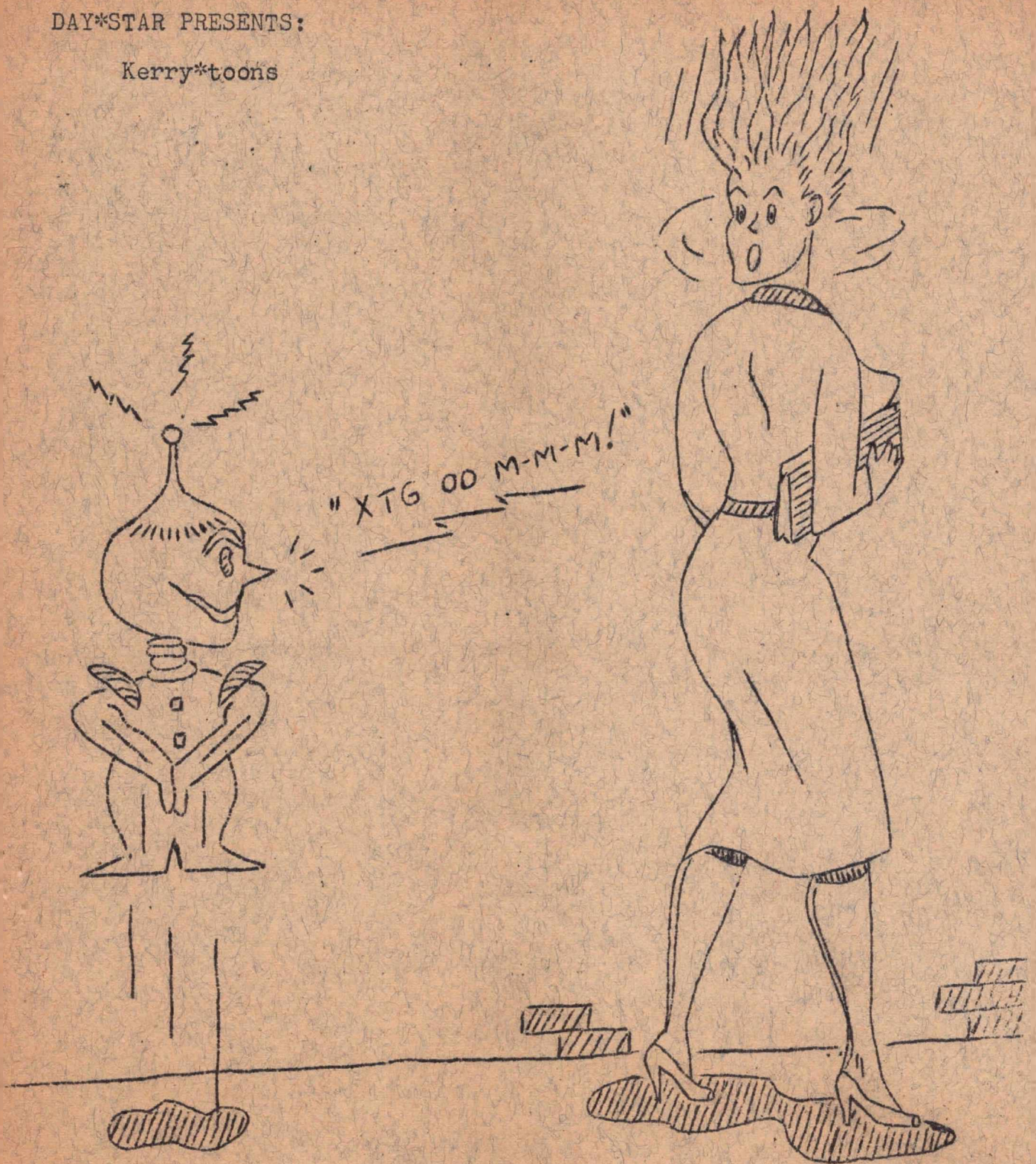


DAY*STAR PRESENTS:

Kerry*toons



(Translation: "So YOU'RE a girl!")

KERRY

S T E N C I L G A Z I N G S

.....Marion Z Bradley

March is exercising its privilege of going out like a lamb; we've been having lovely springlike weather, warm enough to leave coats and even sweaters in the house. When Brad came home from work we decided it was too pleasant to stay home, and drove out toward a lonely farm road, toward the distant bluish line of low hills, outlining the Brazos river. We've never found a way to reach the river; that land is grazed by cattle and worked by cowboys; riding with lariat and gun on saddle. We turned down one lane after another, and finally came to an abandoned road into the river valley. We left the car and went on on foot; The road was blown over by drifted sand, as white and clear and clean as beach sand; Brad had on high boots, but Steve and I were wearing sneakers; we took them off and went on barefoot, in the warm sand. After several twists and turns we came to the river bottom. It was nearly dry; the river bed was about sixty yards wide, but the water itself had shrunk only to ten feet or so.

We saw the tracks of deer, jackrabbits, foxes and coyotes and all sorts of birds were singing; one with a strange hammer-sound, whit-whit-whit-wheety; and out in the mud of the river bottom, where Steve and I ventured barefoot, we saw the three-clawed print of herons and cranes. Most of the river bed was dry hard sand; but some of it was muddy, and I got, in one spot, on to a quaking sort of bog; the whole later of mud shifted and slipped sideways. I shouted to Steve to get back on dry ground; I wasn't really afraid of quicksand, ~~why~~ for I could see tracks where a tractor had gone straight through the dry bed; but I was afraid of...I don't quite know. But we got through, rolled up our pants legs, and washed our feet in the river, which wasn't more than a foot deep anywhere, but very clear and clean.

Then back through the drifted sand-dunes; at this time of year it was safe enough, but I'd hesitate to go in the summer without leather breeches and a pointed stick; or a pistol. All too prevalent, around wild country here, the rattlesnake lies in wait. I remember one day here; last year, climbing a mountain with Steve and Brad, we came across a flat rock in the sun when literally hundreds of cast snakeskins were lying. We lost our enthusiasms for climbing that mountain, right then and there.

...actually, the above was written last March, for I am cheating, getting my May Day*Star ready early; I don't know how much time, and how many stencils; my annual flurry of Check-listitis will leave me. The article, A Swinging Good Time, was written for my N'apazine, PICTURE TRICK: I am reprinting it here for the benefit of non-N'apa members and personal friends who get this Day*Star; I forgot to mimeo enough extra copies of Picture Trick for my outside mailing list. Anyone who is bored to death with this trapeze kick I'm on, may quit reading right here, and I'll see you in August.

Love and kisses and stuff,

Marion Z Bradley

This is the second page of Picture Trick #2, for the NAPA.....

I was pleased and gratified by the number of people who wrote in about the first Picture Trick; and so many of them were interested in what I had to say about aerialists that I decided to do the same thing again.

A few writers merely made utilitarian remarks. For instance, it was called to my attention that the catcher in a flying act does not, as depicted in Ruth Wieland's otherwise pretty sketch, hang by his knees, but supports his weight by twisting his legs around the ropes of his trapeze. I knew that, but didn't feel quite enough of an artist to re-draw the acrobat in question. I was also told by Someone Who Should Know, with great disdain for my ignorance, that the tape or elastic bands on a flyer's wrists does play a great part in protecting the vulnerable joints from strain; that the catcher, in fact, often wore not only elastic bands, but a leather wrist-guard, padded inside with lambs-wool.

And Ruth Berman reminded me that a trampoline was probably the nearest thing to flying, off a trapeze, outside of Never-Neverland.

Most people, however, seemed curious to know which of the flying maneuvers I meant when I referred to a Picture Trick.

Actually a "picture trick" refers to any one of a group of simple and uncomplicated ~~www~~ tricks on the flying trapeze. Now, please note that I use the terms "simple and uncomplex" in a strictly relative sense. For an amateur, the mere act of swinging on a bar with enough momentum to get yourself back to the takeoff point (without losing momentum in mid-swing) is almost impossible -- just try it sometime! The analogy of a playground swing doesn't hold true -- on a swing, the center of gravity is differently distributed. The body is folded in a sitting position so that the weight of the body, on the swinging bar, keeps the ropes moving. Even so, an inexperienced tot often loses momentum unless pushed by an adult. When hanging by the hands from a trapeze, the center of gravity is below the bar, and considerably greater effort in the shoulder muscles, and better control of the entire body, is necessary to keep it swinging evenly.

So this is the flyer's first problem.

(And incidentally, for perfectionists, I am well aware that aerialists themselves refer to the acrobat who leaves his trapeze, and soars through the air, as a ~~leaper~~, and that only outsiders would call him a flyer; nevertheless, I prefer the pretty and descriptive word flyer; leaper makes me think of nothing on earth but a frog.

In writing about the flying trapeze, I have spent a lot of time studying and analyzing the various muscular motions involved. So when I speak of simple tricks, please understand that they are simple only when contrasted to very very difficult tricks done by highly skilled athletes, usually men. The difference is the difference between an ordinary good tournament high-diver and the intricate acrobatics done by the world's champion high-diver at the Olympic Games.

The so-called "Picture Tricks" demand considerably less

This is the third page of Picture Trick # 2, talking about flying.

effort, and are comparatively less dangerous; but, depending as they do on balance, and grace of movement, are often prettier than such things as the famous "triple", superb feat of timing, daring and coordination though that is.

Examples? One of the most commonly seen, and therefore probably the easiest, is the one where the leaper jack-knives his body on the bar while swinging so that at the end of his swing, he is hanging by his knees with his hands stretched toward the catcher. The general impression from below is that the catcher has "scooped" him off his trapeze.

Another extremely pretty trick can be done on an ordinary trapeze; I have heard it called a snap-up in gymnasiums, but it is described as a "seat jump" by circus writers. The flyer, while swinging on the bar, pushed the bar down with her hands so that on the end of the swing she is sitting on the bar like a swing. Then, at the end of the forward swing, she does a graceful jump toward the catcher and meets his hands.

A lovely, but rarely seen (so presumably rather difficult) trick is one where the flyer swings all the way around the bar, as a good athlete does on parallel bars. And there are various versions, with different names, of the trick where the flyer "skins the cat" -- bracing the trapeze behind him at the waist or back before he lets go and dives at the catcher.

Most of these simpler tricks are concerned with maneuvering the body in relation to the fly bar, so that the flyer's center of gravity is above the bar and he can leap down toward the catcher. The emphasis in all these so-called picture tricks is in the ability to control the body (mold it into pictures?) and complete command of the position of body and bar. It is obvious that until these have been completely mastered, the flyer would not be ready for the "big tricks" -- where the emphasis is on what the flyer does after leaving his trapeze and before alighting in the catcher's hands. These big tricks include the turning of one or more somersaults and a variety of twists and spins between fly bar and catcher's hands.

Classed as picture tricks also are those pretty maneuvers done in the catcher's hands. One such was beautifully demonstrated in the movie "The Big Circus" by David Nelson and Kathy Grant; as the girl swings from the catcher's hands they shift their grip so that she swings suspended by one wrist and ankle, free arm and leg extended in a beautiful ballet arabesque. Or, having been caught by the ankles rather than the wrists, the flyer throws her body through the loop of her clasped hands, then shift their mutual grip so that, from being suspended by the feet, she is now swinging by her wrists from the catcher's wrists.

These, of course, are variations borrowed from another type of aerial-trapeze act; the double-trapeze or supporting-partner routine, which is not, strictly speaking, a flying act; one acrobat hangs by his feet or his knees from a fixed rigging, supporting a lighter acrobat -- usually a girl -- by feet or hands while she does a variety of balance tricks.

In a regular flying-return act, these

Fourth and last page of Picture Trick, talking about picture tricks/

balance tricks are 'pretty' variations on the necessity for the flyer to turn, in the catcher's hands, half-round as they swing together; when the flyer leaves his trapeze, he is, of course, facing the catcher and thus must turn around in the catcher's hands before returning to his original trapeze.

In most flying-return acts of today, after the leaper leaves his trapeze, a third performer on the pedestal board (takeoff point for flyers) catches the swinging bar as it swings back; then, when the flyer is ready to return, he throws it out again.

However, some of the finer flyers (Ernie Clarke, for instance, a great flyer long before I was old enough to watch anything but a swinging rattle, who was doing triples when my mother, in pigtails, was skinning the cat on a backyard trapeze) do not use a third performer at all.... when the flyer leaves the bar, it is left swinging, so that the flyer's return to his trapeze is dependent on the calculated speed and force with which he has left it...and the precision of his movements in leaving, to keep it moving absolutely straight. In an interview with Ernie Clarke (way back in 1921!) a reporter asked him what he thought about in mid-air. He confessed that on his way up to the top of the tent, he thought about the crowds; but that, the moment he left the bar, he never had more than one thought in his mind -- whether or not he had left the bar even and straight.

This, of course, puts a flyer out of the picture trick class, and out of the scope of this fanzine.

I seem to have a few lines left, and there is hardly time to go from flying to any less lofty subject, so I'll tell, for the edification of people who believe that accidents should get you down, the story of Charles Seigrist, who used to finish up his act by a swan-dive from his high perch, turning three somersaults into a net seventy feet below. One day he fell off by accident and turned over three and a half times, landing on his face in the net and snapping several vertebrae in his neck. The rebound out of the neck also broke his leg. But when the other members of his act reached him, he was trying to get up and finish his act with a flourish.

They carted the old fellow (he was not young then) off to the hospital and strapped his neck into a harness. Some time later, a horrified nurse came into the room to discover that he had wriggled out of the harness and was moving his neck experimentally. They strapped him promptly into a tighter harness, and not being Houdine, I suppose he stayed there. It never occurred to him to think of himself as finished, though accidents far less serious had permanently grounded other flyers; six months later he walked back on the Ringling grounds and next season he was doing double somersaults to the catcher's hands again, with undiminished vigor.

As Dexter Fellows remarked in his book, you can't keep a circus squirrel on the ground. At the age of seventy-two, Charles Seigrist was still flying, and none of the kids in the business could touch him....what's a little thing like a broken neck? If, that is, you happen to be Charles Seigrist.

There ought to be a moral in that story somewhere. Morals, anybody?

Genuine Pre-FAPAN MAILING COMMENT

BETWEEN STENCILS :Freeload division

Since Ted Pauls is not yet a member of FAPA, he cannot mailing-comment in FAPA. However, he sent me a lengthy "mailing comment" on CATCH TRAP, and I am reprinting it here, in part. In part because I don't have four pages handy, and also because I am too shy to print egoboo.

Follows Ted's Genuine Pre-Fapan Mailing Comment; CATCH TRAP, Bradley; When I was 10 or 11, possibly earlier, I saw an aerialist fall. Fortunately, there was a net beneath. The woman, whose name I do not remember, was, as a climax to her act, supposed to fall from the trapeze and (since she had a rope --invisible at a distance-- strapped to her wrist, stop at about twenty feet from the net.) Only it didn't work. She was supposed to "slip" from the trapeze at its highest point, swing in an arc and from there grab the large rope and descend. What actually happened was that her leg became entangled in the rope and she was unable to let go until the trapeze had reached nearly its lowest point. Then, instead of swinging neatly in an arc, she fell straight down --this extra, stunned-dead-weight, plus the unexpected jerk as the rope ran out; was sufficient to break it, sending her head-first into the net. We learned later that the force of the sudden stop had ripped several muscles in her neck and arm. # \$ //++That is an example of the kind of aerial act I can't watch. They scare the very life out of me. It isn't, as I tried to make clear, the danger of an aerial act that fascinates me; it's the rhythmical beauty of flight. ++ // Yes, static eliminators give you quite a jolt, but you aren't supposed to touch them. Actually the "eliminator" title is misleading -- the tinsel collects the static that builds up in the mimeograph, and while it protects the user of the machine from shock, it actually gives a concentrated shock if you happen to touch it. It's a question of whether you want your shocks concentrated, or in one lump. //++ Well, actually I'd prefer not having any!)

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Kerry, who did the covers on this and the last Day*Star, wrote me a letter I can't locate, remarking that the Ozzie and Harriet show, of all places, starred a brief flying sequence with David and Ricky Nelson (!) and a couple of professional aerialists.

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The time of typing this stencil; February 22, 1960; and the FAPA mailing isn't here yet --the February mailing, that is. Also, this Saturday, I am about to see the movie which you all recommended with one voice after my column in YANDRO on the flying trapeze; namely, THE FLYING FONTAINES. I'd like to wait and review it, since that seems suited to the theme of this Day*Star; but after running off this stencil I am going to clean up the mimeo (a mess after the last sandstorm) and get ready for the Checklist, which this year is longer than the FANCYCLOPEDIA II. Hence this Day*Star, for the May mailing of FAPA and a few personal friends, is going off right away. And please ...thanks for bearing with me....this is probably the last issue of Day*Star which will be devoted exclusively to the flying trapeze.