

"THE PHANTOM EMPIRE"

Fictinized by David Fluornoy

From the MASCOT Motion Picture Serial

In Twelve Thrilling Chapters — Episode No. 2

"THE THUNDER RIDERS"

Synopsis: Gene Autry's radio broadcasts have made his Radio Ranch a popular spot. Prof. Beetson, coveting the radiom on the land, attempts Gene's murder. Gene's death is also decreed by Tika, Queen of the lost under-ground nation of Murania lying under the ranch. Her horsemen send Gene with Frankie and Betsy Baxter, his two youthful pals, plunging over a cliff.

As Queen Tika's terrible masked Thunder Riders swept away, Gene managed to grasp a bush just below the cliff-brink, Frankie and Betsy clung to him as their fall toward death was arrested. But the bush was pulling loose. In another minute—

"Look!" cried Frankie in sudden hope. "Our Junior Thunder Riders!"

The young members of his club had galloped to the edge of the opposite precipice. They now hurried a lariat across the gaping chasm and Gene quickly looped it about a tree. Then he, Frankie and Betsy climbed hand-over-hand to safety among their friends.

"There's just time to reach Radio Ranch for your two o'clock broadcast Gene," Betsy reminded.

"And if you don't get there you'll lose the contract," added her brother.

They mounted and galloped for Radio Ranch, arriving just in time.

During the broadcast sinister Prof. Beetson beckoned to his friends, Cooper and Saunders:

"Autry doesn't suspect that we tried to kill him; yet I know a better means of getting rid of him. If his partner Baxter were shot— if shells were found in Gene's rifle—you see?"

Stealthily they planted exploded shells in Gene's rifle. Later, during the radio play, a shot rang out and poor Baxter, father of Frankie and Betsy, fell dead. An examination disclosed the bullets in Gene's gun.

"Hold him for the sheriff!" Prof. Beetson loudly ordered.

Frankie and Betsy hurried to their friend's side.

"We know you would not shoot our dad, Gene!" said Betsy, trying bravely to fight back the tears.

"And I'm going to prove I didn't Gene declared. "When the sheriff gets here I'll be gone. If I went to jail I'd never find the real murderers."

The secret killers clamored for the sheriff to take Gene away. But as the officer arrived, the two-fisted rancher broke from his captors and vaulted into the saddle. In another moment faithful "Pico" had galloped with him into the hills.

"After him," cried Beetson, "in my plane!"

Never suspecting he was aiding the actual murderers of Baxter, the sheriff took a supply of tear-gas bombs and boarded the mad Professor's airplane with Beetson's henchman, Sharpe, as pilot.

And the rest of the plotters gloated, sure that Gene Autry would soon be killed or captured, leaving them free to seize his radiom-laden land.

But they reckoned without the dread men of Murania!

Far down in that underground nation, the cruel but beautiful Queen Tika stared balefully into the marvellous television screen which pictured all these foregoing events. Around her in the control-room of gleaming jeweled metal were a myriad of miraculous inventions such as earth-men would not achieve in the next 500 years.

"Gene Autry must be captured at all costs!" She cried. "My warrior, Ord, has failed in his first attempt." Her beautiful hand swept up in an imperious gesture to Argo, her satanic chancellor.

"Give Ord ten lashes; then send him again to take Autry—or lose his head!"

Burning with shame and pain, her Thunder guard captain, Ord, swept surfaceward in the great Muranian elevator and soon was leading his troupe of masked horsemen after Gene Autry.

Gene saw the Muranians sweeping toward him, and urged tired Pico to greater speed. He glanced up as an ominous hum filled the heavens. Beetson's plane was zooming toward him, too.

In the parachute compartment, unknown to anyone, Frankie and Betsy were hiding.

Rifles began to crack and Gene's horse fell. Gene stumbled along on foot, then the Thunder Riders were upon him. They swept him up and thundered away toward the secret mountain entrance to Murania.

Miles underground, blonde Queen Tika raged as she watched the television screen.

"The airplane dares attack my troops with gas bombs!" She shrieked. "Suma, destroy it with an aerial torpedo!"

Her gunner made ready an enormous radio-controlled torpedo, pressed a button, and it flashed out through the mountain-side, up through the sky, straight toward the doomed plane. Sharpe, the pilot, saw it. He screamed. Then torpedo met plane in a deafening explosion.

(Learn Frankie and Betsy's fate in this newspaper next week.)

RECORD TRUCK SALES

Detroit, April 24.—The Chevrolet Motor Company today reported that retail sales of trucks this year to April 1, totalling 40,332, have set a record for first quarter sales for the last six years, and have been exceeded only once before in the history of the company, in the first quarter of 1929.

Special significance is seen in a marked increase in registrations of half-ton trucks, says the Chevrolet announcement issued by W. E. Fish, manager of the truck division, who declared that this gain is a particularly healthy sign in that it is conclusive evidence that small merchants, whose business was the first to suffer in the depression, are now coming back. Chevrolet's smaller trucks, of half-ton capacity, such as are largely used by these small business places, showed a 93 per cent gain in registrations so far officially reported, said Mr. Fish.

The high rate of sales, of all classes of trucks, which established the first quarter of the year as the second highest in the history of Chevrolet, says the company's statement, is continuing unabated, sales for the first ten days in April having shown a greater increase per cent over the same period of last year than did the first quarter. Total truck sales for the first ten-day period of April were 5365.

Baraca-Philathea Convention

The Franklin County Baraca-Philathea Convention will meet with the White Level Baptist Church Sunday, May 5th, at 10 o'clock.

We are urging all classes to have delegates at this meeting to represent your class.

The following program will be given:

10 o'clock—Opening Song Audience.

Devotional—G. A. Nelms, White Level.

Welcome—P. B. Murphy, White Level.

Response—Albert Joyner, Sandy Creek.

Special Music—Lawrence Bros. Quartette, Raleigh.

Special Music—Durham Male Quartette, Durham.

Reading of minutes of last meeting.

Appointment of judges and committees.

Special Music—Lawrence Bros. Quartette, Raleigh.

Special Music—Durham Male Quartette, Durham.

Roll Call by classes.

Address—Mr. Hubert May, Nashville, N. C.

LUNCH

1:15 Special Music—Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Miller.

Introduction of Speaker—Rev. F. G. Walker, Castalia.

Address—Rev. L. B. Reavis, Henderson, N. C.

Special Music—Lawrence Bros. Quartette, Raleigh.

Report of judges and committees.

Special Music—Durham Male Quartette, Durham.

Awarding of Banners, Benediction.

In March the Catawba FCX experienced its best month's business so far. First reports on April indicate that it will exceed March.

Protracted rainy weather over much of the State has delayed spring plowing in many sections. Planting may also be delayed if bad weather continues.

Baer's Next Foe



PAS

NEW YORK . . . James J. Braddock (above), New Jersey heavy weight, gets his chance at Max Baer's world heavyweight crown in a 15 round June battle here. The New York State Athletic Commission has approved the match.

RECORD POURING

Saginaw, Mich., April 28.—The gray iron foundry of the Chevrolet Motor Company set a new all-time record for a single day's pouring on April 19 with a total of 2306 tons. The previous high record was 2152 tons, set one year ago. The new record was made with twelve cupolas in operation.

On four successive days, ending with the record day, an average of 2103 tons a day was poured. The total for the five-day week was 10,279 tons.

The foundry makes castings for Chevrolet passenger cars and trucks, including cylinder blocks, pistons, and clutch and transmission housings. Parts are shipped to the company's several manufacturing plants to be machined and finished ready for dispatch to the ten Chevrolet assembly plants throughout the United States.

A recent carlot shipment of poultry from Martin County carried 15,256 pounds of poultry that sold for \$2,282.84.

Halifax County farmers are showing more interest in producing certified seed for sale.

SPRING is now HERE

And we are all ready for the spring rush of cleaning, pressing and repairing of those almost as good as new spring clothes laid away last year for wear this year.

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RUTH GIBSON'S ENGAGEMENT

Wide interest will be centered in the announcement made Sunday by Mrs. William Asa Gibson of the engagement of her daughter, Ruth Elaine, to Lawrence Clifton Houck, of Philadelphia, formerly of New Orleans.

Miss Gibson is one of three lovely sisters, all of whom are general favorites in the younger set. Her father, the late William Asa Gibson, was one of Birmingham's most popular business men, and her mother is a charming representative of distinguished South Alabama families, prominently identified with the history of the state.

Mr. Houck is the son of Mr. Frank Houck and the late Mrs. Houck of Henderson, N. C. His boyhood was spent in North Carolina, but he has been in New Orleans for the past 10 years where he has been associated with the

Bohn Motor Company. He is now connected with Neiman Motors, Inc., in Philadelphia, where he and his bride will make their home.

Plans for the wedding are to be announced later.—The Birmingham News.

Mr. Houck was a former Louisburg boy and is the son of Mr. M. F. Houck, who was a popular contractor in Louisburg several years ago.

Good lespedeza growing weather this year has aided the balanced farming program in Martin County. The county agent says some of the lespedeza stands are the prettiest he has ever seen.

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