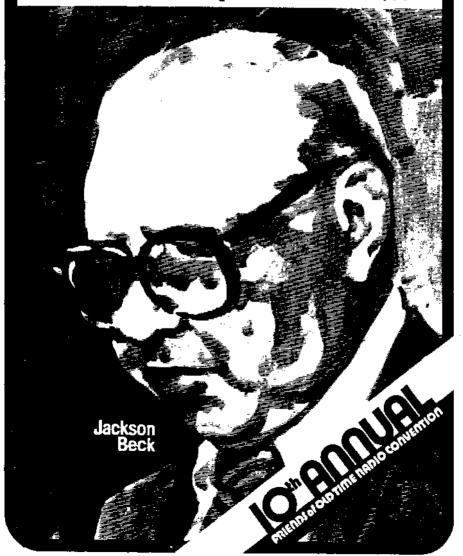
Old Time Radio DIGEST

No. 17

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September · October 1986



Old Time Radio ODIGEST

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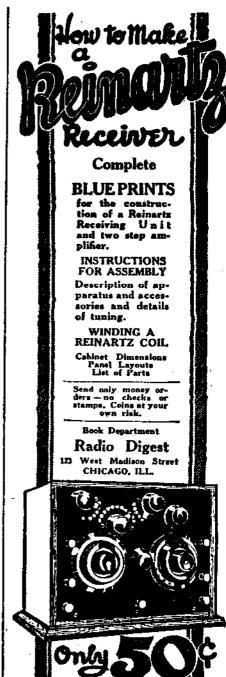
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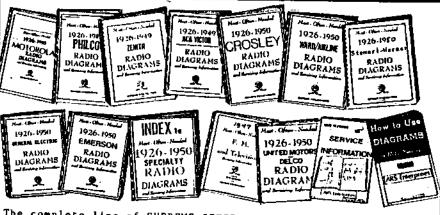
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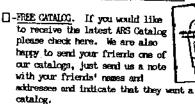


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C-15	.78	.73	.61	71	.66	55	.64	.59	.53	.49	.44	40	.41	39	.37
C-20	.80	.75	.63	.73	.68	.57	66	61	.55	.51	.46	42	.44	41	.39
C-30	.86	.80	.67	.78	.73	.61	70	.65	.59	.55	.50	.45	48	.42	.40
C-40	1.00	.88	.76	91	.80	.69	.73	.68	.63	.58	.53	48	47	.43	.41
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PRIENDS of OLD TIME RADIO CONVENTION

Radio fans recall days of yesteryear by Mark Finston

The Lone Ranger rode again over the weekend.

Followed by his faithful Indian buddy Tonto, the masked rider rode and rode and rode. And the faithful, the lovers of yesteryer radio drama, trotted alongside, dodging silver bullets and oblivious to danger as they peppered the experts with questions.

A group called the Friends of Old Time Radio drew 400 people to its 10th annual convention held at the Holiday Inn North near Neward International Airport. They swapped facts about the Shadow (Orson Welles played the part in 1937,) and tingled over tales of "Suspense" and drew strangth from the exploits of Superman and generally grieved over the absence of radio drama today.

"But that's why we have tpes," mused co-chairman Anthony Tollin of Fairfield, a comic book color artist. "One man here has 30,000 hours of old radio tapes."

In any discussion of radio drama, aptly called the Theater ofthe Imagination, the Lone Ranger rides high. The masked man first saddled up on a rather unique radio station in Detroit called WXYZ, the station which also introduced the Green Hornet and Sergeant Preston of the Yukon. From WXYZ, these shows were broadcast across the country on radio networks.

"Part of the beuty of radio drama," said Tollin, "was that any local station could put it on. Local TV stations aren't capable of doing that."

Still, WXYZ occupies a place in the heart of radio drama buffs comparable to the Model T for auto historians, the Twentieth Century Limited to rail fans. Such well-knowns as John Hodiak, Mike Wallace and Danny Thomas got their starts on the outlet.

A sizeable nmber of WXYZ alumni were assembled to discuss the old days and to recreate an actual Lone Ranger broadcast.

Dick Osgood, once a writer and broadcaster on WXYZ, has written a book on the subject. He said the owner of the station, which was losing money, also owned some movie theaters, and noted the theaters always made money, even on lousy westerns.

The owner got in touch with a freelance radio writer named Fran Striker, who did scripts for a program he invented called "Covered Wagon Days." Striker died in 1962, but his son, Fran Striker, Jr., who lives in Runnemede and who is a project manager for a computer company, knows the tales.

"Covered Wagon Days," which premiered in 1930, evolved into the Lone Rager when it was decided a central character was necessary.

"My father used to tell me the writer had to dream up how to make sound effects," recalled Striker. "For example, one of his scripts explained the director should roll a piano stool across the studio floor to make the wagon wheel sound."

Striker asserted the first sound effect of a pistol shot came out of WXYZ.

That sort of information excites radio historians almost as much as the explanation of just where the Ranger's faithful Indian companion Tonto first picked up the affectionate word "Kimosabe," which is spelled in all manner of ways but which came to mean "Good scout."

"It meant actually nothing," said Lee Allman of Mount Laurel, an actress on most of the WXYZ radio shows, perhaps best known for her continuing role as Miss Case, the secretary to the Green Hornet. "It was made up. It was the name of a boy's camp in northern Michigan."

Osgood has a picture of the camp sign in his book. The sign reads "Kee-Mo-Sah-Bee." It was owned by a relative of a

WXYZ official. The name of the camp was later changed to Lone Ranger.

The director of the broadcast recreation was Fred Flowerday, who now owns a recording studio in Detroit. Flowerday started as a WXYZ sound effects man, and later directed the thrice-weekly live program (all radio drama was live in those days) as well as the Green Hornet and Sergeant Preston. (Preston reportedly started when the station owner commanded, "Give me a show in which the hero is a dog.")

Tonto was Rube Weiss, a Detroit commercials announcer now, then a radio actor who played mostly outlaws.

"Radio drama was a great way to become an actor," said Weiss. "He had to start with a cold script, look at it, rehearse it briefly-do it well live."

The announcer-narrator was now, as then, Fred Foy, still a staff announcer with ABC. Foy was also the voice-over



announcer on the 1985 Miss America telecast. So he's doing OK.

"But I miss the creativity, the excitement of radio drama," said Foy, who cannot count the number of times he introduced "the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains . . . Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear . . .")

"There's an immediacy missing in dramatic work now. Radio drama will always be my first love."

Only the Ranger himself never was connected to radio drama. He wsa Lee Alan, a former WXYZ disc jockey and program manager, who now owns a Detroit ad agency. But Alan sounds like the most famous of the Lone Rangers: Brace Beemer, who died in 1965. Beemer was discovered by a sales manager of WXYZ, who heard Beemer reading poetry on a small Indiana radio station.

The conventioneers were permitted to sit in on the rehearsal. The bad guys were identified as Black Mike and Duke Manto. "Them plenty bad," warned Tonto.

"They're outlaws," agreed the Lone Ranger. "They have no chance of opening the gates of the fort."

Little did he know. But he found out soon enough.

"Silver, whoa," said the Ranger to his horse.

"Louder," instructed director Flowerday. "It's a big horse."

Fred Foy: "The Lone Ranger studied the fort through his binoculars."

And so on to the usual happy conclusion, with the Lone Ranger extolling, "Hi-yo, Silver—Away!"

It may be light years away. WXYZ now has a format of talk radio, with those ubiquitous phone call-ins from a few listeners who like to bleat on the air. ("Junk," shrugged Flowerday.) And there was agreement that radio drama, live or otherwise, will probably never be revived.

"I don't think advertisers would risk the money necessary to bring it back," said Fred Foy.

"There's nothing to replace it," said

JOHN WALLACE

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Rube Weiss. "It was an opportunity for the mind to work, for the listener's imagination to be an active participant. I think there has been a loss in our society. Children now have to see visual images to create anything in their minds."

Fred Flowerday: "It was a great medium—all that imagination coming into play. I really think people these days are less imaginative than they used to be."

Maybe he's right. The entire rehearsal was recorded so that radio drama nostalgists would have a permanent record of the latest Lone Ranger adventure. It was recorded on videotape.



Fran Striker, Jr.



Ernie Winstanley, original Dan Reid on Lone Ranger



Fred Foy, Announcer, Lone Ranger









Ken Piletic, videotapes convention





Gary Kramer



Scale model of the Jot'em Down Store by Don (not famous) Claton







Anthony Tollin



Slu Weiss









Jay Hickerson and what's her name







Mr. & Mrs. Tom Solome



Miriam Wolfe, Alice Reinheart









The Old Time Radio Workshop gives convention visitors, collectors, and regular people a chance to see how it feels to be behind the mike starring in a radio show. For those who get the chance, it's definitely a highlight of their convention. They have no trouble believing the old radio stars when they all say how much fun it was being a part of radio. The listening of "their" show cements a bond between them

that will last for conventions to come.

This year's story was a re-creation of a Tom Mix show, "Secret Mission". The program was directed by Rich Mancini, who also played the houseboy. Tom Mix was played by Dave Zwengler; Dave Warren, Mike Shaw; Lora Palmer, Drusilla Drake; Joe Webb, Mr. Moonlight; Jim Snyder, K-12; and Bob Burchett was the Announcer.









Bob Burchett



Dave Warren,

Lora Palmer,

Dave Zwengler



Rich Mancini,



Joe Webb,



This program was done as part of a Tom Mix Workshop. It was not the only actors workshop done last year. The second one was a "Little Orphan Annie" story directed by Ron Lackmann.



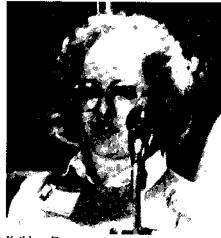
Ron Lackmann



Dave Davies



Don Dean



Kathleen Dean



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Humphrey Davis, Frank Nelson, Evie Jester, Jackson Beck, Sidney Slon

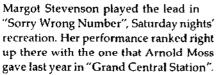


Evie Jester



William N. Robson, Director of Suspense







Arthur Anderson



Liz Weiss



Humphey Davis









Sidney Slon writer/actor "The Shadow"



Terry Ross, sound effects artist



Miss Convention of 1985



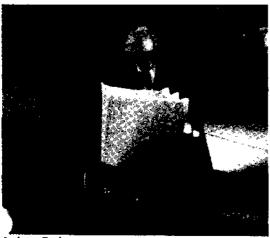
Lucille Fletcher Wallop, Author



George Ansbro



Frank Nelson, "Jack Benny Show"



Jackson Beck





Shadow radio cast reunion

by Anthony Tollin

John Archer, the popular film star who portrayed The Shadow on the MBS radio series, will be reunited with other veterans of The Shadow radio cast at the SPERDVAC Radio Heroes Convention being held November 7, 8 and 9 at the Viscount Hotel near Los Angeles International Airport. Archer will be joined by Lesley Woods (Margot Lane), Dwight Weist (Commissioner Weston), Les Tremaine, Alice Frost, Bill Zuckert, Amzie Strickland, and announcer Andre Baruch.

As Ralph Bowman, Archer made his motion picture debut in "Flaming Frontier," a Johnny Mack Brown serial, and also appeared withRalph Byrd in "Dick Tracy Returns." In 1938, he won a movie contract and a new name on Jesse Lasky's "Gateway to Hollywood" radio series. Archer co-starred with Anne Shirley and "Gateway" winner Alice Eden in "Career" for RKO, and appeared in such films as "Crash Dive," "Guadacanal Diary," and "Sherlock Holmes in Washington" (with Basil Rathbone) before moving to New York in 1943.

John Archer was cast as The Shadow in 1944, selected from hundreds of actors to inherit the famous role that had previously been portrayed by Orson Welles, Bill Johnstone and Bret Morrison. Archer debuted as Lamont Cranston on September 24, 1944 ("The Emerald Goddess") and portrayed the famous crimefighter in thirty episodes, fifteen of which were written by noted science fiction author Alfred Bester. He also made frequent guest appearances as The Shadow on Ken Roberts "Quick as a Flash" program. Archer's last Shadow broadcast, "The Case of the River of

Eternal Woe," was aired over the Mutual Network on April 15, 1945.

After four years in New York, John Archer returned to Hollywood and resumed his film career, hunting down James Cagney in the classic gangster film "White Heat" and leading the first manned lunar mission in "Destination Moon" (1950). The latter film changed his opinions about the possibility of space travel. "The rocket scientists working as consultants were absolutely certain that everything portrayed in the film could happen and they convinced me that eventually we would make it to the moon." In addition to his numerous film roles, Archer has appeared in hundreds of televsision episodes. He played a recurring role on "Lassie" and is frequently seen on reruns of such famous shows as "Perry Mason," "Maverick," "Batman," "Twilight Zone" and "Columbo."

The 1986 SPERDVAC Convention will also feature a panel discussion on space heroes featuring Frankie Thomas ("Tom Corbett, Space Cadet) and John Larch ("Captain Starr of Space"), a luncheon salute to WXYZ with Lone Ranger announcer Fred Foy, Ernie Winstanley and Casey Kasem, and a recreation of "This is Your FBI," directed by series creator Jerry Devine and featuring members of the original radio cast.

For further information, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to SPERDVAC Convention, Box 1163, Whittier CA 90604 or phone (213) 947-9800.

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by Gerald Volgenau Knight News Service

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"Get a real deed to one square inch of land in the Yukon gold rush country." And, "You'll actually own one square inch of Yukon land."

It was easy.

All you had to do was nag Mom until she bought a box of Quaker Puffed Wheat or Quaker Puffed Rice, "the cereal shot from guns." A box of Muffets Shredded Wheat also would do.

Official indeed

Inside each box was a very official-looking "Deed of Land" from the Klondike Big Inch Land Co., Inc. with scroll work around the edges and lots of official words like "whereof" and "covenant."

Then you just signed your name on the line.

Instantly you became "the 'Grantee,' of the second part," owner of your very own numbered tract of Yukon land "comprising by ad measurement one square inch, more or less."

Kids' imaginations soared. They didn't

want just one square inch. They wanted three, four, 10. Every neighborhood had a budding land baron who bought and traded until he had scores of inches, perhaps hundreds.

Prodded by these suddenly land-hungry kids, Moms bought puffed cereal almost faster than the guns could shoot it. Shelves emptied each day. In a matter of weeks, Quaker Oats had distributed 21 million deeds for these miniscule land plots.

"Keep this authentic Deed in a safe place!" read the instructions. And people did — and still do — keep them tucked into school yearbooks, locked them in safety deposit boxes, stored away with insurance policies and wills.

Over the years, grantees of the second part have raised questions about the Big Inch land. Was there ever any land? Did I actually own it? Do I own it now? And is it worth anything?

In brief, the answers are: Yes; sort of; no, and yes, but only in a romantic sense.

Ad man cleans up

The story goes back to 1954, when the late chicago adman Bruce Baker, of the firm Wherry, Baker and Tilden, came up with the idea while sitting in his bathtub.

He needed a gimmick to compete with other cereal come-ons such as whistles, decoder rings, buttons and plastic airplanes.

At first, Quaker Oats hated the idea. The company lawyers thought it would be impossible to register the deeds to millions of itty-bitty lots.

But Baker worked it out. He contacted a Whitehorse lawyer, George Van Roggen, who determined that the deeds would not have to be individually registered. In late 1954, Baker and others took a boat three miles upstream from Dawson City to see a 19.11 acre plot of land, officially designated as Lot 243, Group 2 (now known as Group 1052, according to the Yukon's Register of Land Titles).

The Big Inch Land Co., Inc. was formed, and it paid \$1,000 for this future home of juvenile dreams. The parcel had 640 feet of riverfront and was 1,301 feet deep.

In case you drop by, the lot sits just upstream from Sunnydale Slough, a trough behind three islands that's only navigable during spring's high waters. Viewed from a passing canoe, it looks much like the surrounding land.

The 1950s are long gone, but the myth of the mighty inch lives on.

Aging children continue to write to Quaker Co., and the Land Titles Office in Whitehorse can dredge up four fat file folders overflowing with queries about the square inch of the Yukon.

The letters, which come from all over American and even Europe, cover a wide range of types:

- General inquiries: "I have found in my papers what appears to be a deed to an infinitesimally small parcel of land... Would (you) inform me if it has any value?"
- The law-abiding: "I have not received a tax notice and would like to know if I owe any back taxes. If so, how much?"
- Priggish lawyers: "Please be advised that I represent a deceased among whose papers we found four deeds of land."
- The hopeful: "I have five deeds of land papers. I am wondering what I can do with them? Could I rent them? I sure can use some money if there is any coming."

Two men from Cedar Rapids declared in a letter to the territorial commissioner that their four square inches were henceforth "free and independent from the Yukon Territory," and shall be referred to as the Republic of Xanadu.

And a boy sent a piece of string and four toothpicks to Quaker Co., asking them to fence in his land.

For some years now, the Yukon Register of Land Titles has sent out a form





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letter that essentially says the deeds are worthless. The Klondike Big Inch Land Co., Inc. was dissolved on Jan. 22, 1965, and the land reverted back to the Canadian government for non-payment of taxes totaling \$37.20.

But if you actually still have a deed, don't despair. Apparently some dealers in nostalgia have offered as much as \$40 for that worthless piece of paper.

Sgt. Preston (Richard Simmons) and Yukon King were stars of "Sergeant Preston of the Yukon" in the '50s. The show inspired the greatest cereal promotion in history.

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Private Eyes for Public Ears

by Jim Maclise

During a ten year stretch from 1946 to 1956, Jack Webb appeared in five different crime series. Three of them ran simultaneously during 1949 when he was Pat Novak for Hire, Jeff Regan Investigator, and Joe Friday in Dragnet's first season (and which Webb was still playing on television in the Madero, but the Novak fans in San Francisco, where Webb created the role in 1946 for KGO, demanded the return of the real thing. They had their way when ABC picked up the Novak series and restored Webb to the part for a single, but memorable, 1949 season. Finally, in 1951, he portrayed the title character in the excellent Pete Kelly's Blues, a New Orleans jazz-crime oriented drama with superb musicians. From then on it was mostly Dragnet for Webb and on to television.

But the five shows mentioned could all be depended upon to feature Webb's low-key sardonic quips, delivered in that exquisitely flat monotone, and, excepting for the realistic police routine plots of Dragnet, one could expect Pat, Johnny, Jeff, or Pete to be soundly beaten by thugs, angry husbands or boyfriends, or by cops at least once weekly. Sultry women who "sauntered slowly from side to side like a hundred and eighteen pounds of warm smoke" and had voices "like warm stew" or "like a furnace full of marshmallows" were standard fare. And of course there was murder. But the best of the hard-boiled, overblown similes, the most savage beatings, and the hottest women and coldest corpses belonged to Pat Novak for Hire.

"One of radio's most unusual programs" was ABC's opening announcement during the show's one and only perfectly cast and expertly produced (by the great

William Rousseau) 1949 run. A brief orchestral fanfare preceded the sounds of a lone foghorn, answering tugboat horns followed, then the lapping of bay water against pilings and footsteps along the wharf. "Sure, I'm Pat Novak," begins Webb's weekly monologue, "for hire." After the jazz theme surges up, the flat voice continues: "If you're trying to make a living down on the waterfront in San Francisco, you've gotta run things like a smorgasboard. You take a little of everything you can lay your hands on. Even then it's a bumpy ride because down here everybody tries to pad his part. Oh, I rent boats and do anything else good men pay bad men to do. You don't get many gold stars that way, but you pay the bar bill, and it's about as safe as a closet full of tigers. The only way you can make friends down on the waterfront is to die. I found that out Tuesday night."

Typically Pat's new adventure will arrive in the form of one of those 118 pounds of warm smoke which "walked with the nice easy swing of a satisfied leopard" with "pretty good spots." In a voice like torched butane, she'd advise him to "Relax, Patsy," which was exactly what she planed to play him for. In the Dixie Gillion story Pat is approached by the lady and agrees to threaten a man with an unloaded gun, which she supplies. He does the job, but there's an argument and a scuffle and a gun goes off and Dixie is a fresh corpse. Soon Inspector Hellman of San Francisco's finest (perfectly played by Raymond Burr in his pre-Perry Mason days) is making life unsmooth for Novak, even though the ballistics expert claims that "if he fired the bullet out of that gun, he retooled it in midair." Nevertheless the listener can

depend on Hellman to gear up the pressure, perhaps slap Novak around a bit, then force him to solve the case for the police in order to save his hide from the hangman.

Sometime during each show Pat will visit "the only honest guy I know, an exdoctor and a boozer by the name of Jocko Madigan" (English actor Tudor Owen) - "a good man until he began to figure that the last drink in the bottle was just as easy to get at as the first." Pat will ask a favor of Jocko which requires some research and legwork, and locko will fire off a few choice insults in his boozy Shakespearean English, but the favor will get done. Eventually Pat will extract himself from the weekly tangled webb (a pun) and make Hellman look such a fool that the inspector will champ at the bit waiting to rough Patsy up again next week. And when the exhausted, much-harried Novak finally returns to his apartment for some much required sleep, he'll probably encounter the same sexy lady who got him into the mess, waiting with a drink and offering a

backrub. (That's if she hasn't herself become one of the caper's accumulating corpses.)

The earliest ABC show dates from February 19, 1949, titled "The Thousand Dollar Deposit." It opens with Novak being informed by a pretty pansyish bank teller that he has an extra grand in what he expected to be an overdrawn account. ("They were beginning to play handball with my checks.") When he arrives home, there's a second surprise: "When I came in, she was sitting on the couch drinking my whiskey. The 1949 panther model, just the right amount of size 12 in a dress that looked like a well-tailored fig leaf." She's Connie Riley, who thinks Pat knows more than he should about a jackof-clubs carried by a passenger aboard the Monterey Rose, which has just docked in San Francisco. But as she's trying to seduce information (which he doesn't have) from Novak, Inspector Hellman abruptly arrives, and she leaves in a hurry. Hellman seems to know all about the deposit and the ship's arrival and accuses Novak of being an

MORTIMER AND CHARLIE

WHERE'S MORTIMER?



accomplice in a government microfilm theft by one Max Coleman. And when Hellman steps out to the kitchen to pour himself a drink, he notices the broom closet. "What do you keep in here, Novak?" "Mops and brooms," retorts Pat. "Where'd ya buy this one, smart man?" snarls Hellman as a body flops out onto the linoleum. "I could tell right away it wasn't a mop," observes Pat.

Although the mystery solutions on Pat Novak for Hire are frequently ridiculous and trite, it doesn't matter. What does is Jack Webb, Raymond Burr, and the sort of hardboiler dialogue that not many write this well anymore. (It's mostly by Richard Breen.) And anyway, even though each week brings another corpse for Pat to explain, he makes no claims to be a great detective. "I rent boats. It works out all right, if your mother doesn't mind your coming home for Easter in a box."

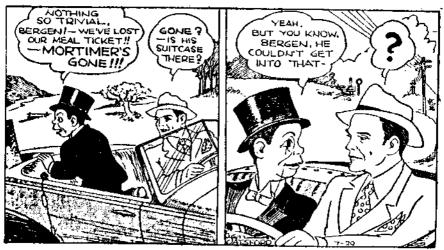
Note: If you've already got the dozen or so Novak shows and are looking for more of Jack Webb in a similar vein, Jeff Regan, investigator features Webb as less of a smartmouth and more of a strongman (neither of which is an improvement on his Novak creation). "The Prodigal Daughter" and "The Lonesome Lady" are two July 1948 shows worth hearing. Little of Johnny Madero seems to be available, but the show is too similar to Novak to even require description. One of its weekly characters, the priest Father Leahy, plays a key role in the April 2, 1949 show "Joe Feldman" on Pat Novak for Hire.

Next time: a look at the distaff side of private eyes with Meet Miss Sherlock and Candy Matson, YUkon 2-8209.



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By EDGAR BERGEN



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