

# HI-YO, SILVER!

By J. BRYAN, III

TIME, an afternoon this past summer. Place, a suburb of Detroit. Scene, a drugstore crowded with thirsty children.

A young man found a table and ordered, "A chocolate soda, please."

The waitress stared at him, then whispered, "If I give you extra-good service, will you give me your autograph?"

"Me?" he asked. "Who do you think I am?"

She whispered again, "You wouldn't want me to say with all these kids here, would you?"

The young man had shot his way through an ambush of desperadoes only the night before. Time and

again he had bearded murderers in their lairs and haled them to justice. He could not remember how often a mere glance of his eye had cowed a swaggering bully.

But kids were different. You can't cow a

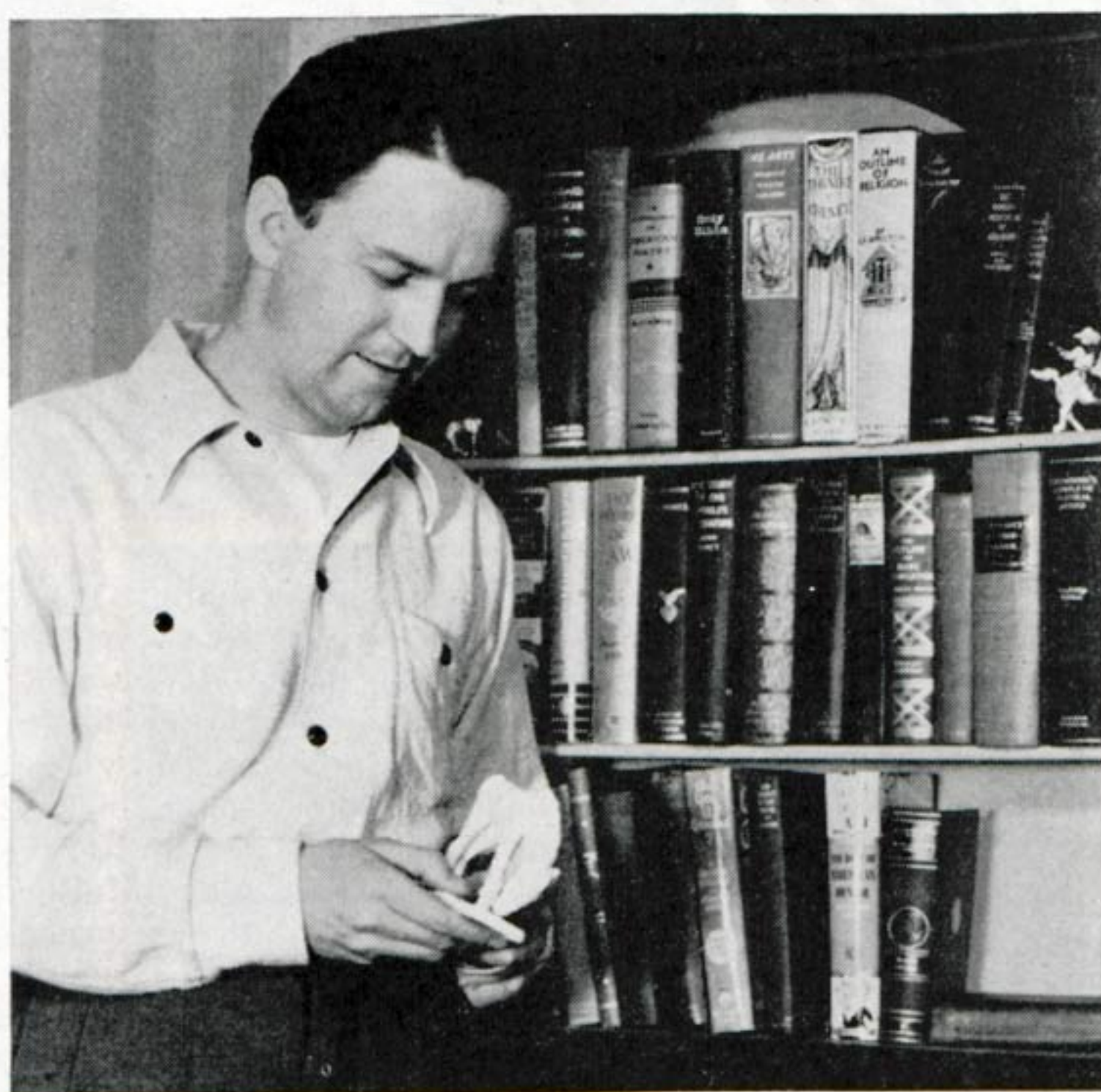


Fran Striker, who writes the Lone Ranger scripts, taps 60,000 words a week.

swarm of hornets. He knew that a word, a hint even, could turn the store into a shambles. Screening a paper napkin with his hand, he wrote on it: "Faithfully yours, THE LONE RANGER."

The waitress had recognized his voice, of course. It is the most famous voice in America. Some 20,000,000 people hang upon it every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, when it echoes from 140 stations—the greatest number carrying a single program in the history of radio. But only a few dozen people—his family and his home studio, WXYZ, Detroit—can couple his voice with his face. The ear's memory is so short and treacherous that he has not been challenged ten times in his career and, except in such emergencies as that afternoon's, he has always been able to sidestep with "Me the Lone Ranger? Why, nobody knows who he is!"

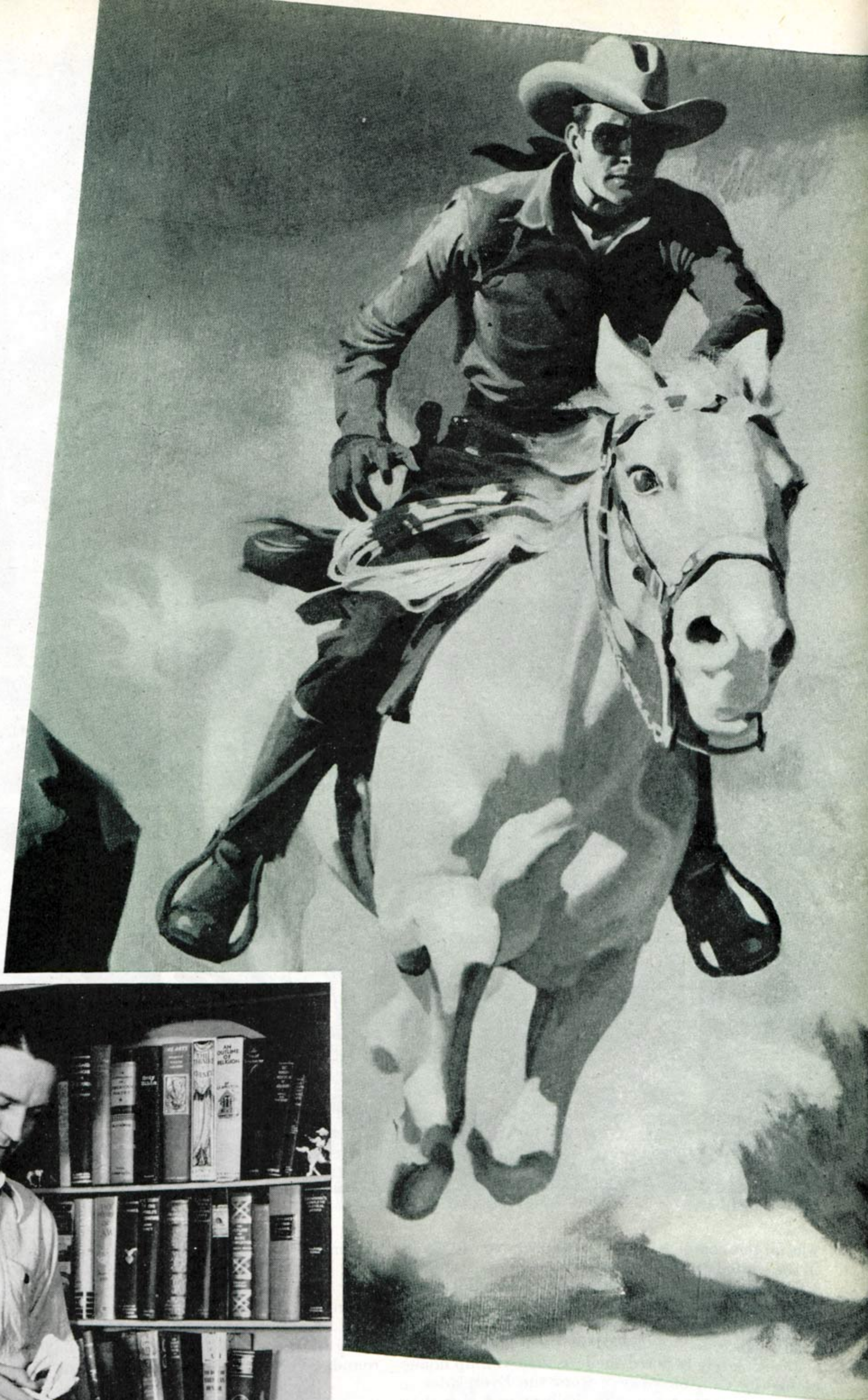
WXYZ has guarded his identity for practical reasons. He wears a figurative mask on the street because he wears a hypothetical mask on the air. Mystery is vital to his role; much of the illusion would be lost if his face were familiar. More of it



Dismounted, unmasked, de-spurred and unarmed, the Ranger relaxes at home in his favorite role—that of plain Earle W. Graser. Above is one of the idealized "photographs" sent to adorers.

would be lost if the audience were allowed to compare an actual face, no matter how noble, with their idealized conceptions.

Even so, the offstage life of Public Hero No. 1 is almost like a public enemy's. Lacking only the legend WANTED! his name glares at him from the placards and posters. It winks at him from the marquee of every movie theater that is an outlet for Republic Pictures. He can read it on sweatshirts and soap, balloons and buttons, and the innumerable other products of sixty-six licensed manufac-



turers. It leaps at him from the pages of the 123 newspapers that carry his cartoon strips. He could not escape it in Montreal or Mexico City. In Belgrade, the Paja Patek spellbinds Jugoslavs with his deeds of derring-do.

It is a paradox that this idol of young America could walk into any schoolroom in the nation and cause less stir than the janitor. For an idol he certainly is. No secular myth has ever grasped the popular fancy with such strength. It is hard to see why. Chevalier Bayard, "without fear and without reproach," suffered from his own perfection. Some stain, however tiny, would have made his purity the whiter and the more human. The Ranger is carved from the same cold marble. He has no vices; he hasn't even any relaxations. He never laughs; he never even smiles.

And yet he is the hero from whom all other heroes take fresh luster. The stock comparisons have been reversed. The Ranger's aim is not so unerring as



Robin Hood's; Robin Hood shot as well as the Ranger. Buffalo Bill rode like him. Tarzan was as strong and resourceful. Jack Dempsey was as fearless. The Ranger escapes their faults and combines their virtues.

#### An American Idiom

HE HAS become a classic in his own time. Like the early Ford car, he is not considered a proprietary product, but a commodity, dissociated from commercialism. Publishers of grade-school books are already picking over the novelized form of the episodes. Mrs. Temple has been allowed to state that it is Shirley's favorite program. Mrs. Roosevelt did not hesitate to write in her column:

"The other evening I offered to read aloud to Buz until bedtime, but there is a program on the air called 'The Lone Ranger,' which seems to be entirely satisfactory."

The curse of radio is its impermanence. Its bounty is like Cinderella's god-mother's; little of it survives the stroke of midnight. But one of the Ranger's phrases has already entrenched itself in the national vocabulary: "Hi-Yo, Silver!" No group of children can forgo it long. Hundreds of cartoons have been built around it. Burlesque comedians greet each other with "Hi-Yo, Silverstein!" The papers recently mentioned an Italian grocer in Washington who was heard to summon his wife with "Hi-Yo, Sylvia!"

In a recent Saturday Evening Post story by Paul Gallico, about two Chicago debutantes who go fox hunting in England, occurs this passage:

"The Duke came up and raised his cap . . . and said, . . . 'I say, what was that fascinating cry you used—'I say, Silver,' or something like that?' 'So Swing and I called, 'Hi-Yo, Silver!' for him. . . ."

A New York State mounted trooper arrested a youth for mocking him with it. The trooper had no case. His nerves were simply frayed past further tolerance.

A rider in Brooklyn's Prospect Park complained that urchins had thrown rocks at his horse, so that it would go faster, and they could shout it at him.

It has even rung out over a performance by the austere Detroit Symphony. Gabrilowitsch was conducting the William Tell overture, but someone in the hall knew it only as the Ranger's theme music. Joyfully and heedlessly he gave tongue to the cry.

These spontaneous tributes prove once more that art has gotten the bulge on Nature. Saints aside, no man of flesh and blood has ever had the adoration that the Ranger enjoys, and the Ranger is a man-made man. He was built according to formula, compounded of ingredients chosen and measured as carefully as those in Escoffier's greatest sauce. He was also built to necessity. There is a saying that the times create their own hero. The Lone Ranger was created by hard times at Station WXYZ.

Two men own it: John H. King and George W. Trendle, both of Detroit. King, formerly Kunsy, built the second movie theater in the nation, in 1905. Eventually, he had a chain of twenty. Trendle started as a lawyer and came to specialize in movie contracts and leases. When King made him a quarter partner in the Kunsy Theaters in 1918, he dropped law entirely. They sold out to Paramount in 1929 for \$6,000,000 and bought WXYZ, a Columbia outlet. Trendle is now the active partner.

Obstacles arose at once. Trendle wanted to reserve evening time for programs of local interest, but Columbia would not allow him. Rebellious, he canceled the contract in June, 1932, and became an independent. Presently he found himself losing \$4000 a week. His station could not compete with the symphony orchestras and high-priced comedians offered by the networks. It became a case of "Root, hog, or die," and he rooted—for a program to save his station. There were three factors in his favor: His years of experience with the public taste, his lifelong devotion to pulp fiction, and his Euclidean mind—the kind that erects a logical structure on a solid foundation. In this case, the foundation was that the program had to be dramatic, because drama was inexpensive, required no name-stars, and could be home-cooked.

Now follow his reasoning step by step:

Drama, but what kind of drama—for adults or kids? For kids, because they are less critical, and therefore the program need not be so expensive or elaborate. Besides, Trendle believed that most parents buy advertised products because their kids coax them into it.

What kind of kid drama? Trendle knew that kids' favorites were crime stories and Westerns. He dismissed crime because he wanted his program to be completely wholesome. He also wanted one that would lend itself to premiums from future sponsors. A crime program admitted little more than masks, badges and weapons, but a Western opened the field of costume and saddlery as well.

Western drama of what period? Not contemporary, because the script writer would be cramped by having to defer to probability.

Drama postulates a hero. What kind would this one be? Young or mature? Mature, because it is better to respect than to envy.

Finally, how to distinguish him from a thousand other Western heroes? Trendle wasn't sure about this. He pictured him as a composite of Robin Hood and Douglas Fairbanks in *The Mark of Zorro*, but the picture was little more than an outline, when he unveiled it before his studio staff, in December, 1932.

Their first objection was that the hero had no mystery and little romance. Why not make him a sort of benevolent outlaw and give him a mask? Fine! Then it was suggested that he needed something distinctive as an identification. How about a super-horse, possibly a white Arabian?

#### They Made Him What He is Today

TRENDLE, a horseman himself, said, "No, Arabians are too small. But the white is a good idea—he'll stand out at night as well as by day. Another thing; remember when you were a kid and used to lick your thumb and stamp the palm of your hand whenever you saw a white horse? That'll help fix it in kids' minds."

A second conference was called a week later. "Let's run over our stuff," Trendle said. "Well, this guy is decent, athletic, and 'up on the bit'—you know: alert and enterprising. Maybe he has been unjustly banished and is waiting to come into his own again. Anyhow, he goes around righting wrongs against tremendous odds and then disappearing immediately afterwards. I see him as a sort of lone operator. He could even be a former Texas ranger —"

"There's his name!" someone interrupted. "The Lone Ranger! It's got everything!"

This second conference produced one other development. The studio manager was flipping a souvenir penny as he listened—a penny with an aluminum ring around it. Aluminum ring, silver ring—"How about silver shoes on the horse?" he asked. "We could use them for premiums too."

This was adopted. Now Trendle and his staff stood back and looked at their creature. The raw material was there. All it needed was someone to blow the breath of life into it. They had their man in Fran Striker, a free-lance script writer from Buffalo, who had done a series called *Warner Lester, Manhunter*, which WXYZ had already used and liked. On the strength of it, Trendle telephoned Striker and told him what he had in mind. Striker took it from there.

Edward L. Wheeler, the author of the *Deadwood Dick* series, never went west of Philadelphia in his life. Striker had never been west of Buffalo at the time, and even now he has never been west of Michigan. All that he knew of the West he had learned from a great-uncle who had once served drinks to Mark Twain and Bret Harte across a bar in Washoe County, Nevada.

Striker began by visualizing the Ranger as just over six feet tall and weighing around 190 pounds—a good working build for a Western hero. Such a man, riding a super-horse with silver shoes, would naturally have the finest possible equipment; ivory-handled guns, for instance. The silver shoes reminded Striker of a former series in which he had identified Robin Hood by silver-tipped arrows ("Zounds, my lord! This shaft was loosed by none other than the outlaw of Sherwood!"), so he gave the Ranger silver bullets (Continued on Page 131)



WXYZ's sound-effects staff imitate the thunder of galloping hoofs by stamping rubber plungers into this trough of sand.



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for the same purpose. Bullets and shoes dictated the super-horse's name: Silver. As a final identification, Striker groped around for a special call that the Ranger could use when he wanted Silver to come or to gallop off. "Yippy!" and "Git-up!" were commonplace. Besides, the last syllable had to be a long one, so that the actor could sustain it. "Hi-yi, Silver! Awa-a-ay!" was close to the idea; Striker wasn't satisfied with it, but he let it go through anyhow.

His first script was revised fifteen times before Trendle gave it a trial broadcast, late at night, and unannounced except to the office staff and the sales force. They reported that they liked the story, but they didn't like the Ranger's way of talking; his language seemed to have an Eastern flavor. Trendle stood firm. The Ranger *was* an Easterner, he said. He might even be from Harvard. At least he was an educated man, and he was going to talk like one.

The signature to this first script was: "Come along, Silver! . . . That's the boy! . . . Hi-yi! (*hearty laugh*). . . . Now cut loose, and awa-a-ay! (*Hoofs pounding harder and fade-out*)."

Striker's Ranger was a happy-go-lucky swashbuckler who laughed at the discomfited crooks as he rode off. Trendle saw him as a sterner character, "the embodiment," in his own phrase, "of granted prayer." So presently all suggestions of humor were erased; the Ranger never smiled again. Trendle didn't like the "Hi-Yi," either. For days after the unofficial broadcast, the staff galloped around the studio shouting "Hi-Yo!" and "Hi-Yi!" History does not preserve the name of the genius who finally evolved "Hi-Yo!"

The official broadcast was delayed until Striker could furnish a backlog of two dozen scripts. He ran into difficulties as he turned them out. Lone or not, the Ranger needed someone to talk to, to develop the plots. He also needed someone who could ferret out evidence of wrongdoing and present it for action. The situation was tailor-made for a Mesquite Mary or a Prairie Rose, but Striker knew that the merest breath of romance would blow the Ranger's young audience right away from their radios. His solution was to create a loyal Indian companion. For a name, he went back to another of his old serials, a mystery which featured a semi-savage called Gobo. He juggled the vowels around with a fresh set of consonants, and that's how Tonto was born. (Theoretically, Tonto belongs to the Potawatomi tribe of Michigan; what he's doing so far from home not even Striker seems to know.)

## The Popgun Test

Tonto made his bow in Script No. 10. It was a straight part at first, but it gradually became salted with grunts and "Me go's" and "Him come's."

On January 30, 1933, six weeks after Trendle had first sketched out his idea of the program, it went on the air over WXYZ and the seven other stations of the Michigan network, which opened the same evening. The cast was chosen from WXYZ's stock company. A man named Deeds started in the title role, but it was turned over to George Stenius after six performances. Stenius played it for three months, while Trendle tested the voices of other men

in the company. One of them was perfect: Deep, vibrant, commanding. It belonged to a rather inexperienced youngster who hadn't attracted much attention before, but Trendle trusted him with the part. He has played it ever since.

During these three months the serial rolled along quietly. The Ranger recovered a stolen map; he captured a crooked Pony Express rider; he saved some men on the Chisholm Trail by damming a river. On the whole, though, Michigan remained calm, as far as Trendle could tell. A few fan letters came in, but only a few. And then, on May sixteenth, the Ranger announced that he would give a free popgun to the first 300 children who asked for it.

May sixteenth was a Tuesday. On Thursday's program, the Ranger said firmly that the guns were already exhausted. On Saturday's he had to beg the audience not to write in; there was a hysterical note in his voice. When the avalanche of mail finally stopped, and WXYZ had settled back on its foundations, it counted 24,905 letters—a record which, the Detroit post office told them, had been exceeded only by Father Coughlin, on a coast-to-coast hookup; the Lone Ranger program was hardly audible outside Michigan.

## The Birth of an Institution

Trendle couldn't believe the evidence of his eyes. He wanted to wait for further proof before trying to sell his program to a sponsor. Proof came soon.

Every July, Detroit's Department of Recreation gives a school field day on Belle Isle. This year, 1933, it promised the children that the Lone Ranger would appear in person. He did, masked, on a white horse. The police were prepared to handle a crowd of 20,000—the most that Belle Isle could hold comfortably; 70,000 came. The children broke through the lines and knocked one another down, struggling to get near their hero. The situation became so dangerous that the police had to appeal to the Ranger himself to restore order. He never dared make another public appearance.

Trendle knew now that he had the world by the tail with a downhill pull. He sold the program to the makers of Silvercup Bread (the trade name was pure coincidence). The first commercial broadcast was on November twenty-seventh. A month later the program was extended to WGN, Chicago. Another month and WOR, Newark, was added. (WXYZ, WGN and WOR were the nucleus of the Mutual Broadcasting System, formed that year.) Beginning January, 1937, the Pacific Coast got the program over the Don Lee System. That April, the Yankee and Colonial networks were signed up.

All these were so-called "live" broadcasts, piped directly from the stage at WXYZ. In February, 1938, the program was first offered in transcription form. Today the Lone Ranger's 140 stations—including Newfoundland, Ontario, Hawaii and New Zealand—are roughly half "live" and half transcription. They get him three nights a week—Monday, Wednesday and Friday—at one of his three nightly shows. The first, at 7:30 E. S. T., goes to the Detroit district and the East. The second, at 7:30 Central Time, goes

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to Chicago. The third, at 7:30 Pacific Time, goes to the West Coast.

The cast plays all three shows with the same sincerity and intensity. The cast gives everything it's got. When two characters are supposed to be jogging along on horseback, they actually jog on their feet, so that their talk will have the proper cadence. When they are supposed to be dismounting, they actually swing their legs and grunt as they "land." When one of them is "knocked down," someone actually falls. After a long bit of action, the Ranger sometimes has to signal the control room to keep the music going until he can catch his breath.

One of the best features of the show is the sound effects. To represent galloping horses, the men stamp ordinary bathroom plungers into a trough of sand or gravel, according to the terrain. Every studio has had trouble imitating a gunshot; even a cap pistol would almost break the microphone. WXYZ's solution was so good that NBC sent an expert out to investigate it: They smack a leather cushion with a cane.

Once the script called for an effect that the men couldn't get. The Ranger and Silver were taking a short cut to head off some cattle-rustlin' varmints, and had to plunge over a cliff into a river. The splash defied WXYZ for two hours; nothing even approached the right sound. Suddenly someone in the control room shouted, "That's it! It's perfect!" The staff was bewildered. Nobody had done anything. Presently they discovered that one of the actors, bored with waiting, had crumpled up his newspaper.

### The Joiners

The Ranger rode for Silvercup from November, 1933, to last February, when Bond Bread took over. However, Bond does not sponsor the program on all 140 stations. The breakdown is Bond Bread, 22; other sponsors, 88; sustaining, 30. The 10:30 show is the one used by other sponsors; it is also the sustaining show and the one from which transcriptions are made. Instead of Bond's plug, there is a musical interlude, which may be left in on sustaining programs or faded out for a plug by some other sponsor.

One group of bakers on the Pacific Coast was selling Gingham Bread, and wanted Silver's name changed to Gingham on their special program. Trendle was as outraged as Jeff Davis, the fabled senator from Arkansas. Most of the sponsors are bakers, but not all. An oil refiner has the program over WROK, Rockford, Illinois. Trendle will not accept a liquor distiller or a cigarette manufacturer as a sponsor, nor will he license the sale of Lone Ranger matches, knives, bows and arrows, or anything else with which a child might hurt itself.

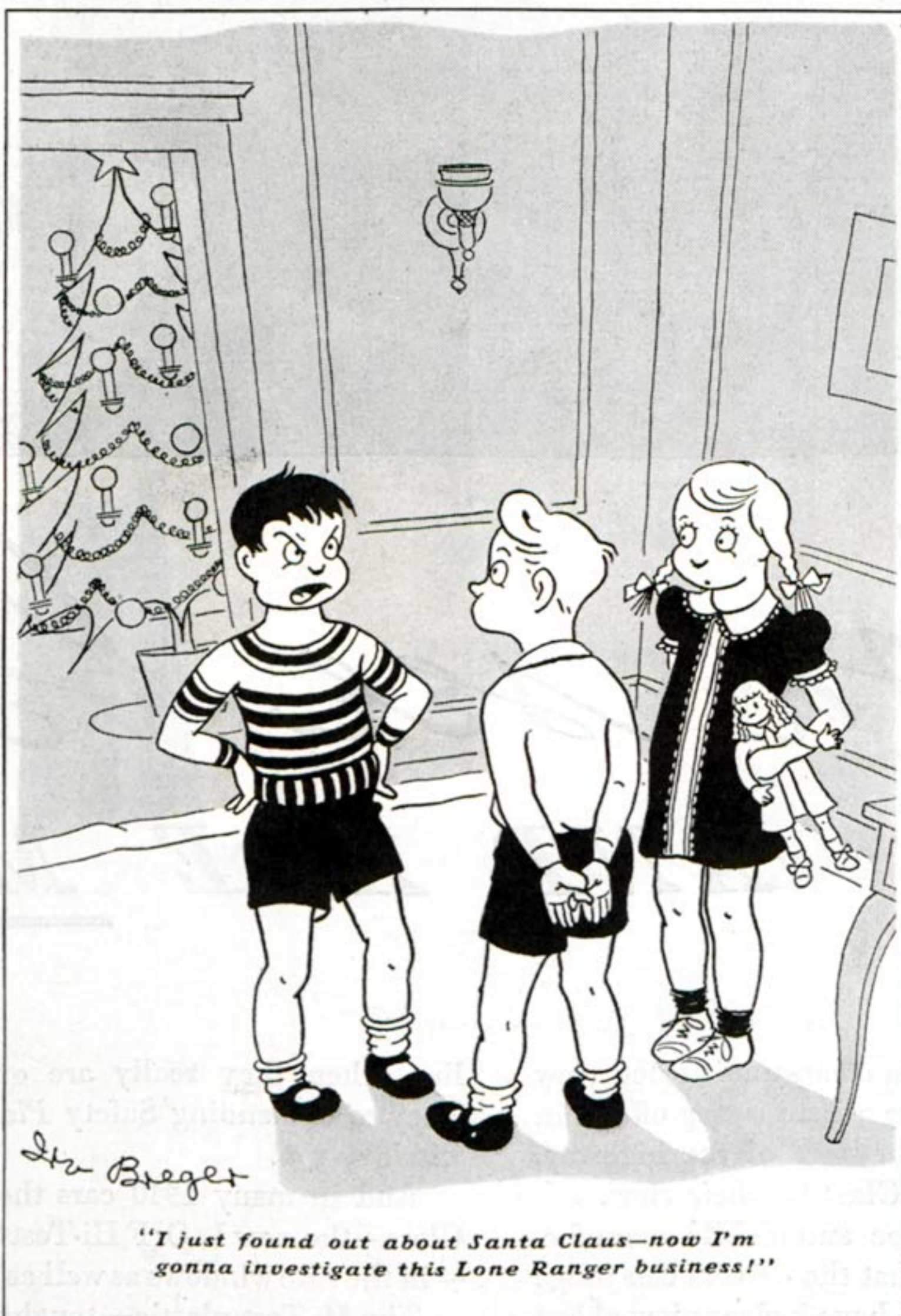
The new sponsor also took over the Lone Ranger Safety Club. This was not only an ingenious piece of promotion but a handy index to the popularity of the program. One evening in October, 1935, the Ranger told children to go to their neighborhood grocer and get an application card for the club. The card reads:

I solemnly promise: (1) Not to cross any street except at regular crossings and to first look both ways. (2) Not to play in the streets. (3) To always tell the truth.

There were ten such promises in all. When the child and one of its parents had signed the card, the Ranger sent a notification of membership and a private code. Almost as an afterthought, he added this fishhook:

P. S.: Of course you will want a Lone Ranger Badge.

To earn this beautiful Badge all you have to do is have three of your neighbors who do not now use (.....) regularly



"I just found out about Santa Claus—now I'm gonna investigate this Lone Ranger business!"

promise to buy (.....) on their next trip to the food store.

I am enclosing a card which I want you to return to me when it is filled out.

By December seventh, six weeks after the campaign had started, 475,574 badges had been distributed; by early January, 535,495. The total is now more than 2,000,000. In addition, half a million masks have been given away and 2,000,000 "photographs" of the Ranger (these are photographs of an idealized oil painting).

Much of the Ranger's mail is from children angrily declaring that a certain member is not eating the sponsor's bread or has revealed the code (read A for B, B for C, and so on). One frantic father had to wire WFIL for the code. His son had sent him an important letter—so important that he did not dare trust it to the mails unencoded.

Meanwhile, in January, 1935, Trendle incorporated the program independently, to protect the station from possible infringement suits. Thus unhobbled, the Ranger rode into a rich new territory. He signed a contract with Republic Pictures to lend his name to two serials (estimated income last year, \$60,000). He agreed to appear in a cartoon strip for King Features (income last year, \$100,000). He licensed a number of manufacturers to sell his novelties (income last year, \$100,000). Add to these the income from the radio, and throw in \$50,000 miscellaneous income, and Lone Ranger, Incorporated's net for 1938 probably tops \$400,000. For 1939, it will probably top half a million. Hi-Yo, Silver! Hi-Yo, Gold!

As founding father and chief owner of the program, George Trendle still cocks a vigilant eye to make sure that it never strays from the noble—and profitable—road that he surveyed for it. But the prime custodian of the Ranger's virtue—and profit—is Fran Striker, the script writer of the program.

### Word Wholesaler

Edward Z. C. Judson, who wrote the Buffalo Bill stories under the name of Ned Buntline, once turned out a 600-page novel in sixty-two hours. Col. Prentiss Ingraham, who took up the series when Judson left off, wrote a 35,000-word novel in a day. There are 773,746 words in the Bible; Gilbert Patten, author of the 776 Frank Merriwell books, wrote an equivalent wordage every four months. His total for seventeen years was 35,000,000 words.

Striker leads them all. He writes 60,000 words a week every week—the equivalent of the Bible every three months. The cumulative birth pangs of the 10,000 different characters he has spawned have shattered four typewriters.

His 156 Lone Ranger scripts a year, plus 365 Lone Ranger cartoon strips, plus twelve Lone Ranger novels, plus editing the movie ver-

sions, plus his tremendous correspondence, account for two thirds of his output. He also writes 104 Green Hornet scripts and fifty-two Ned Jordan, Secret Agent, scripts a year for WXYZ. His working day is fourteen hours; his return, \$10,000 a year, or around a third of a cent a word.

The Ranger, of course, is closest to Striker's heart. He looks on this part of his job as a public trust and discharges it with the utmost seriousness. It is also a private trust; he has three Ranger-worshipping children of his own. Many of the radio's conventions spring from an almost craven timidity, but Striker's are based on simple psychology and common sense.

Each of his episodes is complete in itself. The children don't go to bed in a state of suspense, wondering whether

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rescue will come in time. None of the dramatic action can be localized in the home. Indians may attack, cattle may stampede, a bridge may collapse, but there is never a prowler. Physical handicaps are mentioned only when they are vital to the plot, and then only briefly. Striker always pictures a person similarly handicapped listening to the program in company.

It goes without saying that the Ranger does not drink, gamble or smoke. Villains may; they may also shoot to kill, but the actual killing is never dramatized. Either the shot comes at the end of a scene, or it is immediately followed by a burst of music.

Villains have another privilege in their vocabulary of abuse; they are allowed to snarl, "You rat!" (or "snake," or "polecat"). Even here Striker is sparing. The mildest epithet is sure to bring this sort of letter: "A reprimand after one of your broadcasts prompted a son of mine to turn on me with the words he had just heard on the radio—'You rat!'"

Striker sighs and dictates a form reply: "You may be sure that your letter will be given every consideration, as it is by suggestions such as these that we are guided."

Villains run true to character in causing him trouble. Legal caution prevents their having a surname, so they have to take turns with Muggsy, Butch, Scar, Slim, Pete and Lefty. Nor can they be the dastardly greasers of yore. The morning after Striker had some Mexicans raid an American farm, he got a sharp protest from the Mexican consul in Detroit. Thereafter all villains have been Americans or, as a compromise, half-breeds. Here, too, a form reply soothes irate patriots: "One criminal is never considered representative of his race or races."

### **An Eastern Authority on the West**

The Ranger's heyday is conceived as somewhere between 1865 and 1890, so Striker has to guard against anachronisms. For instance, when blasting comes into the plot of one of his earlier stories he is careful to speak of blasting powder, not dynamite. Still, he has made other kinds of mistakes. In one of his scripts a man was trampled to death by a mad bull, which Striker described as getting up from the corpse forelegs-first. Two thousand letters hastened to correct him.

Last January, the Ranger's sixth anniversary, WXYZ repeated a few favorite old programs. In the first, the Ranger and Tonto were together when they found Silver. In the second, the Ranger was riding Silver when he met Tonto. No one noticed the blunder. Another that slipped by was "Hark! I hear a white horse coming!" The oddest blunder of all seems to have startled the audience too much to question it: Slap in mid-program came the screech of an automobile siren. Tonto, resting between scenes, had put his feet up on a horn box used in the previous program.

Striker's correspondence includes not only taking care of complaints but answering questions and acknowledging the Ranger's personal mail. A candidate for an M. A. at U. C. L. A. asked for information about early stone houses in California; someone else had made a bet about a certain Indian custom; a third person could not identify an early type of bridle; a fourth wanted a photograph of Judge Roy Bean. Striker's secretary does the research, and his answers are painstaking.

Many letters testify to the completeness of the illusion the program has created. A Kansas man greeted the Ranger as a long-lost friend of his cowboy days, and offered to help him clean up the country. A Kentuckian invited him to look up his brother in Denver, next time he was out that way. One Christmas a lady sent him twenty-five dollars to buy food for needy Indians. Most such letters are from children, bringing their troubles to the Ranger and asking his advice. When Striker writes to them, he begins "*Ta-i ke-mo sah-bee!*" ("Greetings, trusty scout!") and ends "The best of good luck always! The Lone Ranger."

### **Unhorsed and Unmasked**

The children love it. They don't know that the Ranger himself isn't writing to them. But the Ranger knows. Even that is denied him. The injunction of secrecy extends even that far. With the exception of a pantomimist who plays in silhouette behind a screen, the man who plays the Ranger has been reduced to the minimum of entertainment—pure voice, a voice that differs from all other radio voices in that it does not take on substance when the program is over. He is a walking shadow, a zombie.

It is time now that the disembodiment be reversed, that the voice become man again. His name is Earle W. Graser (pronounced Grah-zer), and — The rest of this passage should be placarded **FOR ADULTS ONLY!** Here are the sad facts; glance at them and forget them.

Graser is Canadian-born, thirty years old and married. ("*Save your thanks, miss! I must be off. Come, Tonto!*")

He, too, has never been west of Michigan. ("*Here in the Rockies a man can breathe!*")

Far from capturing and christening a fiery stallion, he got his own name from a horse—a horse that pulled a grocery wagon. Earle had always wanted a nickname, but never had one. The horse's name was Barney, so Earle suggested that his father call him Barney too. It stuck. But he doesn't ride and he has shot a pistol only once in his life. ("*Ah, you would, would you?*"—*Bang! bang!*—"Awa-a-ay, Silver!")

His eyes are mild, not piercing; his face is chubby, not lean; moreover,

*He's of stature somewhat low—*

*Your hero always should be tall, you know.*

("Don't look at me like that, Ranger! Ouch, my wrist! I—I'll confess, I did it!")

Swimming and badminton are his sports, gardening his recreation. He has two ambitions: To play Hamlet and to own a farm in Connecticut. Half ashamed, he adds, "That's an awful thing to say, isn't it? I ought to want to live in Wyoming."

It is an awful thing, unless you realize that for every hour Graser spends as the Lone Ranger, he spends thirty-six as a perfectly normal, pleasant, intelligent American citizen. His family moved from Kitchener, Ontario, to Detroit and his father became naturalized. Earle went to high school in Detroit, then to Wayne University, where he took an A.B. in oratory, drama and interpretive reading. At present he has ten hours' credit on an M.A. in speech and, to boot, has studied law for two years—not expecting to practice, just for his own satisfaction.

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During high school he worked in drugstores and groceries until he discovered that he had a natural bass voice. Singing solos with a local pit orchestra paid for his lessons, but ruined his voice. He strained his upper register and had to give up singing entirely.

His first professional appearance was in the summer of 1928. At eighteen dollars a week, he got a job ushering at the Michigan Theater, doubling as the announcer of the next organ selection, and tripling as an Alpine shepherd boy in the stage show that went with—of all things—the William Tell overture, now the Ranger's theme music.

"It was quite an act," he says. "I had to poke six dirty sheep along a ramp in a 'thunderstorm.' The storm was a chromium lightning bolt sliding down a guy wire, and two stagehands firing shotguns into a barrel."

Looking back on his past, this is the episode he regrets most. He is afraid that the first Western cattleman who learns he once herded sheep will oil up his guns and head for Detroit.

In the summer of 1931, he joined a tent show and played two-night stands through Michigan. The Haunted House one night, Your Uncle Dudley the next. A year later he became a bit player in WXYZ's stock company. It was April 16, 1933, that his buoyant tones first rode the air waves.

There have been 3000-odd Ranger performances since that day, and Graser hasn't missed a single one. His two understudies are beginning to believe it would take one of his own silver bullets to lay him low. He doesn't see the script until five hours before he goes on, but he learns his lines so easily that one rehearsal is usually enough. His only stumbling block is the word "probably"; for some reason, he can never give it full quality; Striker finally had to blacklist it.

It is a credit to Graser's expertness that this is the only quirk, the only titbit, that his associates have gar-

nered about him. He himself can add two more. The day after he had made a particularly impassioned plea to the Lone Ranger Safety Club, he was arrested for driving down Grand River Avenue at thirty-eight miles an hour. And once he and his wife were listening to Horace Heidt's orchestra at a night club when Heidt offered a prize for the person who could shout "Hi-Yo, Silver!" most nearly like the Ranger. Graser tried out, but didn't get even honorable mention.

One of these days, to be sure, the Ranger will have to Lope into the Sunset, Cross the Great Divide and Ride the Big Range. When that happens, Graser would like to stay on in radio, but he thinks he would have a hard time getting a job; his voice would tab him as the Lone Ranger forever. Failing radio, he would like to teach elocution and drama at a small Eastern college, such as Bennington. Failing that, he'd like to go back on the stage—not in a love-interest role, but one like Grandpa's, in *You Can't Take it With You*.

Today his \$150 a week lets him and his wife live comfortably in a Detroit suburb. The features of their bungalow are a cocker spaniel named Schlecker, and half a dozen miniature white horses which fans have sent him. These horses, with some cakes and cookies and maple sugar, are the only presents he has ever received.

Few of his neighbors know his occupation. He is aware that they consider him somewhat stand-offish, but policy forbids his exposing himself to discovery. His friends are mostly the studio crowd. John Todd, a veteran character actor who plays Tonto, is a special friend. After the last performance, Tonto and the Ranger frequently ride home together—*drive* home together—for a cigar and a nip and a hand of cards. Todd is the only person associated with the program who knows the West at first hand. He went through once with a Klaw & Erlanger road show.