

# Girl with a VOICE

By Kyle Crichton

**The meteoric career of Miss Martha Raye, showing you what can be accomplished in Hollywood by a well-placed yell**

**S**HORTLY after 2:17 of a cold California morning, Louie Prima stopped pushing that cracked voice of his around, waved his trumpet in an agitated circle and led a chorus which was yelling:

"Martha! Martha!"

The sad-faced guitar player looked no more doleful than ever, the pudgy clarinet gentleman beamed, the pianist looked over his shoulder with interest and the bozo operating the bull fiddle showed signs of pleasure.

"Martha!" everybody yelled and the coaxing didn't need to continue long, for Martha Raye got up from a table and started to sing.

It wasn't the Trocadero or the Clover Club or the Casanova, but merely Louie Prima's Famous Door in Hollywood, a place no larger than your grandmother's front parlor.

She sang My Memories and I've Got You Under My Skin and two other late ones, with Louie sitting on a chair on the silly little platform which serves as an orchestra stand in the Famous Door, accompanying her with discreet toots on his horn. She wasn't getting a cent for it and she wasn't impressing anybody of importance because the only other celebrity was a featured player who had been dragged in by proletarian friends.

It was merely what Martha Raye had been working up to from early morning. She had got up at six, had been on the set at Paramount doing Waikiki Wedding from nine to six, and had then done two broadcasts, one at 6:30 and another at 8:30. The Prima appearance was just something for her own amusement.

"I sang in them back in the days when a pretzel was a full meal," she says. "Why should I stop now?"

The only reason she should stop, says the studio in shocked tones, is that she is giving away a year's salary of a section hand every time she opens her mouth.

"Look at me," says Martha in reply. "What a mouth. . . . And it's open."

The Raye story is one of the epics of Hollywood. Slightly over a year ago she was singing in the Casanova Club, a typical night-club entertainer and trouper. It was on one of the famous Sunday nights at the Trocadero, however, that she sold herself to the movies. She got up in that audience of swells and big-wigs and literally tore the roof off the joint.

"When I opened my mouth, they thought it was a cave-in," she says. "They could hear me in Santa Barbara."

Adolf Zukor sent his card over; Darryl

Zanuck sent a man over to her table; Norman Taurog, the director, came over in person. It was almost too easy. She finally signed with Paramount and they wrote a part for her into Rhythm on the Range, which was already in production. Now she has picture contracts and radio contracts and gives endorsements for beauty creams, which in some respects seems a bit too much, but what of it?

"It's a cinch!" cries Martha. "All you need is a lot of talent and being able to do without meals for a year or two."

She comes of a theatrical family and for years was the little girl in Reed and Hooper, along with her brother. Reed was Papa and Hooper was Mamma. Later the act became Bud and Margie Reed, Margie being Martha's real name.

"I was born in the theater at Butte, Montana," says Martha, "but I don't remember anything about it. The one I remember is Bud. The old man had a tab show and we were stranded in Grand Rapids, Mich. That was when Bud was born. We couldn't afford a doctor and the chorus girls in the troupe delivered the baby. I can remember them running around with hot water."

## The Road Down

The Reeds were eternally having their ups and downs. At one time when the act was known as Bud and Margie Reed, they got \$400 a week. That was the top and they soon started slipping.

"I never could understand it," says Martha. "We were just as good as we ever had been."

The descent was rapid when it began and they went from scattered weeks of work to split weeks in Passaic and finally to club work.

"We'd go sixty miles for a \$15 date," says Martha. "Some Elks' Club or something having a Saturday night binge."

The only thing they hung onto was their car because without it they wouldn't have been able to get anything. They could make a few meals out of the \$15 date and get their gasoline money.

"We slept in the car," says Martha. "We had a little scenery for the act and the old man had that packed so it made a platform level with the tops of the front and back seats. Ma and Bud and I slept back there on top of the scenery and the old gent curled up in front. Don't worry, you can sleep when you're tired."

About that time they began to figure out that the family could probably make more money if it split up. A good single could often make as much as a whole

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# New Evidence

By Frank Kilroe

Why Martin Dugan, who made one mistake, never knew it. The dramatic finish of a young man too clever for the police

THE drawing room of the old Reading house was a formal place, quiet with the prearranged, almost ominous hush of a stage set in a silent theater. There was so little out of place, so little to indicate that it was part of a house still used for living, that you were surprised to hear the faint lilting of the maids' voices off in the kitchen wing, to notice that the magazines laid carefully in the rack were not last year's or older.

The conference would be held there this afternoon, as soon as the toxicologist from Albany submitted his report on the autopsy. It was, as Mrs. Reading had said, a matter best settled within the four walls of her home.

Archie Somers, the county prosecutor, was coming over with the report. They would decide when he came what action to take. Until then, there was nothing for Mrs. Reading to do but wait, and let her unresting mind run over for the hundredth time the things that had come before.

It was not quite a year since Martin Dugan came to Readington. That would always be an easy day for her to remember, the afternoon he first entered her house. The telegram had come the day before from Alice in New York, announcing the marriage. She and Polly were waiting tea for the newlyweds and expecting nothing but the worst.

He came in as though he knew it, stiffly, with his face set against the certainty of her disapproval and his thin lips twisted into what tried to be a properly filial smile. Not even having Alice there by his side, laughing fondly at him and saying, "A son-in-law I picked up for you in the city, Mother," had dispelled the chill of that first meeting.

It was inevitable, of course. He knew she must have seen the story the New York papers had made of his runaway marriage to Alice. The Reading name had been a favorite with the metropolitan scandalmongers ever since Cousin Will Reading set forth on his arduous career as a collector, husband, and constant litigant of Broadway's more acquisitive show girls. The marvel to Mrs. Reading was that the papers had made as little as they had of this midnight elopement of an obscure young lawyer with a girl who was heiress to the fabulous Reading carpet fortune and all the Readington domain that went with it.

They had made enough of it for Martin, though. He sat through his initial interview with Mrs. Reading, on the edge of his chair, with his teacup held nervously before him, as if he wanted to be ready to set it down and leave as soon as she had told him he would never do.

As the head of the Reading family, that might have been expected of her. But Mrs. Reading was never very good at feigning sternness. All through the gentle agony of their forced and halting

conversation, she found herself wondering how Alice, whose tastes had always run to playboys, had fallen in love with this solemn young man, as she so obviously had, and how, having managed that, she had inveigled him into the recklessness of a midnight marriage at Armonk, or wherever the place was.

And so, unable to be forbidding, Mrs. Reading ended by liking him. It was a fondness she would never share with her younger daughter.

"I think he's hideous," Polly burst out that first evening. "With all the men in the world for Alice to choose, that she should take such a stick."

"Don't be a silly," her mother told her. "People aren't supposed to like their relatives-in-law. Especially headstrong, intolerant young people like you. What do you suppose he thought of you, sulking in the corner as though the cat had your tongue?"

"Whatever it is," Polly muttered indifferently, "if it's half as little as I think of—"

"No doubt it is," Mrs. Reading could remember saying. "He seemed a very good choice to me. Much better than we had any right to expect. A quiet, sober, well-mannered young man."

"The scheming type," Polly told her stubbornly. "Anyone could tell he married Alice for her money. That sharp look in his eyes. I think it's hideous. I think he's hideous."

Mrs. Reading laughed then. "You're a fool, Polly. One minute, he's a stick. The next minute, he's the scheming type. All that he really is is a stranger in a very difficult situation, being careful, as your young friends say, to keep his chin in. In the circumstances, your melodramatics are a little childish."

"I suppose now you'll be making a place for him in the business."

"We will speak of it," Mrs. Reading said. "The estate needs sons to manage it. That was a way in which I failed your father. As long as Martin is Alice's husband, and she loves him, there will be a place for him in my house and a place for him in Readington."

SO, EVEN at the beginning of it, she had been his friend against the others. On his second day in Readington, she asked him what plans he and Alice had made. She hoped he could see his way to settling down in Readington to help with the management of the family interests. The ten years she had spent alone at it after Harry Reading's death had been far from easy.

Her offer did not go a-begging with Martin. The gratitude in his heavy-lidded eyes was almost pathetic, she told herself, watching his thin lips shape the careful words of acceptance.

As a matter of fact, he said, he had hoped for such an opportunity. He had



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