

Three generations of Linkletters: Jack, 23; Mike, one and a half; and 48-year-old Art, who was recently elected Grandfather of the Year.

Confessions of a Happy Man PART FOUR

Young Linkletter did everything backward. He became an ad-lib artist because he found scripts too risky. And his big break came when he was fired from an important job.

Art in 1939, when he worked with the Golden Gate International Exposition. Fired from this job, he was forced to free-lance, and soon hit the big time.

My Zany Rise to the Top

By ART LINKLETTER
as told to
Dean Jennings

One evening many years ago I passed my son Jack's bedroom and paused for a moment to listen as he said his bedtime prayers. And this is what I heard: "Thank you, God. Amen. Listen in again tomorrow night, same time, same station, for another in this series."

My first impulse was to step into the room, scold him a little and explain that perhaps God *was* tuned into the Linkletter house, but that He was considerably different from a radio audience and should be treated with more dignity. But I didn't. I quietly shut the door and went back downstairs.





Linkletter (third from left) at a meeting of the Diners' Club board of directors. A daring investor, he owns interests in dozens of oil wells and such odd items as Hula Hoops.



Art, squinting against the sun, and his friend Irv Atkins return from a preview of *Christmas in the Holy Land*, a film starring the Linkletter family.

I realized that little Jack was not only imitating me, which was natural, but that since his birth he had heard little else around the house but the jargon and shoptalk of my business. Broadcasting dominated my life, and I had been living it every minute, day and night, since my college days. Jack Linkletter is twenty-three now, has recently made me a grandfather for the second time and, I am proud to say, has created and starred in his own television show. He has learned all that I could teach him—and more—but I suspect he is saying his prayers quite differently now.

As for myself, I have been thankful many times for the happy turn of events that got me started in radio and television.

During my senior year at San Diego State in 1934, I had a part-time job as an announcer at radio station KGB in San Diego and, when graduation time came, I stood at the crossroads—as many another senior has done—and faced the challenge of the future.

Among other offbeat opportunities, I probably could have had a well-paying job as a shill or casino employee in one of the gaudier gambling halls in Agua Caliente, just across

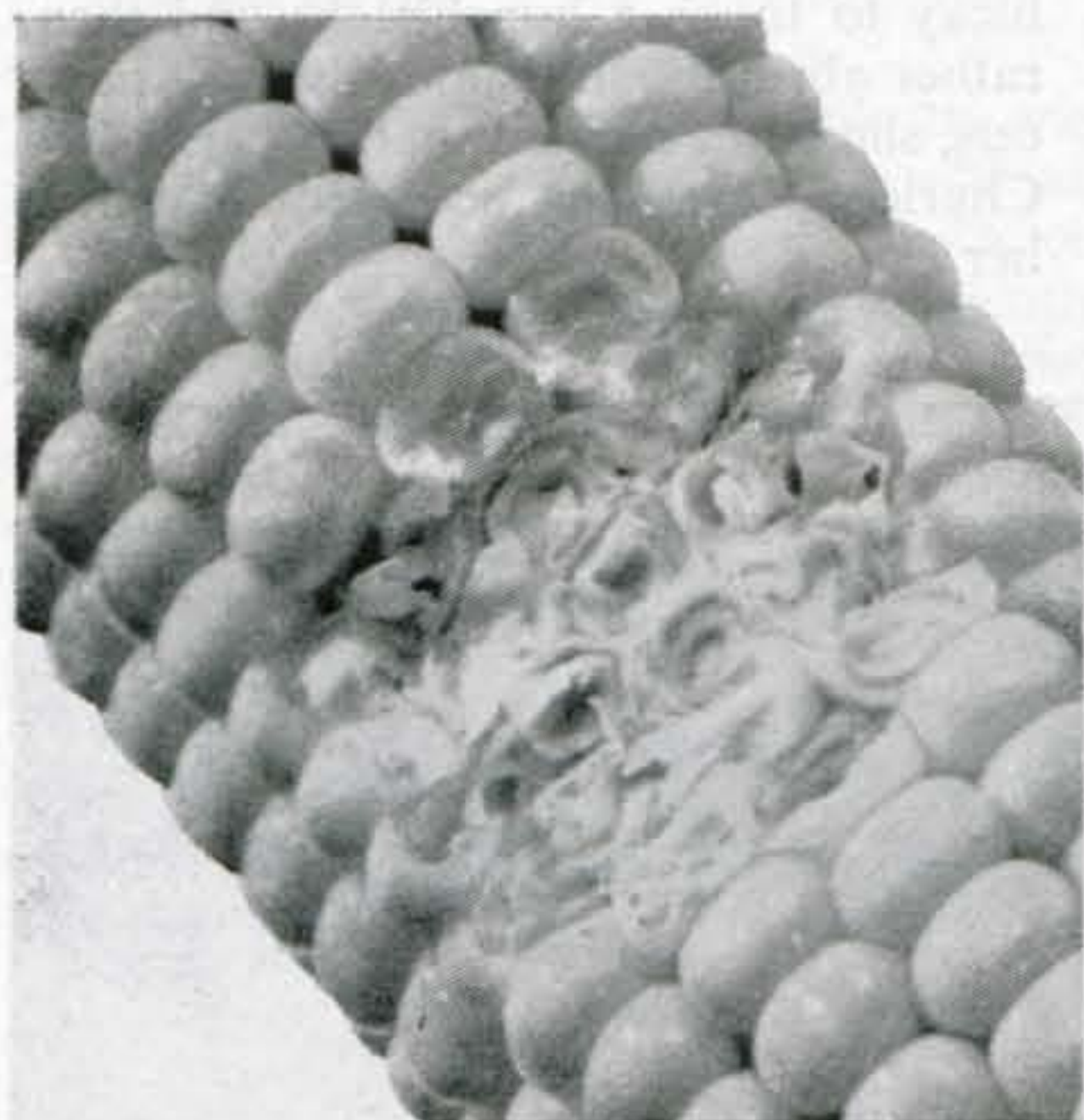
the Mexican border from San Diego. I had been employed many a weekend there, posing as a spendthrift college boy while trying to trap cheating dealers in the casino. Not only was it an exciting adventure but it brought me into close personal contact with some of the great motion-picture stars I had long admired. I found myself—then a mere country boy in this kind of company—chatting and laughing with Margarita Cansino, now better known as Rita Hayworth; Clara Bow, the original “It” girl; the late Jean Harlow, Clark Gable

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Art and Zsa Zsa Gabor clown during rehearsal for *Love Is Funny*, an NBC special slated for October. “I’m a married man,” he said. She replied, “That makes no difference.”



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"Charlotte?" The little old woman spread out Sarolta's dressing gown, arranging it neatly over a chair. "No, sir. She quit last night. She had to go to a hospital, I understand. Is anything wrong?"

"Nothing," said Jed. "Nothing."

He sat down on Sarolta's bed. He knew her so well that it was easy to try to think as she might have thought after she had discovered the backgammon board in June's room. From then on she had known that Kendeffy was in Brussels and must have asked herself why it had been kept from her. And then the secret she was keeping, about Farkas' presence in Brussels and the threat to Jed's life, must have begun to torture her, and she had decided that it was a terrible mistake not to have notified the police. But that had not been enough for her, and she had tried to find him somehow.

Jed's mouth went dry and he called for Miss Bettigole. "Do you remember the name of the maid I asked you to check on with the housekeeper?"

Miss Bettigole's memory was as tidy as her files, which she could turn to at any time and, without searching, lay her hand on the desired object. "Charlotte Goud," she said. "She lives somewhere in the Marolles—her home town, though, was Antwerp."

Jed rose, ran through the room and was almost out of it before June could ask, "Jed! Where are you going? Jed!"

"To the police," he said. "We have to find Charlotte Goud. We have to find her as quickly as possible." And without looking back he slammed the door shut after him.

"What are you doing here?" said Farkas to Charlotte. "I told you never to come unless I called you."

He looked at her angrily. *She's no good, he thought. Anyone who doesn't obey orders is unsuitable, never mind how intelligent she is. In the end no quality is as important as obedience. If they ever begin to think they can act on their own, they have to be eliminated. Anyhow, this one is clumsy.*

He took another look at her and realized, surprised, that his angry look did

not intimidate her. She did not cringe, but met his eyes. "What is it?" he demanded.

Charlotte smiled, but she did not answer. This was her moment, the moment she had been longing for, the moment when she would no longer be a negligible factor in Farkas' eyes, but command his respect.

"The girl," she said.

"What girl?"

Oh, it was a delicious minute. She had not known that triumph could be so sweet. "His wife. You know —"

But Farkas was quicker than she thought. He caught on at once, robbing her of some of the fun. "Mrs. Drake! What about her?"

"She's in my room," said Charlotte. "Well taken care of. She's been there for hours."

But Farkas was in no mood for playing games. Every moment mattered now that he did not know where Kendeffy was. For though he knew that Drake's arrangements for getting Kendeffy back to Hungary had met with difficulties, he could not know what other resources they had at their disposal. Any hour might bring new developments that would enable Kendeffy to leave before Farkas was able to kill him.

"Don't waste my time."

In spite of her high spirits, Charlotte knew Farkas too well to go too far. "She must have suspected me from the start, and today she followed me. I saw her recognize me on the street. She stopped dead. That's when I decided to let her find me. I couldn't take the risk of her having seen me without my hump and telling others, could I?"

It had been this disfigurement that had brought her into his service—or, rather, his promise that he would pay for its removal, if it could be done. But later, after the successful operation, he had decided, much to her disappointment, that she must use it again.

"Didn't I instruct you to wear it outside your room at all times while you were working for me?"

Charlotte had not intended to say anything that might give her away as unreliable. It stunned her for a moment;

then she shrugged. "It wouldn't have mattered. She would never have given up. She was after me. Anyhow, I left the door to the house open to make it easier for her and she fell right into the trap. And there she is. Instead of having the police after me, we've got her."

Farkas' reaction was not what she had expected. Without saying anything, he went and sat down in his chair and closed his eyes.

Even though he had taken for granted that Pista had not betrayed him, it had been a pleasant confirmation of his judgment to find, when he had crept cautiously back to Brussels and to this room, that, as he had expected, he was still undiscovered. But it might not remain that way much longer. Mrs. Jethro Drake could be traced. And he didn't doubt that Drake would move heaven and earth to find her. The question was—when would Drake discover that Sarolta was gone?

One could, of course, let her be found dead somewhere, run over by a car, for instance, and that would stop the police from searching for her and trying to find her through the maid at the Hotel Métropole.

Perhaps that would be best. It would cut down the danger of being discovered. Once she was known to be dead, some of the excitement would fade and give him a better chance to lie low until he could get Kendeffy.

His silence made Charlotte uneasy. Had she done something to displease him after all? "What are you going to do with her?"

Yes, what am I going to do with her? Farkas repeated the question in his mind. Then suddenly he knew. He had not wanted a problem like this on his hands, but there it was. And he had always known how to turn odds that were against him to his advantage.

He looked at his watch—half past five. Then he looked out the window. For his purpose it was dark enough.

"Go home," he told Charlotte, "and pack a few things quickly. Sandor will pick you and the girl up in exactly twenty minutes."

TO BE CONCLUDED

Confessions of a Happy Man (Continued from Page 33)

and many others who went to Agua Caliente for holiday fun.

Gable and I, who are now good friends, were reminiscing one recent day about that period during the early '30's, and he laughingly said, "Ah, those were the wild days." Needless to say, neither of us is wild any more. Gable spends his nights at home on a San Fernando Valley ranch, and I—well, I have five children, and that's enough to tame any man.

There were two other choices for me that summer twenty-six years ago. I had majored in English at college, had always loved working with words and had actually considered a teaching career. The teaching position would have paid me \$120 a month, but KGB offered me a job as an announcer at \$125, and that did it.

The job would be permanent—or as permanent as anything was in that post-depression period—and the extra five dollars, stretched a little, might pay the gas bill if two people were cooking meals instead of one. And this is exactly what I had in mind for Miss Lois Foerster, a blue-eyed San Diego beauty who was very dazzling indeed, even with the bangs on her forehead, and I had already decided they could easily be snipped off.

We were married in San Diego on Thanksgiving Day in 1935. We took a small apartment not too far from the radio station and we had been there only a week when she started moving the furniture around. And among other things there was a floor lamp which, to fit her arrangement, needed a longer cord.

"Darling," she asked sweetly, "can you make this cord longer?"

She knew very well how to fix it herself, but I was the man of the house, of course, and she was letting me nurse the illusion that women are sort of helpless about these things. So I took our only kitchen paring knife, cut and scraped wires, taped them all together—the knife was never any good after that—and plugged the cord into the outlet. There was a flash of blue light and a puff of smoke—the kind that the magicians use to make a pretty girl disappear on stage. Lois vanished too—I think she went down the back stairs—and all the fuses were blown. Lois never asked me to repair anything thereafter, and I have sadly concluded that I am not the home fix-it-yourself type.

Years later I was invited to emcee the presentation of television Emmy awards at the Statler Hotel in Los Angeles. I was

in the center of a vast stage, the orchestra was in the pit, and wandering around among the soaring pillars of a Grecian setting were \$10,000,000 worth of movie and television stars. It was a proud moment for me, with 40,000,000 viewers waiting by their television sets, and my heart pounded as the network announcer said, "We now take you to Art Linkletter at the Statler Hotel."

The curtain slowly opened, and at that instant the main stage lights blew out. An unidentified stagehand, rushing to the fuse box, knocked over one of the fake Greek pillars, and it toppled into the pit. The first violinist was hit on his E string and the tuba player blew a C sharp, which was not the cue note at all. I don't remember what I said, but Lois, standing in the wings, turned to Walt Disney and whispered something that has probably puzzled him ever since. "Well," she said, "I see Old Fix-it did it again."

Later I wished I had said something of the sort myself, because such awkward situations are often the breeding ground of high-flying ad libs.

I am generally considered to be an ad-lib man. That is, I usually work without a typed script. Over the years, in countless newspaper (Continued on Page 108)