

# The Retired TORPEDO

By HANNIBAL COONS

A somewhat colossal epic in which Dear George the press agent proves that you can't make an omelet without breaking yeggs

FEDERAL PICTURES  
Hollywood, California

From RICHARD L. REED  
Director of Publicity

January 2, 1951  
Air Mail

Mr. George Seibert  
Special Representative, Federal Pictures  
Hotel Book-Cadillac  
Detroit, Michigan

Dear George:

George, you'll be delighted to know that we've made another crime picture. Isn't that dandy? If my count is correct, this makes an even thousand of these gat-and-gutter dramas that Hollywood has turned out this year. What an elevating force we are in the life of this nation.

Why we go on making these things I don't know. Personally, I wouldn't let any child of mine under the age of thirty-five see a one of them. We feed the children of this country a steady diet of celluloid murders, and then wonder why little Junior can hardly wait to get out of school in the afternoon in order to hasten over to rob the liquor store. It is getting so that the papers are so full of crime news that there is hardly room left for the ads of our crime pictures, which is most embarrassing.

But, as usual, ours not to question why; ours but to figure out new ways of selling this stale mackerel. And on this one, spurred by desperation, I am going to employ a gimmick that is unusual in the extreme.

They have titled this new one, simply, Corruption. It concerns, vaguely, the old alky days in Chicago, and my first thought was to run the same old ads featuring a smoking revolver, six uses of the word evil, and an attractive illustration of a ninety-pound starlet getting hit in the face by a two-hundred-pound male actor. Why such ads are supposed to induce people to think of our pictures as entertainment, I do not know, even though I have been guilty of some of them myself. It's just that after you get violent on one picture, you figure you have to get more violent on the next one. Nero had this same idea in his double features in the arena. But we should bear in mind that Nero ended up, even with his most violent spectacles, not only giving away the seats for free, but having to send out squads of lads with whips in order to round up a suitable crowd.

So, on the ads for this one I am going to discard all violence, and become dignified and historical. This is the way things *once* were in our mighty land, oh, rue the day. I intend to become so sanctimonious that many people will think it an old Biblical play, possibly our last authentic look at the evil days of Sodom and Chicago.

The only trouble is that in order to foist any such travesty on the theatergoing public, I must

somehow convince them that the thing is actually authentic; that this is the way things *were*.

To accomplish this, I am going to feature in the ads large dignified statements from a bunch of former Chicago public officials, all attesting in noble tones to the accuracy of this mighty production. These statements I have secured by paying small amounts of cash to those concerned, and fortunately practically none of them considered it necessary to go to the trouble of actually seeing the picture before endorsing it.

So far so good. But what I need to wrap the thing up is a statement by some actual gang leader of the period, a plug from some real and famous Chicago hoodlum. This will drive the final nail in my authenticity campaign.

The only trouble is, practically all the old Chicago gangsters suffered grievous accidents during their careers, consisting of getting shot and maimed, and even foolishly attempting to go swimming with their pockets full of cement. When you add to these hazards of their calling the normal attrition of the years, the result is that it is very difficult to find a real ex-Chicago gangster in what you would call good condition. Meaning able to speak.

However, you will be pleased to hear that I have finally located one. You will no doubt remember Mr. Clarence F. "Diamonds" Moroni of Chicago alky fame. Well, as you also no doubt know, Mr. Moroni is still alive, thanks to the foresight of the government in sending him to Leavenworth at the height of his career for carelessly forgetting certain requirements of the income tax law.

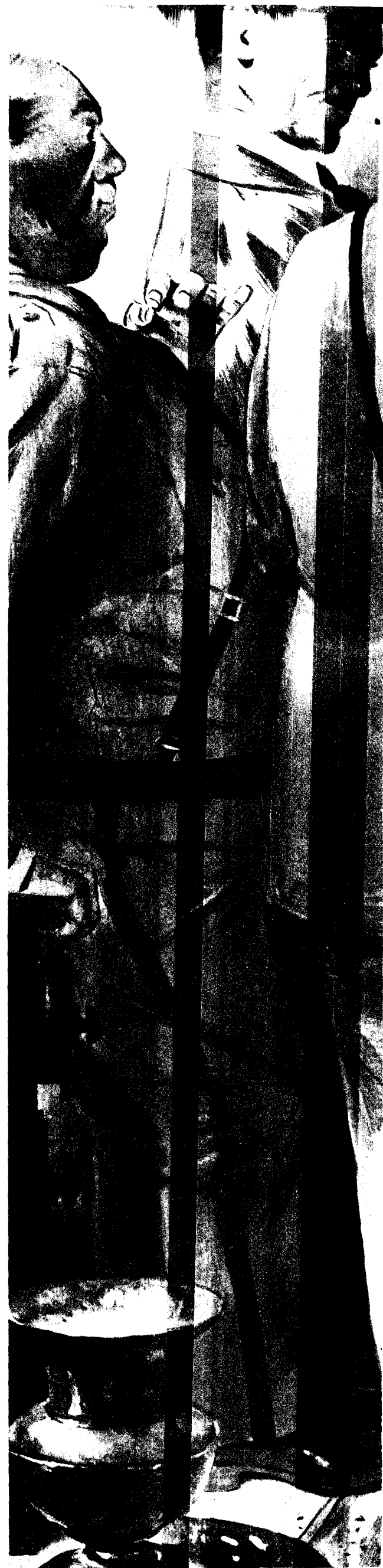
Mr. Moroni was very upset over the matter at the time, but while he was enjoying the healing waters of Leavenworth all the rival gentlemen who meant him harm got themselves slain in one way and another, and thus when Mr. Moroni got out of the G-jug all he had to do was stroll past Chicago and dig up several sacks of loot, and today he is a quiet and wealthy citizen of Miami Beach, Florida, causing no trouble to a soul and being listed in the city directory merely as Mr. Clarence Moroni, Retired.

So, George, don't have a moment's worry over going down to see him. Which, as you may have gathered, is what I want you to do. I have air-mailed a special rush print of the picture to you at Miami Beach c/o the Roney-Plaza. Hop down there, show it to Moroni—if you have to—and somehow get a simple little statement from him that this is the greatest picture since The Birth of a Nation.

For this service you are (Continued on page 69)

There was a great to-do of policemen, reporters and photographers. They took pictures of Imogene, and she explained how she had done it

ILLUSTRATED BY FRITZ WILLIS









# "Fire a Round for Collier's"

By BILL STAPLETON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

"It looks as if you really started something with that picture request," the colonel told our combat photographer in Korea. What he had started was a full-scale battle

## Korea

THE artillery engagement lasted about 14 hours, and by the time it ended, the soldiers of the 78th AAA Gun Battalion had wiped out part of an enemy-held town, smashed a bridge flat and killed 186 North Koreans. (They knew there were 186 because they counted that many in the target area after the First Republic of Korea Division had moved in behind the barrage.) To most people, this probably looked pretty much like any other battle, but it looked different to me: I had started it.

This is how it happened: I had jeeped over to the newly dug gun positions of the 78th in company with Collier's war correspondent Charlotte Knight. The first person we asked for was the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas W. Ackert, of New York City. We explained to him that we wanted to talk to his men and find out what they thought of winter warfare in Korea.

Colonel Ackert was delighted. He assigned Captain David Robertson, of Joplin, Missouri, and Master Sergeant H. D. Truax, of San Diego, California, to take us around. Captain Robertson and Charlotte sat down to talk and Truax and I went over to the guns.

One of the batteries—A for Able—had just received four new gun barrels which hadn't been fired. I asked Truax if they might be tried out so I could make a picture; they would have to be fired anyway for calibration. "Couldn't you just fire a round for Collier's?" I asked.

The request went through channels: Truax asked

the executive officer about it; the exec asked the battery officer; the battery officer asked the Fire Direction Center; the center asked Captain Robertson, and he passed along the request to the commanding officer. Colonel Ackert called Corps and asked for permission.

Corps said okay, provided the guns were fired only once—and provided the battery waited until a liaison plane could get up to observe the target area.

During this time, I had been taking pictures behind the gun sites, where the men slept. The battery's living quarters were a tribute to the American soldier's ability to improvise in the field. It seems that the 78th had been around Pyongyang when the paratroopers of the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team had landed near there. After touching down, the airborne boys had pulled out in a hurry, leaving behind the varicolored chutes which had been used for dropping their equipment. The shivering men of the 78th had pounced on the discarded parachutes and had made tents out of them—strange-looking affairs, but they were really warm.

While I was getting pictures of this colorful encampment, the word suddenly came:

"Stand by for fire mission."

The gunners raced for their guns and I hurried to the hillside to get set. Truax told me that if I watched the gunners' hands I could tell just when the guns would go off.

The gun captains raised their hands  
"Azimuth . . ."

"Elevation . . ."

The hands whipped down. I snapped the shutter as the guns bucked and roared.

That's fine, I said, and we started down the hill.

Truax grabbed me by the arm and said, "They're going to fire again—look." The gunners' hands went up again and I took another picture. Then they fired again, and again. A battery officer walked up and told us that a target—a unit of North Koreans—had been flushed out by the initial shot. The enemy troops were trying to get over a bridge, and our plane was watching them.

We got back to the Fire Direction Center just as Baker and Charlie batteries opened up. We ate a quick lunch with Colonel Ackert, while the 78th's guns—antiaircraft weapons turned field artillery—made our tent quiver with their pounding. "It looks as if you really started something with that picture request," the colonel said.

It certainly did. By the time we got back to the command post of the 24th Division that afternoon, it sounded as if every weapon in the 78th was blasting away behind us. And that, we were told, was just what was happening: The battalion was firing in support of a South Korean attack launched under the initial "Collier's barrage."

That night, I stood in the command-post area watching the lights of the bombardment and listening to the roar of the guns all around us. Another correspondent joined me.

"Wonder what started all this," he said.

I didn't tell him that I had.

THE END

M/Sgt. H. D. Truax helped set off "Collier's barrage." Note scarf and tent of chute cloth

Hard-working artillerymen pass the ammunition in preparation for bombardment. These weapons were made as antiaircraft guns; in Korea they became fieldpieces—and good ones

