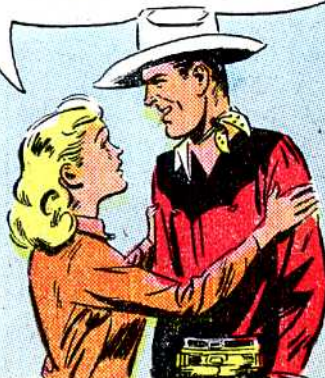
ALL OF IT, VERA,—FROM BEHIND THAT ROCK! IT EXPLAINS WHY BERT NOYES DIED---HE KNEW TOO MUCH! AND WHY SANDY NEARLY DIED---HE'D NEVER HAVE LET YOU GIVE MONEY ---TO A CROOK!

THEN---THERE WASN'T ANY BEAR?

NO, VERA! IT WAS SULTAN, WEARING BEAR-CLAW SHOES! DAVE WILL EXPLAIN IT ALL LATER--- YOU'VE HAD SHOCKS ENOUGH FOR NOW.

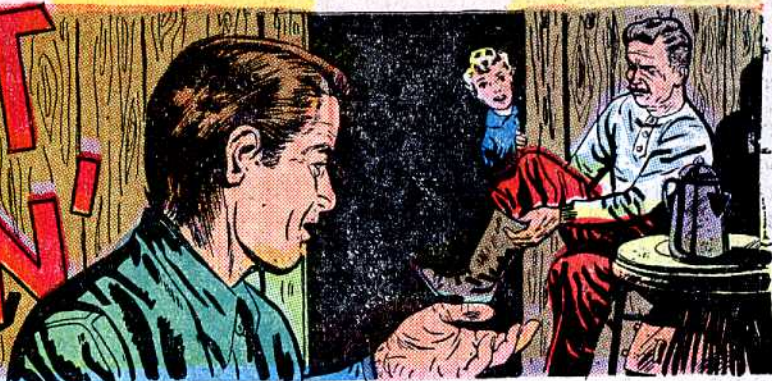


MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, GENE--- BUT I'M OWING YOU A DIFFERENT SORT OF SHOCK, I THINK. BECAUSE EXCEPT FOR YOU, MY SANDY MIGHT NOT BE ALIVE TODAY... BEND DOWN, MARSHAL ALTRY! DON'T YOU KNOW HOW TO BE KISSED?



SMART FIGURIN'!

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Jimsey woke up with a start. The first fingers of the sunrise light were probing through the window. He glanced at Dad's bed, a cheery greeting on his lips. But he swallowed the words. Dad's bed was empty! At that moment, he heard voices in the kitchen and realized what had awakened him had been the back door opening; its hinges always squeaked.

In barefoot silence, he hurried down the hall to the kitchen. On the threshold, he paused. His heart began to pound against his ribs for, just inside the back door, loomed Chad Mason—broad and bulky, his face dark with anxiety. Chad was Dad's night deputy. His being here at sunup spelled trouble. Dad was standing near the stove, alternately putting on his clothes and gulping black coffee.

"Tex Todd didn't do it," Dad was saying firmly. "He was settin' a trap line up on Bald Peak last night. I met him when I was ridin' home from the Lazy-Q-Bar. It musta been about ten-thirty, 'cause Len and I played checkers till ten and I left right afterwards. If Bunky Dimmitt was killed around eleven, his murderer wasn't Tex! Why, Tex couldn't have made it from Bald Peak to Bunky's in half an hour unless he had wings."

"But how're you gonna prove you saw Tex?" demanded Chad.

Dad's face reddened. "Reckon my word's good enough!" he snapped, sitting down to pull on his boots.

"Tis for me," said Chad, "but you'll need a heap more'n that to clear Tex. There's too much evidence against him. One o' his gloves was

found alongside the rifled strongbox. The knife that done the killin' belonged to him. An' three witnesses saw him ridin' away from Bunky's around twelve-thirty."

"What three witnesses?"

"Jake Wells, Lefty Dowd, an' Roy Nolan."

Dad snorted. "As if the law'd take the word of those ornery gunslingers ahead of mine!"

"There's three o' them, Sheriff, an' only one o' you."

Dad stood up and took his gunbelt from the back of the chair. "More'n likely, THEY pulled the job and planted the evidence against Tex. It'd be simple to get his glove and knife. He never locks his cabin."

Chad shrugged. "Could be, but it'd take a heap o' provin'. Take time, too. An' that's somethin' you haven't got. Not if Jake Wells meant what he was sayin' when I started over here."

"I've been sheriff of Sundale for five years, Chad, and there's never been a lynchin' yet!" Dad practically spat out the words.

Jimsey padded into the kitchen and said, "Are they going to hang Tex, Dad?"

"Not if I can help it!" Dad looked at his deputy. "Get back down street, Chad, and try to keep the lid on for a coupla hours. I'll head for Bald Peak. If I find Tex, I'll take him to the Raw-hide jail. He'll be safe there till I can prove who really killed Bunky."

When the door had closed behind Chad, Dad turned to Jimsey. "Better stick close to home today, son."

"Okay, Dad . . . but what'll I do if

Tex comes here?"

"What makes you think he might?"

"Well, when he finds out about the murder an' that he's accused o' doin' it, he'll remember meetin' you last night, an' prob'ly come straight here to get you to back up his alibi."

Dad smiled proudly. "Smart figurin' for a fourteen-year-old." He patted Jimsy's shoulder. "If Tex does show up, hide him till I get back. Dawgoned if I know where you'll do it, though."

Jimsy was in the living room, rearranging his butterfly collection, when the voice of the mob came through the open window. Jimsy started across the room. As he neared the doorway, Tex Todd filled it.

"The mob! They're after me!" he gasped. "I didn't kill Bunky! Where's your Pa?"

"Lookin' for you. He knows you're not guilty." Jimsy slid under the big man's arm and headed down the hall. "Come on! I've gotta hide you till Dad gets back."

As Jimsy returned to the living room, the mob, headed by Jake Wells, stormed through the front gate. Jimsy went to the door to meet them.

"We want Tex Todd!" shouted Jake. "He come in here an'—"

Jimsy interrupted. "Did he? You're welcome to look."

Jake scowled. "Don't think we won't! Get to it, men!"

Although it was but fifteen minutes, to Jimsy it seemed like hours before Jake was standing in the back yard, snarling, "Well, he ain't in any o' the buildings!"

Jake's glance wandered past the corral, past the hitch rack, and paused at a clump of very tall grasses near the corncrib. "Mebbe he's in them grasses," he said and took a step that way. At the roar of laughter that went up, he purpled. "What's so funny?"

A tall rancher stepped forward and pointed a long finger at a black-and-gold butterfly poised on the tiptop of the tallest grass spear. "You are, Jake! If anybody was hidin' in them grasses, that butterfly wouldn't be ridin' there, nice an' quiet in the breeze." The

rancher turned. "C'm on, men! Let's git our hosses an' head for Bald Peak. I gotta notion we'll pick up Tex's trail there."

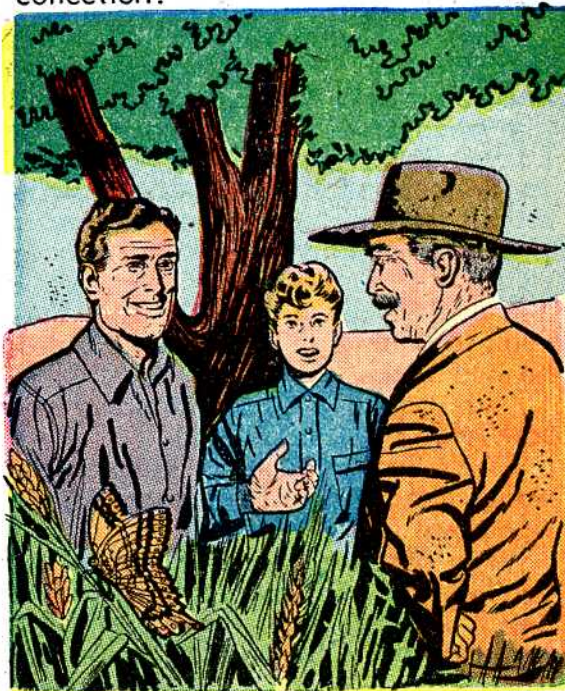
The echoing hoofbeats of the mob's horses had scarcely died away when Dad rode into the yard. Jimsy ran to meet him. "Tex is here!" he panted. "An' the mob was here, too . . . lookin' for him. Searched everywhere but they didn't find him. He's hid over there in the tall grasses by the corncrib."

Swinging out of the saddle, Dad shouted, "Come on out, Tex! I've got good news for you. When Tex's head appeared above the grasses, he continued, "I found the loot from Bunky's strongbox at Jake's place. Bein' as he didn't know I was your alibi, I figured he might be kinda careless. An' my figurin' proved right."

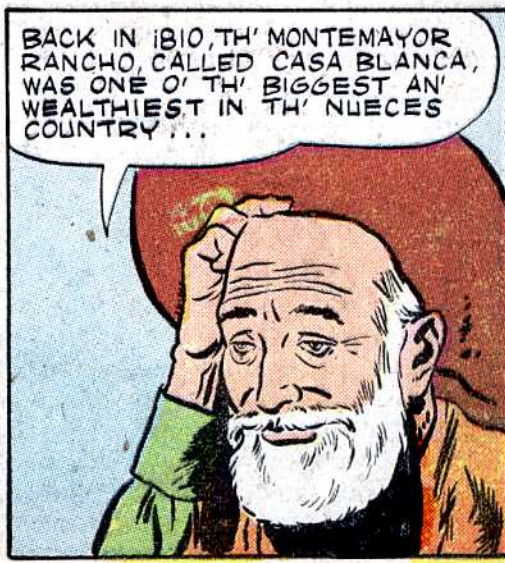
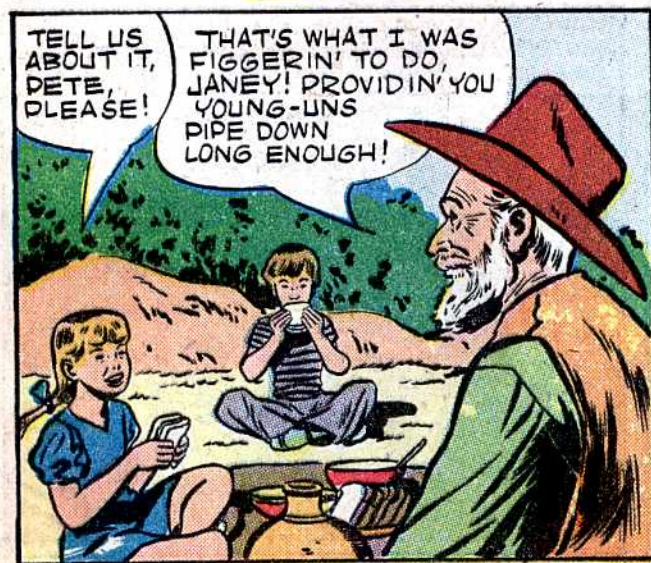
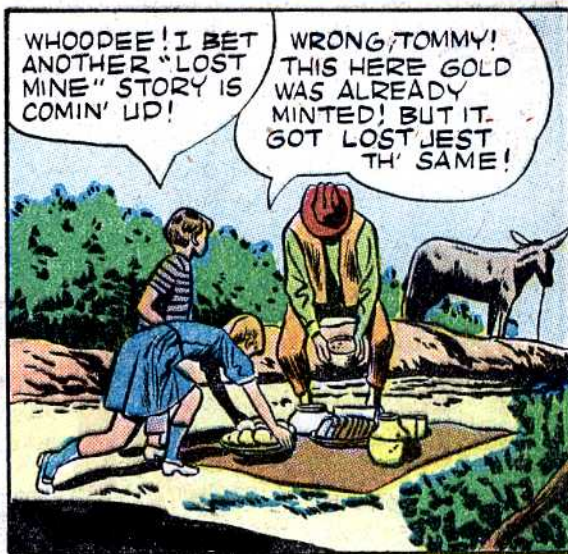
"You're plenty smart, Sheriff," grinned Tex, "but you've got a long ways to go afore you catch up with that son o' yours."

"I don't savvy." Dad looked puzzled.

Tex chuckled. And, reaching to the tip-top of the tallest grass spear, removed a black-and-gold butterfly—one of the prize specimens in Jimsy's collection!



CARABAJAL'S LOOT



"BUT WHEN TH' INJUNS WENT ON TH' WARDATH AN' WIPED OUT A NEAR-BY VILLAGE ...



"OLD JUAN MONTEMAYOR DECIDED TO SELL OUT HIS HOLDIN'S."

I HAVE SIGNED, SEÑOR GARCIA! THE RANCHO IS NOW YOURS! YOU HAVE BROUGHT THE MONEY?

SI, SEÑOR! MY MEN WILL BRING IT INSIDE AT ONCE!



"AS HE'D DEMANDED, MONTEMAYOR WAS PAID IN FULL WITH GOLD COINS."

SO MUCH GOLD WILL INVITE DANGER TO YOUR CASA, SEÑOR MONTEMAYOR!

I DO NOT FEAR! NOT ONLY HAVE I MANY GUARDS, BUT, WITHIN THE WEEK, I SHALL TAKE IT AND MY FAMILY BACK TO MEXICO!



"FIVE NIGHTS LATER MONTEMAYOR WAS TAKIN' A LAST WALK AROUND TH' RANCHO."



"HE HAD NO WAY O' KNOWIN' THAT TH' NOTORIOUS MEXICAN BANDIT, CARABAJAL, WAS LYIN' IN WAIT WITH ONE O' HIS MEN!"

AHA! THE OLD ONE COMES! PREPARE TO SEIZE HIM! AND REMEMBER — EVEN A SMALL SOUND WILL BRING THE GUARDS!



"AGAINST SUCH ODDS, OLD MONTEMAYOR DIDN'T STAND TH' GHOST OF A CHANCE!"



"TH' BANDITS TOOK HIM TO THEIR SECRET CAMP IN TH' NEAR-BY WOODS."

MERCY, SEÑOR!
I AM OLD!

THEN TALK!
WHERE IS YOUR
GOLD HIDDEN?
TALK! OR YOU
SHALL DIE!



"MONTEMAYOR COULDN'T DO NOTHIN' BUT TELL HIM!"

THE GOLD... IT IS IN THE
OLD WELL... NEAR THE
ORCHARD! NOW, MAY I ...
GO HOME ?

NOT TILL WE SEE
WHETHER YOU HAVE
TOLD THE TRUTH,
OLD ONE !



"WHILE CARABAJAL AN' ONE O' HIS MEN WENT BACK TO CASA BLANCA, MONTEMAYOR HUDDLED ON TH' GROUND."



"TH' GOLD WAS RIGHT WHERE OLD JUAN SAID IT WAS!"

SO MUCH GOLD,
CARABAJAL! WE
ARE RICH!

WE ARE DEAD IF
WE DO NOT
VAMOOSE, PRONTO!



"TH' BANDITS TOTED TH' LOOT BACK TO TH' HIDE-OUT CAMP."

ALAS! I AM RUINED! YOU SHALL RUE THIS NIGHT, CARABAJAL! A THOUSAND CURSES ON YOU!



"INSTEAD OF LETTIN' OLD JUAN GO FREE ..."

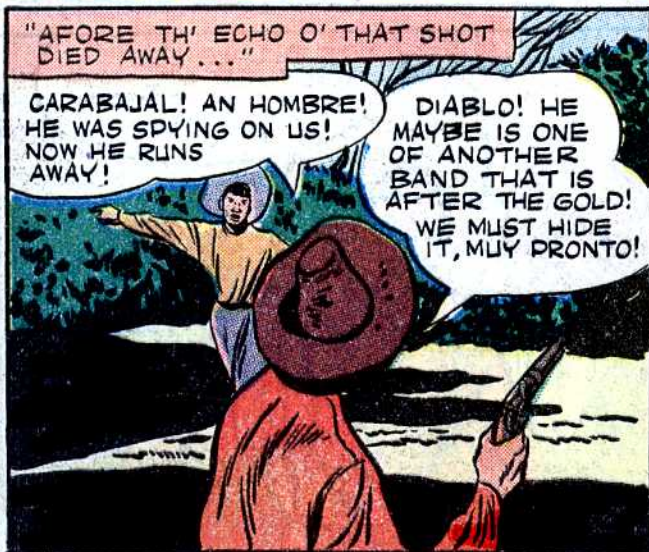
HA! HA! YOU ARE THE ONE WHO WILL HAVE THE REGRETS, SEÑOR!



"AFORE TH' ECHO O' THAT SHOT DIED AWAY ..."

CARABAJAL! AN HOMBRE! HE WAS SPYING ON US! NOW HE RUNS AWAY!

DIABLO! HE MAYBE IS ONE OF ANOTHER BAND THAT IS AFTER THE GOLD! WE MUST HIDE IT, MUY PRONTO!



"FAST, BUT QUIET-LIKE, THEY BURIED THEIR LOOT IN A NEAR-BY ROCK PEN."



"AN' PUT OLD MONTEMAYOR'S BODY ON TOP ..."

HA! HA! OLD JUAN DID NOT DREAM HE WOULD BE OUR GUARD FOR THE GOLD!

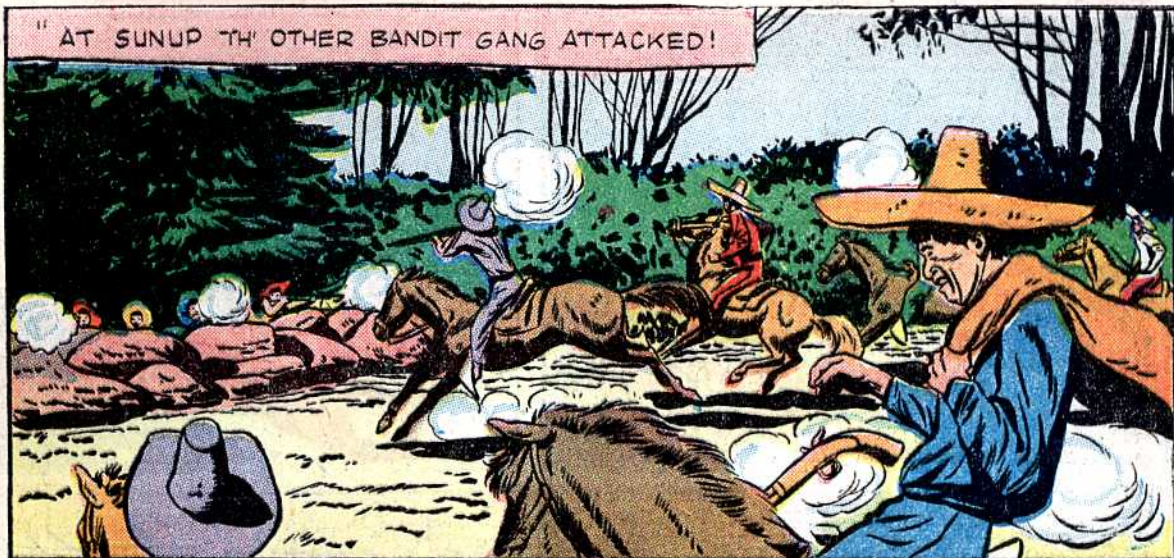


"THEN THEY WENT BACK TO THEIR CAMP TO GIT SET IN CASE O' TROUBLE."

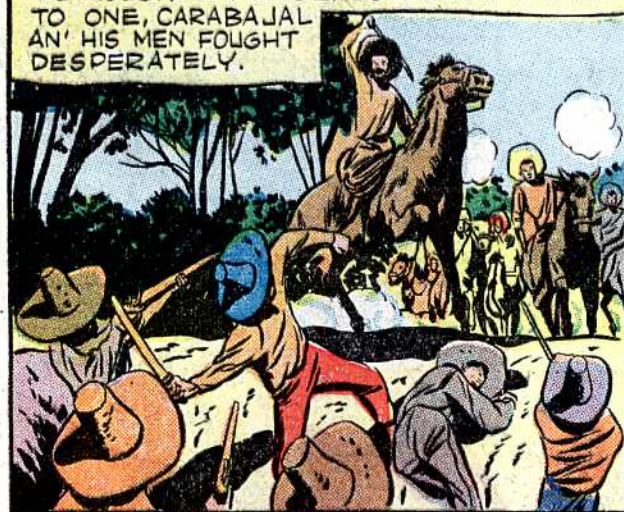
WORK FAST, COMPADRES! IT WILL BE LIGHT IN AN HOUR! THE ATTACK WILL COME THEN, IF IT IS COMING!



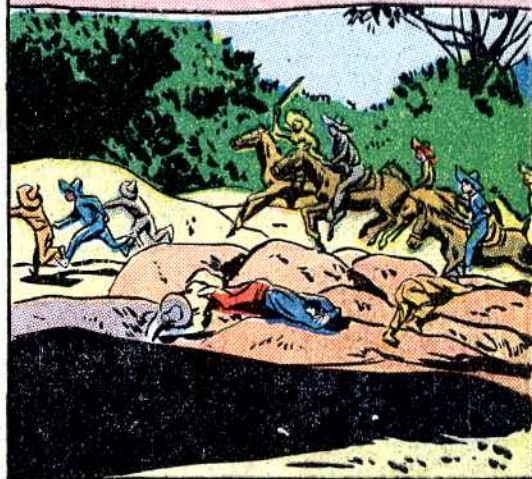
"AT SUNUP TH' OTHER BANDIT GANG ATTACKED!"



"ALTHOUGH OUTNUMBERED MORE'N THREE TO ONE, CARABAJAL AN' HIS MEN FOUGHT DESPERATELY."



"BUT THEY FINALLY HAD TO DUCK INTO THE BRUSH."



"TH' LEADER OF TH' ATTACKIN' GANG WENT AFTER CARABAJAL."



"MAKIN' A QUICK DISMOUNT, HE RAN TO CARABAJAL'S SIDE."

BEFORE I
FINISH YOU,
SEÑOR TELL
ME — AY!
CARABAJAL!
MY BROTHER!!

SI, GASPAR... I
SENT YOU WORD...
I WOULD GET THE
GOLD... BRING
IT BACK TO...
MAIN CAMP...



"WITH HIS DYIN' BREATH CARABAJAL SHARED TH' SECRET OF TH' MONTEMAYOR GOLD."

I DID NOT GET THE WORD! ALAS! WHAT HAVE I DONE?

YOU HAVE KILLED ME... MY BROTHER... BUT YOU SHALL HAVE THE GOLD... IT IS IN THE PEN... BY THE SPRING...



"BUT BEFORE GASPAR AN' HIS MOB COULD GIT TO TH' ROCK PEN..."

LOOK, GASPAR! MANY RIDERS COME THIS WAY!

MONTEMAYOR'S VAQUEROS! RIDE FOR THE RIO GRANDE! WE WILL COME BACK FOR THE GOLD LATER!



"THEY NEVER DID COME BACK, THOUGH, 'CAUSE TH' CASA BLANCA VAQUEROS CAUGHT UP WITH 'EM AFORE THEY REACHED TH' RIVER..."



... AN' WIPED 'EM OUT! 'TWARNT SMART, NEITHER, SEEIN' AS HOW NOBODY WAS LEFT ALIVE WHO KNEW WHERE TH' GOLD WAS HID!



HASNT IT EVER BEEN FOUND, PETE?

NOPE! SHORE WISHT I'D COME ACROST IT! LIFE'D BE JEST ONE BIG PICNIC FER ME'N JUGHAID HERE, FROM THIS MINUTE ON!



STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF August 24, 1912, as amended by the acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 of the Gene Autry Comics published monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1948, State of New York, County of New York, ss:

Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Helen Meyer, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that she is the Business Manager of the Gene Autry Comics and that the following is, to the best of her knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily, weekly, semi-weekly, or triweekly newspaper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 (section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations), printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, George T. Delacorte, Jr., 261 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.; Editor, Helen Meyer, 261 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.; Managing Editor, None; Business Manager, Helen Meyer, 261 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

2. That the owner is: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 261 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.; George T. Delacorte, Jr., 261 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.; Margarita Delacorte, 261 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

(Signed) HELEN MEYER
Business Manager

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 9th day of September, 1948

(SEAL) JEANNETTE SMITH (GREEN)
(My Commission Expires March 30, 1950)



