

Phantom Ranch

WRITTEN FOR AND RELEASED BY CENTRAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

by OREN ARNOLD

SYNOPSIS
LORENA HAMILTON has come to Arizona to visit her uncle GEORGE BRAZEE, owner of Phantom ranch, whose leading cowboys are JERRY DALE, college-bred newcomer, who is fascinated by Lorena, and SHOT ROGERS, who finds himself in love with her.

YESTERDAY: Lorena talks to Rogers about applying modern detective methods, instead of armed forces, to tracking down the cattle rustlers.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO
"I BEEN thinking a lot about what you said, Miss Lorena," Shot Rogers stated after supper. "I'd like to hear your ideas some more." He had managed to get her off for a walk alone.

"You mean about what lovely things flowers are?" she asked, dimpling ever so little but pretending to be serious.

He got her point. "Now, Miss Lorena," he smiled genially, "don't you start diggin' at me, too! I cain't whup you and you know it; but maybe I ought to try, at that!"

She laughed gaily at him and dared him to try, and he made a motion of hitting at her a few times.

"I'll never hear the last of them—of those flowers, ma'am. You don't never want to make a man pick flowers for you like that. It gets him in bad."

"Did it get Jerry in bad, too, Shot?"

"Oh," he was serious now. "Well, you see he's different. He and the boys don't—well, it's different there."

Lorena thought she understood. Also that she was treading on dangerous conversational ground. She changed the subject.

"What had you been thinking about, Shot? Seriously, I mean."

"About that detective work and all, Trailing Escobar. I figure that it would cost more than George Brazee can afford to keep up enough armed force to protect his stock, if Escobar's going to keep building up his army and keep raiding. And George can't very well call in the United States federal force. So maybe you're right. Maybe we ought to match brains against him, and not so many guns. Now me—rely a lot on guns, and strength. I—well, too much, I reckon, Miss Lorena. I apologize."

She put her hand on his arm then, halting him.

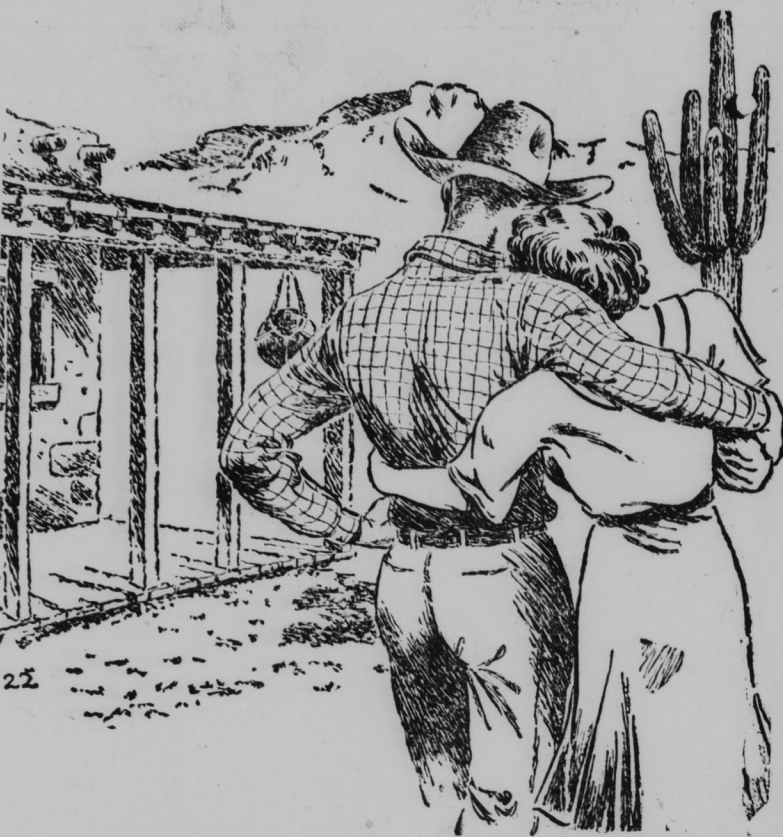
"Some men have to use strength, Shot." She spoke very earnestly, looking up at his face. "Society needs protectors. Don't feel ashamed. Or embarrassed. Just because you hit a man with your fist at a dance. That's it, I know. I don't hold that against you. I thought at first that you were being boorish, but I have been thinking a lot, too. I am—and I was then—secretly thrilled to have a man fight for me. Actually fight for me! And Shot—when are you going to begin calling me Lorena, without the 'Miss'?"

Young Rogers inhaled deeply, happily. Not in a long time had he received so much spiritual bounty in one short speech. The manner, the tone, as much as the actual words, were an exhilaration to him.

"I haven't dared," he almost whispered, speaking fiercely.

"Don't be ill at ease," she went on gently. "You are unduly shy at times. Aunt Sally says so, too. Nobody likes a forward man but you needn't have fear of that. I want us to be good friends. I—well, I notice how you try to correct your speech, Shot, and how you have ideals and thoughts away above the average cowboy. You have good stuff in you. Uncle George trusts you a lot. He says you are a fine young man. I thought somebody ought to tell you these things!"

"My stars, Mi—Lorena!" His tone gave her thanks, even if his words fumbled them. He looked worshipfully at her, then turned



Simultaneously, then, each slipped an arm around the other.

away as if distrusting himself to look into her eyes any longer. He had already known she had the most beautiful eyes in the world; he was afraid he might tell her so and that would spell disaster!

"My daddy taught me a lot of things about the outdoors," Lorena resumed their talk. "I have hunted long hours with him, and fished. Most of the things were common sense. I can see how they apply out here in Arizona as well as in Kentucky. Daddy was well read, too. He knew a lot about your state. He used to long to visit here himself. I think that's why mother was so anxious for me to come."

"I'm sure proud you did," he told her. "What say we go back and talk about this private scouting business, this detective work, to George Brazee and them?"

"All right."

They found George and Sally Brazee and two friends of theirs, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Anderson from the neighboring L Bar 9 ranch, inside by the lamplight. After greetings Shot Rogers broached the topic in his mind. The Andersons were deeply interested, too, having come to inquire of George about the trouble with raiding thieves.

The opinions, however, were mostly negative.

Nobody seemed to think that detective work could be applied against an enemy that used mostly force. Tradition in the southwest, especially along the border land; was that gun must be matched with gun, battle with battle, death with death.

"I don't mean," Mr. Brazee concluded his summation of it, "that I want to go out and kill, even Mexican crooks. I hated to have to haul those two poor devils in on Thursday, hated to know I had been a part in their death. Hated it aside from the legal details—we still got the formalities to complete, and all that, you know. But folks, if Escobar's another typical revolutionist, then he's a bandit at heart and you know it. And the Mexican government knows it and would thank us to run him down. Only we don't yet know where he hides out or how he gets my cows out of their valleys and escapes with them, or how he—"

"That's it," Shot put in. "That's just it. We don't know too much."

Lorena nodded, backing him. But they still didn't see it that way. Only thing George would agree to was to stick by his bargain to let Shot have his own free rein in directing the fight on Escobar.

"If you want to try private trail-ing, why, go ahead, son," big George said. "But keep your armed riders at hand for quick call."

Lorena and Shot went back outside alone, then. They liked to be under the moon and stars. And, anyway, Shot could always talk more freely in the darkness; he didn't feel half as bashful about talking to a girl then.

He wished he could find some adroit manner of switching their conversation back to a personal basis, whereby he could court her in the manner his heart bade him to do. But he wasn't good at such maneuvering. Before he knew it they were back on the other topic again.

"Since the rain is over, and since the big rustling effort was a failure, don't you think Escobar will try to raid again?" she suggested.

"Or will he think you are too strong for him, and so stay away?"

"No, I doubt that, ma'am. Lorena, I mean. My lord, he had 30 or 40 men in that band Wednesday night! I don't know whether he was with them or not. Probably he wasn't; he'd be playing safe. But he probably thinks he's stronger than any force any rancher can afford to keep. And he can set out spies that watch a rancher's movements and—"

"Exactly!" she broke in. "His spies can see your armed riders leave the ranch and send back the news of where they are. Don't you imagine that's what he did Thursday, Shot?"

"Say! Maybe that's right. Maybe we ought to try to get some—some, uh, inside information, so to speak, to know where we're at before we try to run him down by force."

She turned to face him then. She reached out suddenly and grasped both his arms at the elbows, holding him tight in the earnestness of her next words.

"Shot, let's try it! Let's go out and scout around—you and I if a woman rides out with a man, any spies wouldn't be suspicious. . . . See? . . . Don't you see? . . . And I have cause to hate Escobar, remember. His men kidnaped me! . . . I want to go, Shot. I want to try it. I could do it. I can ride and shoot. And I'm not afraid. I want to help Uncle George. Let's go out quietly and see if we can possibly learn anything!"

Simultaneously, then, more like brother and sister, each slipped an arm around the other as they strolled along and talked on and on. (To Be Continued)

BRIGHTER DAYS FOR BETTY

Little Betty, now two years old, has a brighter, safer childhood than her grandmother enjoyed.

Today, Betty's doctor can guard her steps against many of the pitfalls of earlier generations of children. Modern nutrition, with its knowledge of vitamins, minerals and other food-essentials, gives her a better chance of having a sturdy body.

The advertisements in the Daily Dispatch have also played a part in smoothing Betty's path. Dad read one and bought insurance to protect her future. Every day Mother reads of wholesome foods to help Betty grow . . . crisp, new frocks to set off her dancing eyes . . . simple, reliable items for the medicine chest when Betty stubs her toe.

Yes, the advertisements are a big help in raising a family. They save shopping steps. They inform you of reliable products and help your dollars make ends meet.

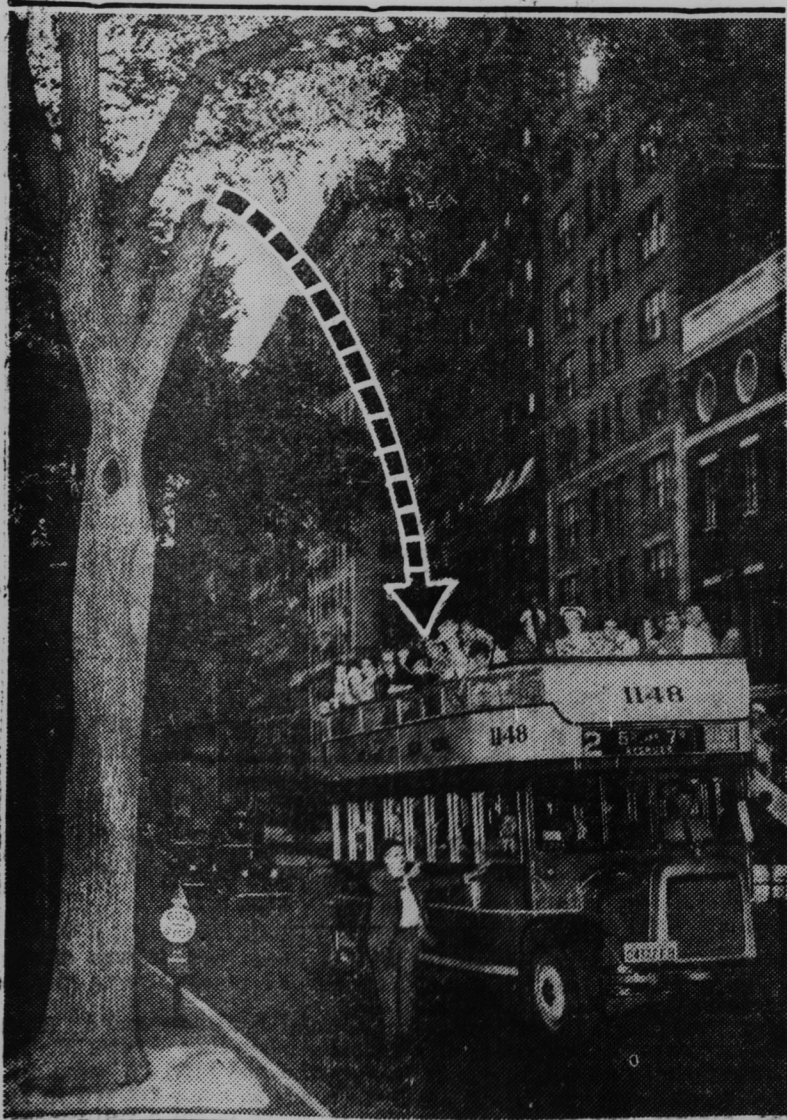
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IN THE

Henderson Daily Dispatch

Save Time, Money and Energy

Tree Kills 5th Ave. Bus Rider



When a limb fell off the tree at left onto the crowded open top of a New York Fifth Avenue bus, such as one shown, a man was killed and two women injured. The bus driver turned around and sped to Mt. Sinai Hospital, seven blocks away, with the victims. Limb evidently had been weakened by previous day's storm. (Central Press)

Parted by Shot



Pictured with his mother, Mrs. Stiano Braggiotti, is Sebastian Braggiotti, 13, who was accidentally killed by discharge of a rifle while shooting frogs with two young friends at Ogunquit, Me. The boy's father is a member of the socially prominent stage family of Boston.

Wife Preservers



If a leather garment has gotten wet, allow it to dry in ordinary room temperature—never near artificial heat. Place on coat hanger and shape carefully. Stuff folded paper into sleeves to shape them, and hang where air can circulate around it.