



CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT



by Jimmy Thornton

The year was 1918. The place -- a darkened room, housing the headquarter's of the Air Corps Command of the AEF, in war-torn France. As the General-in-Command paced up and down with a desperate, worried, expression emblazioned upon his tired face, young Major Barry Steele broke the tense silence with a simple, sincere request......

"Please sir, may I tell you the name of the man whom we have sent on this mission?"

"NO," shouted the General. And then, in a quieter tone of voice he added......"No, Major Steele, thank's just the same. But I'd rather not know the name of the man -- who I may have just sent to his death."

Yes, this was a secret mission being carried out by a very brave -- and a very rare type of fighting man. The German secret agent, Ivan Shark, had within his possession, stolen battle plans that could turn the whole tide of the great World War. Acting



under the direct command of the General, young Major Steele had commissioned valiant Captain Albright to remedy the situation. But, what made the mission both suicidal and impossible was this... not only did the courageous captain have to capture the evil Ivan Shark and get back the stolen paper's—but he had to accomplish all this before twelve midnight... or the whole tide of the war would be forever lost for the Allied cause. With deep contempt for personal fear and a strong sense of predestined duty... loyal Captain Albright accepted the dangerous commission. Coming to attention with a sharp salute, he quickly climbed into his World War One flying Spad — and flew off into the jaw's of death.

Now, it was victory or defeat for the defender's of Democracy. Upon the success or failure of this one super-human feat -- depended the future of the Allies... and freedom. Slowly the minute hand of the wall-clock edged it's way towards twelve, as precious time ticked away. Three minutes to midnight. Major Steele and his commanding General sat in the icey silence of the darkened command post, praying, as the sweat slowly ran down their faces. Two minutes to midnight. The very atmosphere was charged with the tenseness of high powered fear and hope mixed together in a chaotic swerl of emotion. One minute to midnight. Suddenly -- the commanding General exclaimed:

"I knew it was impossible. No mere mortal human being could do -- w-what he's expected to do. All is lost. He...he....." The General almost started to weep.

"I know exactly how you feel sir," said young Major Steele, as he laid a comforting hand on the old man's shoulder. But, because hope still burns eternal in the hearts of the very young, Major Steele still waited -- and listened.

"Fifteen seconds before twelve... look's like we've lost the ball game..." sighed the General, as he stared down at his clinched hands with a bowed head and damp eyes. "It was just too much to ask of one man."

"Listen, do you hear it?" shouted the Major, as he lept to his feet.

"Yes, it's a plane!" exclaimed the General. "He's done it, by Heaven. We're saved."

With both a satisfied smile and a deep sigh of relief, Major Steele remarked..... "...and it's just twelve o'clock." "Yes, twelve o'clock." replied the grateful General.
"Major Steele, I don't know who that man really is,
but to me, he will always be... CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT."

As Major Steele and the General rushed out into the trenches of No-Man's land, the good Captain gunned his engine three times and sent his spad through a Victory Loop into the wild blue yonder, with his white silken scarf waving in the wind.

This first episode portrayed the origin of CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT and was the beginning of the wellremembered, long run series. It first came roaring over the airwave's of the nation on September 30, 1940, and was sponsored by the Wander Company; who were the makers of Ovaltine. It started out as a local program, but finally ended up as a regular nation-wide action drama after 1940. This exciting 15-minute-aday serial series was the brainchild of the famous writers of aviation adventure...Robert M. Burtt and Wilfred G. Moore. These talented gentlemen also gave us other flying heroes of the air-waves, such as HOP HARRIGAN, SKY KING and THE AIR ADVEN-TURES of JIMMIE ALLEN. But since first impressions are always the most lasting - it was Captain Midnight who became the real flying star of golden age radio and finally outshone all the rest. Even Cap's human creators couldn't improove upon perfection.

It wasn't long before the publishing companies realized that they had a real solid gold mine on their hands, in the way of future book sales. During the early forties, the Whitman Co. published two Big-Little-Books, and one hard cover novel written by Russ Winterbotham. They had such titles as - "CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT and the SECRET SQUADRON, "CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT vs. The TERROR of the ORIENT" and "JOYCE of the SECRET SQUADRON." Many of the colorful covers on these books were painted by the talented cartoonist/illustrator Mac Raboy, who also gave us such well-remembered greats as...CAPTAIN MARVEL Jr., FLASH GORDON etc., etc. - plus the comic book version of CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT. The dark ace of the airways first made his comic book debut around 1941, in The Funnies. Later on, Fawcett Publications bought it up and on its first cover, showed CAPTAIN MARVEL welcoming CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT as a new member of 'the family.' Yes, pictures are always worth a thousand words, and since it's the only kind o' lingo a kid really digs – this colorful honey really attracted the pre-teen flys to the roaring, soaring adventures of CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT.



And speaking of pictures, let us not forget Cap's contribution to the art of motion pictures. In 1942, Columbia Pictures placed Dave O'Brien in the starring role of CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT; which was also the movie serial's title. -And for once, the 'big brain's' of hollywood finally did something right. I'm referring to their acting choice in the starring role. Dave O'Brien truly looked and acted like CAPTAIN MID-NIGHT — black boots, jodpur's, dark leather jacket and flying helmet, midnight clock emblem and all. What a thrill for the kids. -Now they could not only hear him on the radio,... but see him in the living flesh on the silver screen. And like Cap', the rest of the well chosen actors in this exciting movie serial were very faithful to the old radio series.

But, as I said, first impressions are always the most lasting; and it is the radio adventures of CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT that sticks in ones nostalgic craw. A more colorful crew o' characters you couldn't hope to find. CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT was portrayed on the radio by Ed Prentiss. (Ed has also starred on T.V.'s DRAGNET, as the middle-aged Captain of the Los Angeles Police Department. -He also played in T.V. shows such as THE INVADERS etc. etc.) Cap's young assistant, Chuck Ramsey, was played by talented JACK BIVENS. (During World War II, Jack enlisted in the U.S. Air Force - naturally - and it has been reported that he was one of the air crew that dropped the atomic bomb on the Jap's at Hiroshima. -When it came to carrying the air wave home to the axis powers... apparantly Jack really believed in living the part to the hilt. Good hunting, boy.) Ichabod Mudd, the brilliant inventor, was portrayed by veteranactor Shermen Marks. Boris Aplon was the actor who played Ivan Shark – and was really a pretty nice guy in real life. CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT'S teenage female companion was played on the radio by



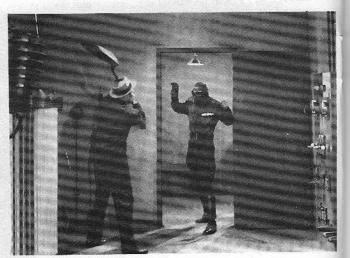


Angeline Orr, Marilou Neumayer and Beverly Younger. (Yes, all three actresses played young Joyce Ryan. – And dig this,... Miss Neumayer was a licensed pilot in real life; just like on the show.) Of times on the show, the same girl who played Miss Ryan would also double as the evil Ivan Shark's blood-thirsty daughter, Fury Shark. (All she had to do was change her tone of voice.) – In the fifteen chapter movie serial, the parts of Cap', Chuck, Ikky n' Joyce were played by Dave O'Brien, James Craven, Dorothy Short and Bryant Washburn.

Television, the ungrateful offspring of radio, has been many times accused of 'borrowing' names, plots and concepts from its parent's body. For instance, take the T.V. series "The Courtship Of Eddies Father." On this show, Eddie's father is named Tom Corbett. That name alone automatically rings a familiar bell to a lot of old radio fans... because its the identical name of the star of the science fiction radio show -"TOM CORBETT, SPACE CADET." Well, if copying is the greatest form of flattery... then the creators of the CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT radio show must be doing unashamed handsprings over T.V.'s 'creative' efforts. On STAR TREK (the T.V. descendent of SPACE CADET), there appeared, quite a few times, a brilliant outerspace scientist named - ICHABOD MUDD. (Shades of boldfaced plagiarism.) During the early 1950's,

THE GREAT RADIO SHOWS

television began to show old movie serials on the boob tube;... and the announcer introduced himself as -CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT. (What made it even worse, he didn't even show the CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT movie serial starring Dave O'Brien.) Creativity went out with a whimper and proud roar, when they finally got around to filming a CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT series for television. The name was there - and that was all, when it came to keeping a once proud name alive. What was a whimpering shame was that Jack Webb, who was starred in the role, looked more like the ancestor of James Bond (007), than the once mighty CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT. He exchanged his plane for a solid white Cadillac, traded in his flying tog's for a Lord & Taylor outfit and did all of his wrestling in the nearest bedroom. The new scriptwriters of this show (no doubt, fresh out of writing school), realized their dumb flub, and tried to 'dress up' the show but in vain. Giving him a jet plane and a fancy flying outfit and ray gun, the new ace of the airways bore more of a resemblance to CAPTAIN VIDEO (who was himself a direct takeoff of CAPTAIN MID-NIGHT), than to Cap', himself. Later on, when this T.V. series was eventually re-issued as a syndicated burned-offering for the pre-teen set (and why, I'll never know), they had the good sense to at least change the title of the show to - "The Adventures of Jet Jackson." One thing has to be handed to this new school of adventure-peddlers though..... at least they didn't drag the good name of CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT through the T.V. mud a second time. I cannot understand why television never filmed a





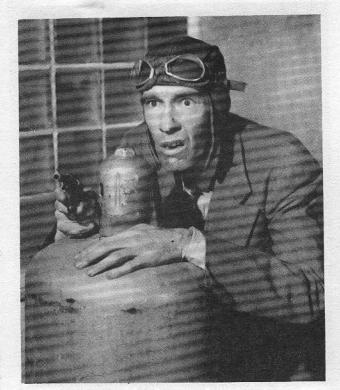
memories that an entire generation holds for the dark ace of the radio air waves.....CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT.

Of course, television wasn't the only one to give birth to out-in-out imitations of CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT. Fore, you see, if radio was like a 'big brother' to all of the pre-teen lovers of super adventure, ... then comic books were the kids adopted 'kid sister.' Soon after CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT had set the original foremat for aviation-oriented adventure, comic books introduced Cap's long-lost, hidden 'relatives' to the Pepsi Generation. These colorful imitations bore such names as - Blackhawk, Spy Smasher, Sky Hawk, Air Boy, Crash Davis, The Black Sheep Squadron, The flying Dutchman, Captain Britain of the R.A.F., The Iron Ace, The Black Angel, Sky Wolf, The Bald Eagle, Captain Spitfire, The Sky Ranger, Syyman, Captin Aero, Flying Cadet, Captain Flight, Wing Turner, Tailspin Tommy, Terry and the Pirates, Steve Canyon, Smilin'Jack, Ace Drummond, The Sky Devils, Bomber Burns, The Grey Comet, Red Hawk, Loop Logan, Strut Simmons, Captain Yank and the Flying Commandos, The War Eagles, Scotty of the Skyways, Wingss Johnson of the Air Patrol, Prop Powers, Sky Sheriff, Ace Archer, The Masked Pilot, Captain Daring and his Sky Sharks, The Flying Fox, Johnny Blair in the Air, The Phantom Flyer, The Phantom Eagle, The Super Ace etc. etc. I could go on and on forever, listing Cap's 'relatives'. But, one fact of history still stands out like a glowing torch in the sky; and it is simply this.... even though his imitators may outnumber the very sands of the desertthere is still only ONE CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT.

cartoon series on the adventures of CAPTAIN MID-NIGHT. It would have certainly been cheaper - (in dollars n' cents) - than their poorly-done live 'action' series. Perhaps, with the recent revival of interest in nostalgia, they will re-introduce the new adventures of the original CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT to a whole new generation. But, if they do..... it will have to be a really outstanding piece of showmanship - if it ever hopes to live up to the







If the radio adventures of CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT were worthy enough to appear in such media as comic books, pulp mags, movie serials, television, long playing records, kid's toys, etc. etc.,... then one all important question remains: what was it about the show and its characters that made it so worthy of emulation – not to mention out-and-out copying??? – Let's examine its foremat a little more closely.

CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT: In reality, he was Captain Albright. In World War I, he was a very brave and valiant fighter pilot of the American Expeditionary Forces of the U.S. Air Corps Command in war-torn France. After his victory over Ivan Shark and the Imperial German secret service, the U.S. government and the allies realized what a valuable secret agent they had on their hands. After World War II Broke out on Sunday, December 7th, 1941, he was recalled to active duty. Amongst the axis agents he fought was his old enemy, ... Ivan Shark, who once again sold his services to Germany; spying for the Nazis. Cap' was the Flight Commander and Leader of the famous Secret Squadron, and his government serial number was SS-I. As leader, only Captain Midnight bore the midnight clock insignia.

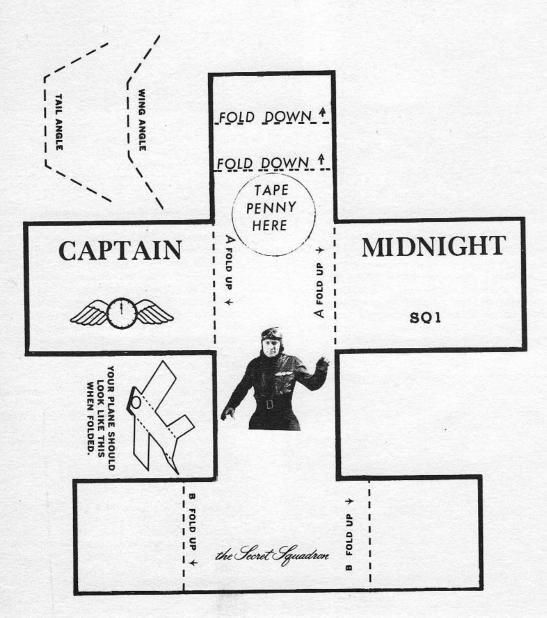




IVAN SHARK: During World War One, he was an agent in the services of imperial Germany. He was supposed to be part Tussian, German and Eur-Asian, and as a spying agent, killer and super saboteur, he could handle anything from an airplane to a 45 automatic with simple ease. Since leopards don't change their spots, Ivan Shark was attracted to Hitler's Nazi Germany like an evil moth to a demonic flame, and continued his all-out war against democratic freedom. "Any organization designed to fight us must be wiped out completely and destroyed, " proclaimed Shark to his perverted followers. Of all his evil ambitions, it appeared that his one lone, sole purpose for existence was to wipe out Captain Midnight, his Secret Squadron and to learn the secret code of Cap's private Code-O-Graph. Helping the goateed, heavily accented Shark was his cheif assistant, ... Fang, who always stood in the shadows, slowly rubbing his hands while all hunched over, and drooling out such mundane lines as - "Yes, Mahster, you're sooooooo right." It appears that Shark and Fang must have been cut from the same bolt of black crepe.



YOUR OWN PLANE



a

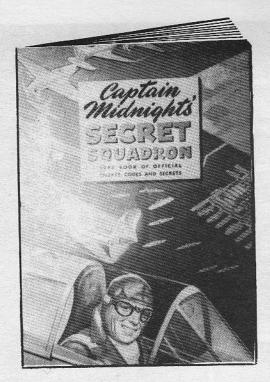
Don't cut dotted fold lines. 1. Cut out airplane on solid black lines

Fold dotted lines A and B as shown in drawing. Use angle guides to measure correct angle of front and tail wings.
 Fold nose flaps under and tape them down.
 Tape penny to nose for weight.





ICHABOD M. MUDD: He was personal and intimate friend of Captain MIDNIGHT, Chuck, Joyce and all of the members of the Secret Squadron. Even though he was affectionately and kiddingly referred to by his inmates as 'Ikky', his official standing in the Secret Squadron was that of SS-4. Mudd was not just a part of Cap's Secret Squadron - fore, as a brilliant inventor and master mechanic, his was the scientific heartbeat that kept this body of gallant freedom fighters alive, vital and forever ready for instant action. It was his talented, inovative genius that presented Cap' with such wayout weapons against world-wide wickedness as... (I.) The special Pocket Locators, which were the silent communication devices used by Cap' and Secret Squadron to contact one another. (2.) The inovative mechanical additions place aboard the solid black planes of Cap's private air force. (3.) But, 'Ikky's' greatest - and most famous scientific gift to the gallant freedom fighters of the Secret Squadron was... The CODE-O-GRAPH badges. These special identification badges, fitted with a secret code finding decoder, made it possible for CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT to send secret messages to members of the Secret Squadron; not to mention all o' the preteen radio listeners at the conclusion of each program. The evil Ivan Shark wanted Cap's CODE-O-GRAPH so 'badly', he was willing to commit acts of murder, arson, robbery, bribery and general acts of pure nastiness in order to obtain this much coveted scientific prize. (But, for all of his scientific genius and evil cunning, ... it never once entered his perverted mind to simply send in 10¢ and an Ovaltine wrapper like any other normal lover of out-of-this-world, super adventure.) And, remember,



the CODE-O-GRAPH and all of the other wonderful inventions were presented to us by Dr. Ichabod M. Mudd (not to mention the premium companies.) -Yes, dear reader, the Lone Ranger had his Tonto and the Green Hornet his Kato,... and CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT,....his Ikky. -And without the scientific assistance of Ichabod M. Mudd, good ole' Cap would have been up a technilogical mudcreak without the proverbial paddle.





CHUCK RAMSEY & JOYCE RYAN: These two youngsters, although only teenagers, were honorary and official members of the Secret Squadron. They were professional flying pilots on the show (as well as in real life.) Chuck's secret code serial number, as a squadron member was SS-2. He was considered the number 'two' man in the Secret Squadron because he was Captain Midnight's co-pilot. Joyce Ryan was as cute as a teenage Shirley Temple, but was braver than Wonder Woman in the midst of a pitched battle. Her official code number, as a squadron member was SS-3. But, still being kids, they did get into jams that took all of Captain's Midnight's power to get straight. - They sometimes appeared to have the same relationship to CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT, that Lois Lane and Jimmy Olson had to SUPERMAN. The only difference ference was that both Chuck and Joyce knew the secret identity of Captain Midnight.

FURY SHARK: This bitter-sweet little bundle of leering larceny was the devilish daughter of the infamous Ivan Shark. And, just like her deadly daddy, she possessed all of the pleasant outlook on life – plus the jolly good humor... of an enraged rattlesnake with a king-sized toothache. Following in Pop's cloven footsteps, little miss sweetness and light made Lucrecia Borgia look like a refugee from a convent. If she discovered that hope still bloomed eteranl in the heart of the free world, she gleefully helped Papa to sew the seeds of waring dispair. Unlike her sister in supersin, the Dragon Lady, Fury was no raving beauty. – She was just raving – period... and ugly as Hell. (In all of the illustrations done of her, she's always



MAJOR BARRY STEELE: Major Steele was young CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT's commanding officer in the first first WORLD WAR. Like Cap', the Major was recalled to active duty upon the outbreak of the Second World War. He was still with the Army Air Corps,... only now, he was promoted to the rank of Commanding General in charge of undercover operations in the European theatre of active combat. It was he who was directly responsible for the forming of the SECRET SQUADRON and recommending CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT to President Roosevelt as its head flight commander. Major Steele was Cap's direct superior officer in Washington, D.C., and the chief liaisonman to the detached flying service group headed by Captain Midnight.



portrayed as having green, pimply-pocked skin.) And to proove that the female species can be deadlier than the male, when it comes to evil eagerness, dig this scene from the show: Captain Midnight had just been captured by said daddy and daughter, and Fury requested with a hiss... "Let's cut his heart out." Restraining her, Ivan Shark commanded... "Now, my dear, After he has served his purpose, we will feed him to the crocodiles." "Yesssss, that sounds even better, my father, " agreed Fury. So, as you can see, this deadly duo made Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun look like Baby Snooks and father, by comparison. I'm sincerely surprised, that with a.... (heh hehhh) sunny dispositoin like hers, Ivan Shark didn't name her Tiger - and then tell her to go sic um' girl. -But, like all human creatures with evil intentions... they followed the road to power and glory - and it only led to defeat and destruction.

The BARRACUDA: This grinning, buck-toothed son of a yellow-bellied beech comber was not only CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT's nasty nemisis of the airways he was Japan's top secret agent... and a prince of the Imperial Black Dragon Society, to boot. The Devil Prince of the Rising Sun was known to the Allied Powers as "The Flying Fiend of Nippon," and would offtimes send scores of Jap Zero's and deathdiving Kamikazi's out to straff n' wipe out American G.I.'s and helpless civilians. The only ones who had the gut-filled mosky to out-wit the Barracuda in flying dog-fights was CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT and the SECRET SQUADRON. If you studied his mode of operation, very closely, you would slowly begin to realize that the Barracuda graduated from the same school of Oriental-type wickedness as Fu Manchu, Emperor Ming and the Dragon Lady. -And the way that he slowly hisssssed out orders to Colonel Goto and his Jap suicide squade, ... you'd think that he must have









received a blood transfusion from his brother in butchery, Ivan Shark. -The shows cheer-the-hero, hiss-the-villain foremat always ended the same way for this sinister son of Satan. 'If, forinstance, he was preparing to use ancient Oriental torture on Chuck n' Joyce,... at exactly the twelfth hour -you'd hear the BONG-BONG-BONG of the big clock, the roar of an airplane engine, and the kids (yes, the ones in front of the radio as well) would joyfully exclaim - CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT. The Barracuda would then shout... "CursesssssssEs, I've lost, I've lost."

If there was anything more popular with the kids, than the actual CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT show itself, ... it was all o' the really great commercials items connected with the show. These were real blueprints to build a dream on - and the pre-teen set ate um' up quicker than hog jowls at a Robert E. Lee festival. And, unlike the toys of today, they were dirt cheap to obtain. These now coveted collector's items could



be gotten for 10¢ and an Ovaltine wrapper – (eat your hearts out, all o' you avid collectors.) Here, then, is some of the grooviest goodies that you could have bought in ye olde golden days of yore:

The yearly premiums - FREE to any radio listeners who cared to send for um' - were... (I.) A magic whistle ring, (2;) A secret compartment ruby ring, (3.) a Secret Squadron service ribbon, (4.) a Captain Midnight pocket telescope, (5.) a Marine medal of Honor, (6.) ... And a real goody was the official CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT RING, which not only left the imprint of YOUR own personal initial on anything that it touched, but - it also bore your own private identification serial code number... making you an official member of CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT's SECRET SQUADRON.

One's imagination boggles at the very thought of what these collector's items are worth today.

But, The cherry on top of the 1940's bannana split in the way of collector's items, were the CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT CODE-O-GRAPH badges. -And, (drool), they were bought for only 10¢ and an Ovaltine wrapper. What exactly were they like? WellIIII.... they were made out of gold and silver colored metal, to begin with. They were equipped with a movable secret code wheel (with numbers and letters), ... which were the main key to dececiphering the secret messages given daily over the Captain Midnight radio show. (Along with the CODE-O-GRAPHS, you received -FREE OF CHARGE - a brand new, full colored handbook; which explained how to work the badges. The handbook was also loaded with swell color pix - and was personally autographed by the immortal CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT.) (Let's see the cheap-Charley distributors of today just TRY to top a deal like THAT.) The first of the decoder badges were issued in 1940. The badges









had two mirrors.... one mirror was marked 'Master Code' and the other was labeled 'Super Code'. Simply by reversing them, as the radio announcer directed, you could take down Cap's coded messages. In 1942, the badges had an added attraction . . . a free miniature photo of Captain Midnight. Between the war years of 1943 and 1944, metal was so scarce, that no new badges were being sold. -Instead, if you wished, you could receive a Secret Squadron winged-clock identification sew-on patch in red, blue, or gold. The kids were naturally down-hearted by this loss, but Captain Midnight reminded them... "Remember, boys and girls.... for every badge melted down - a Jap or Nazi will receive a bullet, instead. Our guys are out there giving their lives. -HOW MUCH ARE YOU WILLING TO SACRIFICE FOR FREEDOM?" The kids got the message loude n' clear - and they even sent in their own badges to the War Department; in order to







help the war effort. -They sure don't make kids like THAT any more. By 1945, the all metal code-badges were back. And since plastic was a new thing, they were now fitted with a new, shiny red plastic dial.

The final code-badge was made in 1949. It was designed in such a way,... that no one but its proper owner could use it. (Are you listening, lock smiths?) -And, believe it or not, Captain Midnight's CODE-O-GRAPH's were so well designed in function, that it was rumored that the government was secretly using them within the armed forces for military purposes. Yes, sir,... they sure don't make toys like that anymore, either.

Farewell, CAPTAINMIDNIGHT - and all o' you gallent night fighters of the immortal Secret Squadron. You may be gone - but you'll never be completely forgotten by those who still have wings on their hearts. Whenever we hear the roar of an airplane engine amongst the clouds - we'll think of you. So, may you forever rest in peace, in whatever flyer's Valhalla that you now reside. -And until we once again meet in that great secret landing field in the sky, we fondly wish you......

-HAPPY LANNND-INNNNGGS.

From,...
Fighter Pilot, Jimmy Thornton.





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