

Poor Man's Fishing

By Frank J. Taylor

There are millions of stripers and thousands of rabid week-end fishermen. Just another of California's "biggest and bests"

PHOTOGRAPHED BY IFOR THOMAS
COLLIER'S STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

YOU'VE heard of "Doc" Watt and Jabes Swan and W. A. L. "Midnight" Miller, of course. No? Well, memory's short. The trio led the Western bass anglers' hot-stove league for years. The Doc was the scientific fisherman. Jabes did the biggest talking. But Miller landed the most fish. Some say it was because he loved to fish at midnight in his favorite haunt, San Gregorio lagoon, just south of San Francisco.

All Mr. Midnight Miller needed to land fish was a last Sunday's newspaper, a stout rod and line, a reel, some clam necks, a forked stick and a bell. Oh, yes, and a bottle of paste. Assembling these items and himself by a campfire of a Saturday night, he followed a ritual. Six double pages of newsprint pasted together and spread on the salt grass made a bed. Six more became a blanket. A few additional sheets propped up with stakes formed a windbreak against the sea breezes.

Threading a clam neck on his hook, he cast the line far into the lagoon, rested his rod over the forked stick, tied the bell to the line near the reel. After a yawn and a stretch, he crawled between the paper covers to doze off and dream of finny monsters until the bell rang. It always rang at midnight. Bounding to his feet, Mr. Miller exulted in twenty strenuous and glorious minutes until there lay at his feet in the pale moonlight a glistening fat bass, silvery with black stripes from gills to tail. Recasting and adjusting the bell, he crawled between the newsprint again to await the next call that would come from the lagoon.

"That, sir," he used to say, "is poor man's fishing."

Well, times and tides have changed. Mr. Midnight Miller has passed to his reward. Poor men don't fish at night any more, nor do rich men, either, it being against the rules in most states. But Mr. Miller's worthy adversary, *Roccus lineatus*, "stripers" to most of us, has kept on multiplying and battling for the bait until today he is considered one of our greatest game fish.

Just to refresh your fish lore, striped bass are natives of the Middle Atlantic waters from the Carolinas to Massachusetts. They're not true bass nor true perch, yet are related to both. They are on the increase on the Pacific Coast, where prior to 1879 there wasn't a striper in existence. That year, Livingstone Stone, of the U. S. Fish Commission, gathered in 135 young stripers about three inches in length from the Navesink River in New Jersey and carried them overland by train to Carquinez Straits where he liberated them. Three years later, J. G. Woodbury, of the state fish bureau, brought five hundred more from the Shrewsbury River, also in New Jersey. These he planted in Suinsun Bay, likewise an arm of San Francisco Bay.

From this modest start, within twenty years, the commercial catch of striped bass in San Francisco Bay exceeded a million pounds a year, and the Saturday-Sunday anglers were hauling out as many more. The stripers proceeded to clear the waters of carp, suckers, bullheads and the other relatively useless fish. They migrated up the coast to Coos Bay, Oregon, and as far south as Monterey Bay, though they stubbornly refused to linger when planted in the warmer waters of southern California.

While they were successfully making a new home for themselves on the Pacific, their cousins were fighting a losing battle along the Atlantic. By 1908, a U. S. Bureau of Fisheries Survey revealed the catch in California running neck and neck with that of nine Middle Atlantic states pooled together. Anglers still catch bigger stripers off the Eastern shores, the quarter-century record being a sixty-five pounder landed

by a Rhode Islander, Arthur Clarke of Jamestown, two years back. Last year's honors went to an Attleboro, Massachusetts, angler, E. S. Kerfoot, whose eel bait intrigued an unwary fifty-five pounder off Narragansett Pier. The best the Westerners could show was Alf Brume's forty-five pounder landed at the mouth of the Russian River, on whose banks Mr. Brume lives.

But week in, week out, year in, year out, the Western anglers have the best of the striped-bass sport, in spite of the fact that the striper is a newcomer and an exotic fish on the Pacific. The reason is that fifteen thousand rabid week-end fishermen have banded together through a federation of seventy angling clubs in a militant lobby known as The Associated Sportsmen to save the striper from extinction. Their first objective, won three years ago, was the law making the striped bass strictly a game fish, prohibited in commerce, like trout. Their all-time battle is to save Western waters from pollution, which is the number-one reason the striper is slipping in his native Atlantic waters. The bass can hold his own against the anglers, but he can't stand oil from refineries,

chemicals from industries and filth from sewage-disposal plants. It's a good deal as Skipper Gene Copp says:

"Boy, you can fish the same hot spot for forty years, and the bass will still come back to it. I know, because I've done it. But start polluting the waters and Mr. Bass leaves that same day. I've seen that happen, too."

Skipper Copp of Oakland rates as one of the practical authorities on stripers. Some of the scientific gents across the bay in the Fish and Game Commission offices may have more theories, but he has the facts. He's studied the fish from the business end of a rod since he was twelve, when he caught his first bass in the estuary. The skipper's been fishing since: thirty years for the fun of it, ten as the professional guide, friend and boatsman of San Francisco anglers.

The Skipper and the Missus, that is. He met the Missus twenty-seven years ago. She liked to drag them out as much as he did, so they practically lived on the Fanco, the boat he built and named for her.

The stripers like to ride the incoming salty tides up the bay and into the (Continued on page 62)



It's a twenty- to forty-five-minute game of patience to tire out and land a striped bass

WHEN her marriage burst in her face, Nancy Cutter fled to Hollywood from San Francisco. When you are thirty-one, when all your hopes for a home that would stand and a love that would last are dynamited, it is so difficult to be sweet.

You may be simple and old-fashioned like Nancy; you may still believe that children and a home are enough, but when your husband does an about-face, when it all goes smash, you may do what Nancy did: bring your money to Hollywood, throw it high up Hollywood Boulevard and deep into the valleys of Beverly Hills.

Draw a big, red smile on your face with lipstick, smear a happy glow on your cheeks, toss the gayest parties of the season, and find a man who is just too funny for words, a man who tells you not to take life seriously though you know it is the most serious thing in the world and draining fast, a man whose clothes and jokes and smiles are made to order, someone like that big screen writer Nancy was expecting, Remington Brooke.

Nancy was succeeding in being very gay, and everyone who had come to drink her liquor and gulp her food told her what a simply charming hostess she was. But Al Manners didn't tell her anything, because he was one of those writers who can't stand parties; his only excuse for showing up was that he wanted to see Nancy. He couldn't tell her how gay and marvelous she was, because you didn't need an X-ray to see that Nancy's powder and her war paint were pretty poor camouflage. Al cared enough for Nancy to see that she was laughing the way people do when they are lost and so very lonely. He kept coming to these parties because he had to tell her this before it was too late—before she gave herself up entirely to these rooms of smoke and laughter, and to Remington Brooke.

They had run out of gossip—one finally does in Hollywood—and in desperation had turned to ghost stories. Nancy switched off all the lights, and the butler lit the fire in the fireplace, and everybody looked thoughtfully or blankly or drunkenly into it.

Just then a man of importance made an entrance—a big sunburned hulk, whose arty clothes did not quite suit his thick, satisfied face. His several double chins slid down the neck of his tweed blazer, on the side pocket of which stood an ostentatious British crest. He framed himself in the doorway and stage-whispered "Beware!" and one little starlet shrieked a tuneful tremolo, and everybody laughed, the newcomer loudest of all. Then Nancy ran forward and they squeezed hands.

"Remmy, darling, you're just in time," Nancy

said, as he continued to hold her hand in that big sunburned paw of his, "we're telling ghost stories."

Nancy sat Remmy down in the middle of the circle and all eyes were on Remmy, which pleased Remmy very much. For he was one of those Hollywood landmarks, like Greta Garbo's 1920 car, or the doorman at the Trocadero, one of those human showcases who felt he was serving his function in life only when he was drawing a crowd.

Nancy curled up on the floor at his feet. Al watched them, understanding why a regular girl like Nancy should turn to Remmy after what had happened to her, wishing he knew a way to stop it. She caught his look and winked, not wanting Al to be too angry—he was such a dear—and Al winked back, not wanting her to know how angry he really was.

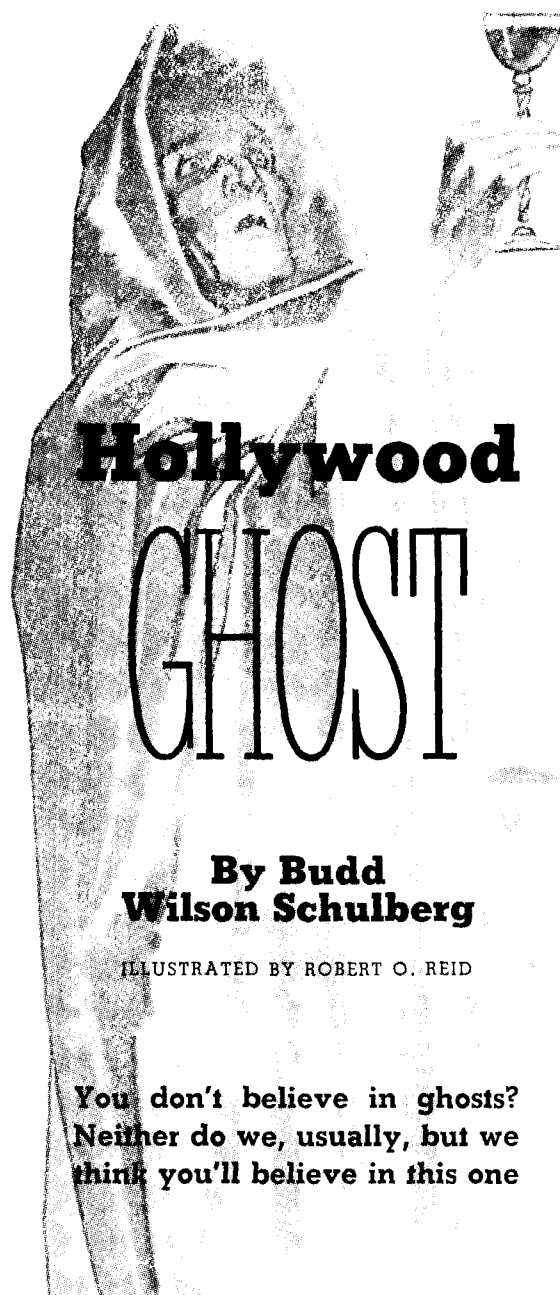
"Remember, girls and boys, everybody has to tell his spookiest story," Nancy warned. "You begin, Remmy," she begged. "I just know you have scads of ghost stories in your system simply screaming for expression."

"So I'm elected, am I?" he asked, speaking very clipped and British, for Remmy lived in a very English house in Beverly Hills, and spent six months of every year in London and collected pewter and complained about how uncivilized Hollywood was. And nearly everybody in town felt quite badly that Remmy had to sacrifice himself to Hollywood and America and forgot completely that he had first seen the light, or rather the murk, of day in Scranton, Pa.

"Your public is waiting, sire," Nancy said mincingly, and Remmy responded kittenishly, "Remember, you brought this on yourself—" Al Manners wondered what would happen if you tried to stop him from telling his story. Remmy leaned forward then, and put his fingers to his lips, and a hush fell over the place; and he began in whispered tones, telling a tale of the ghosts who returned to his father's banquet hall in England to finish a toast that had been interrupted by death.

THEY were all enthralled by Remmy's story, Nancy lost in a cloud of dense admiration and everybody listening spellbound—except Al, and a few other writers who were trying to think of yarns to top Remmy's as soon as he finished.

Al wished the real ghost of this story would appear—it would be really exciting to look upon the face of Edgar Allan Poe. He sat there sipping his highball and looking into the fire; he was twenty-nine, he had just been jumped to five hundred a week, he was trying not to listen to Remmy's phony dramatics. A lot of dough when you haven't got the dame



Hollywood GHOST

By Budd
Wilson Schulberg

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT O. REID

You don't believe in ghosts?
Neither do we, usually, but we
think you'll believe in this one

