

# Thank you, Wadi Botts!

CAROLYN McCORMICK

WHEN I opened my apartment door on a recent morning, I saw lying on the carpeted sill a white sheet of paper folded over and secured by an address sticker, the kind—often mimeographed—that a neighborhood business sends out with notices of sales, closing for vacation, or moving to a new address.

It looked hardly worth picking up. But then I noticed the stamps, two of them, each with a colored bird on it, and saw that the message had come from Libya.

The paper turned out to be a sheet of ordinary office stationery, letterheaded over a printed message (and here I will use a fictitious name for the enterprise and for its director):

### WEEKLY WADI

Editor and Publisher: P. R. Botts  
TRIPOLI, LIBYA

15th June, 1967

Dear Subscriber,

Due to circumstances beyond our control that have occurred because of the current situation in the Middle East, the *Weekly Wadi* is forced to suspend publication for the time being.

Adjustment of subscription term will be made when we restart publication.

If, however, it is impossible to start up again, the balance of the price of your subscription will be mailed to you within the next few weeks.

Thankyou for your interest in and support of the *Weekly Wadi*.

Yours sincerely,  
P. R. Botts  
Editor

The *Weekly Wadi*

Poor Percival, I thought; he couldn't even thank us for the last time without his printer's getting that "thank you" wrong.

I felt sentimental, and sad. Almost every Sunday morning for four years I had driven downtown to the

corner of Shiari Istiklal and Shiari Haiti to buy the *Weekly Wadi*. There was no newspaper delivery in Tripoli.

On Sundays, the streets were always crowded. Although the city was a mixture of three religions—Moslem, Hebrew, and Christian—and celebrated three holy days—Friday, Saturday, and Sunday—it was on Sundays that the streets really jumped.

On Fridays, the Moslem holiday, the government offices and the Libyan-run shops closed. Almost all the Libyans disappeared to spend the day at home with their families or with friends. On Saturdays, the Jewish holiday, again many of the shops closed, and the Jews hung around the streets even less than the Libyans, leaving the whole town looking a little gloomy and subdued.

But Sunday! On Sundays everybody was out! The Moslems were in their shops, the Jews in theirs, and the Italians, enjoying this opportunity not to be in theirs, strolled the streets with their buxom wives, sat in sidewalk cafés reading *Il Giornale di Tripoli*, keeping an eye on the young people's *passeggiata* up and down Shiari Istiklal, boys on the right, girls on the left. And at eleven o'clock they all went to Mass at the great cathedral on Plaza Algeria (formerly Plaza Cathedral), dressed soberly in black, all but the little girls in white-net Confirmation dresses.

The streets were not easy to get through on a Sunday; but it was part of the Sunday-morning buy-the-*Wadi* ritual. Like getting to an island, the effort it cost was part of the total experience.

OF COURSE I felt sentimental and sad. Not only had I read the *Wadi* regularly; I had even written

for it—whenever I felt like earning three pounds, equivalent to \$8.40, which was how much Percival Botts paid for a feature article.

The *Wadi* was one of those newspapers published in English for the foreign colony in capital cities all over the world—tabloid-sized, four to twenty-four pages, folksy, sternly apolitical, and determinedly optimistic:

*Al and Edie Bothwaite returned home last week from a lengthy (too lengthy, Edie and Al! Your friends missed you!) sojourn in Kent . . . brrrrr!*

*A change of Government took place in the Main Corridor outside the Chamber of Deputies in the Presidential Palace this morning at 4 A.M. According to an Official Government Announcement, "Commercial activity in the downtown area, foot and automotive passage through the streets between 6 P.M. and 6 A.M., public transport, radio, telegraphic, and telephone communication are suspended until further notice." No more want ads accepted by telephone! Personal application only! Please co-operate! (Ed.)*

*Students of the National University last evening staged an Independence Day Celebration before an officially unnamed embassy, giving those members of the Foreign Community still around a thrilling review of the ardent-hearted, robust-voiced youth its host nation is producing, these days!*

AND YET the *Weekly Wadi* wasn't quite like that; it wasn't lickspittle, and it wasn't coy. It went through all the motions, but reserved an eyebrow to itself. And its personality was slightly hallucinatory, just like the foreign community's. Reading the *Wadi* in Tripoli gave me the same feeling as thinking about my life there; that its form was familiar but constructed out of elements that didn't really exist, elements that were missing—like an imaginable future, unified motivation and good intentions, and any possibility of bridging the comprehension gap between it and the world around it.

Missing from the *Wadi* were more than abstractions: missing was almost the whole staff. Writers like Montmorcey Argunaught, J. Vaughn d'Arcy, and Ellensworth Pyke-Pier-

pont, whose bylines appeared above almost every item, even the most modest, stick-long ones, simply didn't exist. They were all Percival.

Percival wrote the gossip column, "Tip-Toeing Thru Tripoli," as Archie Plimpsitt; the restaurant and night-life column, "Tripoli Toff 'n' Tippler," as Marcel Villeneuve; the news and interviews with government ministers and oil executives under such names as W. Harricot Bruce, George H. M. Goddard, and Devonshire Lord.

He wrote the weather forecast, the police news, the arrivals and departures from Idris Airport, and the obits—a representative portion of the week's deaths, which, faithfully reflecting his contention that Libyans were reckless drivers, were almost exclusively automobile casualties.

He relished a good "intellectual controversy" waged in "Letters to the Editor," signed by impassioned subscribers in Garden City, Taguira, and Suk el Juma—rebutted, the very next week, by fiery counterattacks from Colina Verde, Gurgi, Sokra, or Georgimpopoli. All Percival.

Every issue included a humor filler. Although I have no sample, they went something like this: *"Last Sunday afternoon, my wife, a worshipper at the Shrine of Terpsichore, switched on the wireless, saying, 'It is ten to two, and there is playing a program of ballet music.' 'Tin tu-tu! That must be the Dance of the Tin Soldiers!' I shot back. My wife said it was one of the cleverest ripostes she had ever heard me make."*

These were invariably signed "A Gentleman from Gargaresh." Percival.

EVERY now and again, briefly, the accustomed bylines abruptly disappeared, and there would appear—with grudging infrequency—some name like Henry Shanks or Mervin Hickey. And I would know that Percival had persuaded some Fleet Street reporter to come to Tripoli to work on the *Weekly Wadi*. But he never lasted long.

Pretty soon, Percival would begin to grumble, "He won't work. All he does is sit behind that typewriter smoking cigarettes and brushing ashes off the keys. They all want air conditioning. Nobody in Fleet

Street wants to go about town, smell out the news, then dig."

Mostly, he let them go because their nerves broke down. One drank. Another turned out to be, Percival said, a "dope fiend." Then *his* replacement, one morning when Percival came out of his office with some of his copy in his hand to discuss it with him, "sat there staring at me with his mouth open, and his eyes gone queer; then the crazy maniac threw up his arms and gave a shout like a Hottentot, laid down his head on the keyboard, and cried. Shameful incident. Grown chap like that. Can't unravel these Fleet Streeters, unravel them at all."

I could. Percival had worked my copy over, too.

ALMOST the entire foreign community was concerned, directly or indirectly, with the production of oil. And yet probably no more



than a handful of people in town at any given moment had ever actually seen a drop of it. In a way, there was no discernible connection between what people did and what whatever-they-did-do produced. It was the same with Percival's paper.

The offices of the *Weekly Wadi* faced onto a one-way street near the Old City, so narrow that cars could be parked only on one side, and then with two wheels run up over the curb so a single lane of traffic could squeeze by.

Inside, the windowless newsroom was the size of one of the vans that moved household belongings of the foreigners who arrived and departed via the Tripoli docks. The Editor's office was up front where, in a

comparable space, the cab would be. Often, inside there was no sign of life at all except, on occasion, a mewling and scrabbling from a cardboard carton containing a litter of kittens, left at the door by one of the homeless street cats the Editor fed each morning. It didn't seem plausible that a newspaper as good as the *Weekly Wadi* should be produced out of here. Where were the people, where the tools?

The *Wadi* was suffused, like all newspapers of its genre, with syrupy unction toward the "host" government:

30,000 NEW HOMES ON GOVERNMENT DRAFTINGBOARD!  
ran a twenty-four point headline one Sunday. Four months later: 30,000 NEW HOMES ON GOVERNMENT DRAFTINGBOARD!

The arrival of a vacationing Düsseldorf tincutter emerged: WEST GERMANY BRACES FOR LIBYA'S SOARING CONTAINER DEMANDS!; a U.S. graduate student working on a thesis about the impact, or lack of it, of oil revenues on Berber tribesmen, SOCIOLOGIST FORESEES LIBYA'S STANDARD OF DESERT LIVING ZOOM!; a new minister appointed to fill a repeatedly vacated post, WHEN LIBYA NEEDS A GOOD MAN, A GOOD MAN IS ALWAYS THERE!

Even Libyans had to laugh.

IT HAD an artistic unity that no newspaper with a genuine staff could hope for; Argunaught, d'Arcy, Pyke-Pierpont, Plimpsitt, and Villeneuve, all had a like originality of expression, identical passions and prejudices.

They were animal lovers to a man, inserting in their news stories pleas for more humane treatment of burros, more humane slaughter of beef, camels, sheep, and goats. They pleaded the cause of dogs and cats abandoned by foreign families being transferred out, noted the seasonal migrations of birds and advised on food they might find acceptable. Once, after the English colony persisted in ignoring their chorused denunciation of desert-fox hunting, the Editor closed down the paper entirely, and not until a year later—when the English, faced with a choice between fox hunting on Sunday morning or reading the *Weekly*

*Wadi*, finally chose the latter—did Percival resume publishing.

The entire staff was unalterably incensed by national groupings—those “colonies” which form within the larger foreign communities.

Percival didn't like Americans, who formed the largest colony of all. They were all too rich. Take some poor American oil driller, who broiled out in the desert in an oil camp south of Benghazi for three unbroken weeks, getting home to Tripoli to visit his overworked, servantless wife only once a month, just in time to repair all the faltering equipment people need where utilities are different from what they're used to—the Coleman space heater, the bottled-gas “flash” water heaters, a *ghibli* blind (which partially seals windows against sandstorms) slipped off its track—if his name ever appeared in the *Wadi* it would only be a suffix to “The wealthy American oil man . . .” And the suburb of Georgimpopoli, west of town, where most Americans lived, like most other foreigners, rich and not rich, was always “The luxurious American oil man's suburb of Georgimpopoli.”

The French and Dutch didn't form a large enough grouping in Tripoli for Percival to get a bead on. The excolonialist Italians still formed a good-sized group, but I believe that to Percival they were just too Latin to get steamed up about.

**I**T WAS for the English colony that Argunaught, d'Arcy, Pyke-Pierpont, Plimpsitt, and Villeneuve reserved their most acid barbs.

Just as Percival used Georgimpopoli to get at Americans with regularity, he had hit on a standard, recurring news item to taunt the English. This concerned the activities of an Egyptian belly dancer whose professional name was, let us say, Princess Leiba, wife of an English peer named, let us again say, Lord Crupaton. It was Percival's conviction (and he may have been right about this) that it caused the English colony acute embarrassment every time any mention was made of Lord Crupaton and Her Ladyship—“more widely known, perhaps, as Princess Leiba, the Egyptian belly dancer.”

Villeneuve would report Her

Ladyship engaged for an unlimited appearance at the Snow-a-Go Go Club (selected membership) in Hong Kong, “. . . accompanied, as usual, by His Lordship on the bongo drums.” Or report Her Ladyship to have abandoned costuming in favor of polka dots painted, in red, directly on the skin, “. . . which, accord-



ing to a member of Tripoli's English community who was fortunate enough to have ‘caught her act’ in Tangier, increases to a really extraordinary degree the transparency of the seven veils.”

Another week or two would pass; then Plimpsitt, on his night-life beat, would hint of a possible engagement at the Casbah (a nightclub in the Old Quarter off limits to American servicemen): “. . . negotiations being carried forth through Lord Crupaton, who acts (I have learned from Lord Crupaton's friends in Tripoli's English community) as business manager as well as drummer to Her Ladyship.”

These periodic threats to the English colony of a visit by Lord and Lady Crupaton never failed to exhilarate Percival, who, rereading the latest one for probably the twentieth time, would begin giggling so hard he would stamp his feet on the floor beneath his desk so the noise of the desert boots he wore hitting the bare concrete would divert his attention long enough to let him pull himself together.

**B**UT all this—the style, the impudence, and the hangups—only served as a backdrop for the real jewels of his collection, which went

on view early every Sunday morning. These were the feature articles he wheedled.

Like all really good editors, he made writers, or anybody else he thought had something to say, want to make him happy. The circulation of his paper was somewhere in the neighborhood of 3,500; the absolutely top price he paid for an article six hundred to a thousand words long was under twenty dollars. Still, week after week, people wrote for him. They *wanted* to write for him.

An English academic sent him amusing sketches of donnish life in Cambridge, a German writer-photographer accounts of lost tribes of the Fezzan. The head of the government Department of Archaeology wrote articles on the Greek and Roman ruins in Libya, and the chief archaeologist of the Fezzan a series about the Garamantes. In his stable was an English archaeologist (wife of a famous historian) who made two study trips a year to Libya and almost weekly wrote Percival all about it. He had a popular English travel writer who regularly let his latest book run serialized in the *Weekly Wadi* before it was published in England. Visiting sociologists wrote him articles, and anthropologists, historians, explorers—anybody who came through Tripoli, if he had only one interesting thing to say—ended up saying it for Percival, in the *Wadi*.

He was a celebrity, and looked it—noticeable, but not in the self-conscious way of someone who looks apart, unrelated to his surroundings. If anything, it was the opposite; his appearance embodied them, because he was always dressed for the desert. He reminded people of what most of them tried to forget—how close the desert was. The hearts of even bridge-playing, salty-dog-drinking housewives in Georgimpopoli trembled sometimes at that thought: just out there, twenty miles away, lay scattered the first pebbles of the vast *reg* that began the Great Sahara Desert.

The desert campaigns in North Africa during the Second World War had two sharply distinct effects on the men who fought in them. The larger group wanted never to see a desert again. But for the others, exposure to it was a kind



of psychedelic experience, and afterwards they never wanted to live too far away to take a trip back into the desert when they felt the urge. A member of this fraternity was recognizable by signs obvious as beard, sandals, and guitar—a brimmed hat of straw or canvas, ankle-high boots, and desert truck.

Percival was a member.

He drove around in a short-wheel-base Land-Rover with its canvas top down, or a smaller, lesser-known four-wheel-drive called a Champion, his straw hat set squarely as a bowler on his ginger hair, back erect and rigid as the unsprung seat back it never quite touched, hands with a firm grip on either side of the steering wheel, bare, bony, sunburned knees sticking up out of chino shorts. He never wore dark glasses; real desert people rarely do, only in night-clubs. He drove fast, and kept his eyes straight ahead on the pavement coming up, like a good desert driver studying the oncoming sand for soft spots.

HE LIKED to go out and drive through the dunes just for the fun of it. Dunes require *urg*, or soft sand, to form, and *urg* doesn't occur in any great quantity for about three hundred miles south from the coast, where the Ubari Sand Sea begins. But ever since the fourth century A.D., when some early Libyan tribes called the Austurians cut down the olive trees planted by the Romans along the coast, soft, windblown sand from the desert has been building up and slowly moving north, so that now fairly respectable dunes lie in some places right along the edge of the Mediterranean.

These were the dunes, close by town, Percival liked to ride, goading the pitching, buckling truck through the shoot-the-chute sands, one minute pointing its nose to the sky, the next at the bottom of a deep pit between dunes and plunging down to circle it, round and round its steep sides at a gravity-defying angle.

Once he took me along to ride the dunes, and so terrified me that I couldn't scream—a silence he interpreted as indifference. As the truck, kicking up sand on the steep side of one dune on speed it had built up from a hair-raising roller-coaster ride down the last one,

reached the sharp crest, teetered a sickening moment on its undercarriage, then pitched over to start another ride just like it, he yelled over the roar of the engine, "Are you bored?"

He rode the roller coaster just outside of town oftener than the desert dunes on the unmarked track from Tripoli south to Sebha, first used by Rome's Third Augusta Legion, then by the camel caravans on their way to Central Africa. This, not the new asphalt Fezzan Road, was the most direct route south, the one taken by the English lady archaeologist, a determined, knowledgeable, highly organized woman whose caravan Percival usually managed to join when he took a deep-desert trip. He wasn't enough of a mechanic to lead his own. Once, on a short expedition, the end truck of three, the Champion in which Percival and his wife were riding, failed to reappear over the crest of a hummock. One of the other trucks drove back and found the Champion stalled, Percival standing alongside, but no sign of his wife. "Little kick-up in the carburetor," Percival explained, adding casually, "Be right-o in a jiffy." "But where," the other driver asked, "is Mrs. Botts?" "Under the car," said Percival.

PEOPLE told these tales about Percival (or Wadi, as they called him) Botts, but, as with most celebrities, very few people knew him personally. He never went to parties; you were wasting your stamp to ask him. And he never invited you to his house.

I dropped in on him to deliver a message one Saturday afternoon, when the paper had been put to bed (any other day I'd never have found him).

"Care for something to drink?" he asked me.

"Thanks. Gin and tonic," I said.

"No tonic."

"Soda?"

He poured gin and soda (no ice) in a water goblet and handed it to me.

There were two cats inside the house, forty outside. Every evening he fed them a mash of four loaves of bread and seven pounds of ground camel meat. He couldn't stand to see a cat go hungry. His cook was

setting the table, an Italian woman; Libyan men can't cook, and Libyan women are in purdah and can't leave the house. His houseman was watering the lawn—a huge Turk with mustachios like a uaddan's horns and a gold ring in his right ear whom Percival swore by—"only damn servant in Libya who'll let himself be beat."

Percival himself was staring at me from across the room, out of pale-blue, lashless eyes in a desiccated-looking face, eternally sunburned. His head was twitching to the left; and with every twitch he blinked.

He said, "I eat at six-thirty."

I looked at my watch; it was six-thirty.

Meekly, I swallowed my drink—he'd only just handed it to me—and, imparting my message in the fewest words possible, left.

Still, I think he liked me all right, even though I was an American. It wasn't so much the nationalities he objected to as the groupiness of them. And the reason he enjoyed putting the needle to the English even more than into us was that the English were even groupier than we were. If Percival was convinced you didn't belong to any particular group, he could be warmhearted and generous, as he was to an American artist who, with his wife and three-year-old daughter, was driving in a Minibus from Tangier to Istanbul when he became stranded, broke, in Tripoli.

THE ARTIST went to the *Weekly Wadi* office to put an ad in the paper for a family that in exchange for portraits, singly or in group, would give them room and board.

"You can live in my garage," Percival told him (part of his garage was fixed up quite nicely, with a toilet and Coleman camp stove).

Percival seemed to have been willing to let the artist and his family (no portraits required) stay in his quarters indefinitely. But the artist reneged.

"For Christ's sake," he told me, "he does everything at exactly the same time, every day. He drives me nuts."

It seemed that the light in Percival's bedroom was turned on each morning at precisely five o'clock, the

# GUTTS

They're priceless. Without them a magazine (like a man) is just a shell.

THE REPORTER digs for facts, culls yards of reports, sorts out the trivial, clarifies, places in perspective, then prints the *real* story, and *damn the repercussions* . . . full speed ahead!

Intellectual honesty and courage are rare commodities. And as this issue of THE REPORTER proves, they provide solid, informative, colorful reading.

"Your magazine has offered many provocative articles on subjects people should be provoked about, and by including meaningful background in its discussion of timely subjects has given readers a broad view of current events." —

SENATOR CLIFFORD P. CASE (R.)

"Yours is a great magazine. I find it invaluable because the articles are timely, yet invariably based on careful

analysis and research. No other magazine achieves this feat as consistently as does yours." —

SENATOR STUART SYMINGTON (D.)

## 1¢ a Day

That's all it costs a trial subscriber to read THE REPORTER regularly. Actually, the price is *less than a penny a day*; just \$3.50 for a full year (24 issues). The postpaid card opposite (sent *without* money, if you like) will bring you the writings of Max Ascoli, George Bailey, Meg Greenfield, Henry A. Kissinger, Edmond Taylor, Denis Warner, Claire Sterling. . . .

If you are presently a REPORTER subscriber, use the card to introduce a well-intentioned friend to this worthwhile, fortnightly reading experience.

## A Note to Comparison Shoppers

Regular rates for THE REPORTER are—1 year \$7, 2 years \$11, 3 years \$14. (Add \$1 per year for foreign postage, 50¢ annually for Canada and Pan American Union.)

THE REPORTER/660 MADISON AVENUE/NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021

bathroom light thirty seconds later; then, in twenty-four more minutes, *these* lights were extinguished and the kitchen lighted up. Eighteen minutes after that, the kitchen light went out, and with the darkness outside not even beginning to lift, the front door opened on Percival with a flashlight, lighting his way to the driveway where his two desert trucks were parked. Here—the first and only unpredictable—he got into one or the other and drove off.

"It's fourteen and one-half minutes to six he leaves," the artist complained. "And I'm not kidding about that half minute, either. At fourteen and one-half minutes to six, he always leaves."

It wasn't being awakened at that early hour he objected to; I very much doubt he'd got to bed by then. It was the grinding regularity.

"It's like he's got this time compulsion. He must be some kind of nut," the artist said, and moved himself and his family out.

Percival *had* to have a time compulsion to put out the paper without, most of the time, any staff to help him, and always the trouble with the printer's errors, like those last words we may ever hear from him coming through as "thankyou." Of course, the New York *Times's* International Edition had the same trouble; but Percival's troubles went beyond that.

I once wrote an article for him on the Greek ruins in Cyrene in eastern Libya, birthplace of an early philosopher, Aristippus, a Cynic. He titled it "Cyrene: Town of Cynics."

"I had wanted to call it "Cyrene: City of Cynics," he told me after the piece came out. "But I couldn't."

"Why not?" I asked him.

"Well, you know, we've only the two ys."

**H**E and the *Weekly Wadi* stuck it out—after the circumstances occurred that were beyond his control in the Middle East—long enough to report, in the last issue, on the evacuation of six thousand western women and children to Naples. Is that where he is now? Reporting on the sojourns of Edie and Al in Naples? Or is he himself back in Kent . . . brrrr?

Wherever you are, Wadi Botts, good-bye. And *thankyou*.

# Bloody Murder

JAY JACOBS

**I**M NOT the omnivorous moviegoer I once was, and have to be pretty well convinced a film is worth seeing these days before I'll go to see it. I knew *Bonnie and Clyde* was worth seeing as soon as I'd finished reading an unequivocal castigation by a well-known veteran critic who is never happier than when he is being served copious quantities of odorless uplift by Cary Grant or Doris Day.

His (and, as I subsequently discovered, several other reviewers') principal objections to *Bonnie and Clyde* seem to be that its producers have been unable or unwilling to hew to historical fact (a failing they share with William Shakespeare, among others); that they have made sympathetic, likable—even, in their own curious way, moral—human beings of characters whose prototypes were a "sleazy, moronic pair" of Depression desperadoes; and that while the "hideous depredations" of their historical models are embarked upon with a measure of levity by the people we see on the screen, a number of episodes end in bloodbaths that are depicted in a most harrowing realistic style.

My own recollections of the real-life Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow are hazy in the extreme, and I'm not interested enough in their abruptly punctuated careers to take the trouble of learning more about them. Perhaps it was a mistake on the part of the film's makers to employ a few pseudo-documentary devices in the early going, but I'm willing to forgive them a ploy obviously adopted in the interests of verisimilitude. I am also willing to state flat out that the film is the best of its genre ever made, the realiest evocation of the rural American 1930's screened to date (all the movies *made* in the 1930's included), and one of the most trenchant commentaries on the senseless drift of American life into violence; a drift that writers like Jules Feiffer and Norman Mailer suddenly (and perhaps too late) have begun to view with the utmost alarm.

The tale the film unfolds is a simple one indeed. A pretty small-town Texas waitress, bored to distraction with slinging hash at loutish truck drivers, recognizes her only hope of escape during a chance encounter with an ingratiating parolee who persuades her to go into the bank-robbing business with him. The young lady is soon disabused of some of her more romantic notions by the realization that her hero is sexually impotent and that armed robbery is just one more form of ill-paying drudgery. The simple-mindedness of a good-natured young recruit to the enterprise results in a first unwelcome killing. Domestic problems arise when a brother and sister-in-law deal themselves in, and life somehow becomes increasingly mundane, taking on a sort of nightmare normality, even in the midst of perpetual flight and frequent gunplay. The girl's loyalty finally has a tonic effect on her innamorato's self-esteem and, after a few hours of relative peace, the lovers are betrayed and die in a truly withering hail of gunfire, jiggling involuntarily to the lethal spatter in which they are caught.

**M**UCH of the action is garnished with a brand of corn-pone humor which struck me as natural enough to the characters, the period, and the locale (Texas, Missouri, Louisiana, Iowa), but which has incurred the wrath of several reviewers who see it as nothing but a cheap play for easy laughs. Many of these same reviewers have also objected to the movie's Mack Sennett overtones, but here again, it seems to me that the characters in question *would* have modeled their actions on the patterns drawn by movies they had seen. And if the jalopies that figure in the chase scenes were not really as acrobatic as they appear to have been on screen, I am perfectly willing to accept some expressionistic heightening of effect to get the feel of the thing.

And the feel is there: When Clyde