



THE HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION

NEWSBOY



Horatio Alger, Jr.

1832 – 1899

A magazine devoted to the study of Horatio Alger, Jr., his life, works, and influence on the culture of America.

First Glance at the 2021 Convention: *‘Frank and Fearless in Fredericksburg’*

The Richard Rowland Kirkland Monument memorializes a unique humanitarian event during the 1862 battle of Fredericksburg.
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The missing Hursts — or, It's more than just the books -- See Page 3



The Milton Caniff *Steve Canyon Series*

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President's column

Good evening from Houston,

With the cancellation of the 2020 convention I was asked by the board of directors — to serve another year as president under these unusual circumstances. Of course, the most significant thing that I do is write this column. Unfortunately, since I have pretty much said all I wanted to in the first two years, bear with me for a few more 2020/2021 paragraphs of odds and ends.

I am excited to announce that next year's convention will be hosted by Jack Bales (PF-258) in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Jack has been doing his due diligence and already has set up a convention hotel and has assured me that he is preparing the menu for the convention banquet. He's also selected the restaurant for Friday evening's dinner, which he will announce in the next issue. This is an astounding effort and I know I am looking forward to next June's festivities.

In his article starting on Page 3, he has announced the meeting's name: "Frank and Fearless in Fredericksburg" — very appropriate for the times we are currently living in. I tried my hand at a few ideas, such as "Flailing away in Fredericksburg" and "Foraging in Fredericksburg," but they were obvious non-starters.

The COVID-19 virus pandemic still has us mostly hunkered down. My big outing today was to the mailbox. I am thinking about doing some curbside food pickup tomorrow at a local grocery store. It has been about 100 degrees in the Houston area every day with not much rain, so extra watering of the yard is also a fun out-of-the-house activity. My wife, Linda, trapped a feral cat in the back yard and took her to get "fixed"... that was the most exciting event of our household this year. Hopefully, we will get back to relative normalcy sometime soon.

I had been in contact with our illustrious editor regarding his fine publication of late researcher and collector Roy Van Devier's 1949 Byron A. Dunn mini-biography and Bill's article on the formats of the books. I suspect there were not many series that were translated into Norwegian, although *Peck's Bad Boy* did have a Norwegian publication. See: www.georgewpeck.com/publishers/norsk.html.

The 19th century bibliography is still on schedule. It is one thing to work on major publishers like Lee & Shepard, Estes & Lauriat, Porter & Coates and D. Lothrop

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HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

To further the philosophy of Horatio Alger, Jr. and to encourage the spirit of Strive & Succeed that for half a century guided Alger's undaunted heroes. Our members conduct research and provide scholarship on the life of Horatio Alger, Jr., his works and influence on the culture of America. The Horatio Alger Society embraces collectors and enthusiasts of all juvenile literature, including boys' and girls' series books, pulps and dime novels.

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Newsboy ad rates: Full page, \$32.00; one-half page, \$17.00; one-quarter page, \$9.00; per column inch (1 inch deep by approx. 3 1/2 inches wide), \$2.00. Send ads, with check payable to Horatio Alger Society, 1004 School St., Shelbyville, IN 46176.

The above rates apply to all want ads, along with ads offering non-Alger books for sale. However, it is the policy of the Horatio Alger Society to promote the exchange of Alger books and related Alger materials by providing space **free of charge** to our members for the **sale only** of such material.

Send advertisements or "Letters to the Editor" to **Newsboy** editor William R. Gowen (PF-706) at 23726 N. Overhill Dr., Lake Zurich, IL 60047, or by E-mail to hasnewsboy@aol.com

Historic Fredericksburg to be site of 2021 H.A.S. convention

By Jack Bales (PF-258)

Like all of you, I am wearing my mask and observing social distancing during these trying times. I am also optimistic that better times are indeed in store for us. One of those occasions is the next Horatio Alger Society convention, “Frank and Fearless in Fredericksburg,” which I am pleased to be able to host in Fredericksburg, Virginia, from June 3 to June 6, 2021. Of course, we will be monitoring the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic in the weeks and months ahead and will keep you up to date.

Fredericksburg bills itself as “America’s Most Historic City.” I’m not sure if that is an appropriate appellation — Boston and Philadelphia quickly come to mind, after all — but the area is certainly steeped in history, and visitors can find much to keep them occupied during their stays here.

The humorous signs posted on houses many years ago that proclaimed “George Washington Slept Here” inspired the 1942 titular Jack Benny comedy film. Well, George really *did* sleep in Fredericksburg. His boyhood home is across the Rappahannock River in Stafford County. In 1772, George Washington bought a small frame house in Fredericksburg for his mother, Mary Ball Washington. The house is conveniently located near Kenmore plantation, the home of her daughter and



The restored Mary Washington House in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

son-in-law. Meditation Rock, where Mary prayed for her son during the Revolutionary War, is also near her home, as is her grave.

Today the Mary Washington House is operated as a historic house and museum, and one of the Kenmore plantation’s rooms is included in Helen Comstock’s book featuring “the one hundred most beautiful rooms in

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The missing Hursts — or, It’s more than just the books

By Brad Chase (PF-412)

For decades I have been very close to fellow New Englander Jim Thorp (PF-574). He and his late wife Mary Jane were among the many collectors who used to attend my annual picnic and Alger swap sessions in our garage and back yard. It was one of many ways that we became close Alger friends.

Unfortunately, we don’t have to find Alger books that way anymore because booking trips and swap sessions today are about as obsolete as a phone booth. Yes, all of us with enough bucks can now find just about anything we want for our collections on the Internet. Of course, the price we pay for this is the complete absence of

what I like to call collector camaraderie. Following is the sad story about how my loss of eight Small Hurst Alger books that I won at the recent H.A.S. online Thorp consignment auction obliterated my chance to own something that reflected all the good times Jim and I had in sharing Alger.

Thumbnail images of the eight missing books accompany this article (see Pages 6-7), reproduced and identified by format number from my book *Small Horatio Alger Books Published by Thomas D. Hurst* (2014). I had won six that were new Format appliqués and two that were new Alger titles for my Small Hurst collection. If

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Editor's notebook

We've discussed for years the demise of the brick-and-mortar antiquarian bookstore. The causes are many: the Internet, high rents, and the fact that people are not reading as many books as they did generations past. I know of young people today who only read school textbooks and couldn't care less about Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys. But that's preaching to the choir.

Then, last week, I learned about another potential assault on our treasured book shops, in particular those in smaller cities and towns. This example takes place in New England and is discussed in a lengthy article in the current issue of *Yankee* magazine, titled "Fighting for Survival," by writer Jon Marcus. He describes a frightening trend, the widespread financial failure of small New England colleges. Eighteen have either shut their doors or merged since 2016, and many more are on death row.

A study shows that the number of New England colleges in danger over the next six years is 25, nearly double the number (13) listed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The reasons? There are many. New England has one of the oldest population demographics in the nation, and the birth rate has been declining in the past decade. The pandemic has also hurt the schools' attracting out-of-state students, as potential freshmen now prefer to remain closer to their families.

The article focuses on the western Vermont town of Poultney, former home of Green Mountain College, which graduated its final class of 427 seniors in 2019, then closed its doors. The school had seen enrollment drop by almost half in recent years and was burdened by unsolvable debt. The campus now sits empty, and Poultney's Main Street has a long row of empty storefronts.

Still hanging on is one of the nicest antiquarian book stores you'd ever want to visit: Hermit Hill Books, which I started visiting several years ago. I bought some nice additions to my collection, and always looked forward to the cozy atmosphere, enhanced by owner Patty McWilliams' friendly dogs and traditional bookstore cat.

"How do you replace a college?" McWilliams asked

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PCA/ACA call for papers; dates moved to June 2-5

The Popular Culture Association Children's/Young Adult Series Books and Dime Novels division is now accepting proposals for presentations at the next PCA/ACA conference, to be held in Boston, Mass., on its just-announced new dates of June 2-5, 2021.

The original dates of March 31-April 3 were moved to June because the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association wants more time for planning and organizing the conference in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Please visit <https://pcaaca.org> for up-to-date information on the conference.

The new June dates place the PCA/ACA conference in direct conflict with the 2021 H.A.S. convention, announced in this issue for June 4-6 in Fredericksburg, Va. This means your editor will opt for Fredericksburg, while other Partic'lar Friends who are members of both organizations will have to make a decision.

For those planning to go to Boston for the PCA conference, papers may cover (but are not limited to) any aspect of the following topics: authors, publishers, major characters, themes, readership, bibliography or research methods, social commentary, early or noteworthy genre forms, print culture, special collections, and representation of gender, race, class, etc.

The division has two distinct but related areas of interest: juvenile series books of all types and eras, including 20th-century publications like those of the Stratemeyer Syndicate (Nancy Drew, Hardy Boys, Tom Swift, etc.), along with non-syndicate boys' and girls' series, as well as more recent and ongoing series (Harry Potter, Twilight, Choose Your Own Adventure, etc.). Also covered are the series books' precursors: dime novels, nickel weeklies, story papers, etc. Papers addressing either or both of these areas will be considered.

All participants are requested to submit a 250-word abstract with title. First-time participants with this division are encouraged to submit a 1-2 page proposal, including a bibliography, along with the abstract. Email communication is welcomed from potential members desiring feedback on a proposal topic prior to making a formal submission.

The deadline for paper proposals is November 16, 2020. Early submission is strongly encouraged.

Please send all inquiries to:

Demian Katz
Villanova University
Email: demian.katz@villanova.edu

Fredericksburg will host 2021 convention

(Continued from Page 3)

America." Chatham Mansion, right across the Rappahannock River, was a Civil War hospital. You can look across the river from Chatham and some of the buildings you now see in Fredericksburg were there when Clara Barton attended wounded soldiers at Chatham.

Some years ago, the Director of Tourism told a local Rotary club that the biggest draw to the city is the Civil War. The Battle of Fredericksburg occurred in December 1862, when Robert E. Lee's Confederate soldiers turned back Ambrose Burnside's Union army. The National Park Service's Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Center and its park historians help tourists understand both the battle and the war.

When you think of presidential libraries, James Monroe's may not immediately come to mind. His presidential library was founded here in Fredericksburg in 1927 by his descendants and is a National Historic Landmark. The library and museum house the world's



Historic downtown Fredericksburg features tree-lined streets and many small shops and stores.

Photo by Jack Bales

largest collection of documents and artifacts related to the fifth president, including the desk on which he wrote the Monroe Doctrine.

I stopped by quite a few local motels and hotels while deciding on one that would be the H.A.S. convention headquarters, and Rob Kasper (PF-327) who lives in Richmond, came up twice so we could talk to several hotel directors. Liane Houghtalin (PF-699) lives in Fredericksburg and we exchanged quite a few emails on the subject. We decided on the **Hampton Inn and Suites** (Fredericksburg-South), not only due to the facilities but

also the enthusiastic welcoming of administrators Chris Jones and Terry English.

The restaurant for Friday evening's dinner has also been chosen and will be announced in the next **Newsboy**.

Fredericksburg's population is about 30,000. The city is located roughly half-way between Richmond, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., and visitors often use Fredericksburg

as a base of operations so they can also visit these cities as well as nearby colonial Williamsburg.

I look forward to welcoming our Horatio Alger Society members and families to Fredericksburg next June! Additional convention details will be published in upcoming issues of **Newsboy**.

Kirkland Monument depicts humanitarianism under fire

Few visitors to Fredericksburg, Virginia — the site of the 2021 Horatio Alger Society convention — fail to be moved by the Richard Rowland Kirkland Monument, shown in the photo on Page 1 of this issue.

As Union soldiers tried to storm the hill at Marye's Heights during the Battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862, Confederate forces repelled them with heavy gunfire. Wounded men littered the battlefield, and Confederate Sgt. Richard Kirkland, unable to bear their cries of distress, filled canteens with water so he could at least provide some temporary relief.

Men on both sides watched with astonishment and admiration as he went from man to man, not stopping his humanitarian task until each one had drunk his fill.

This monument was designed by American sculptor Felix de Weldon, whose 1965 Iwo Jima Memorial in Arlington, Virginia, is based on the famous photo by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal of the flag-raising atop Mount Suribachi.

The Kirkland Monument's inscription reads:

"At the risk of his own life, this American soldier of sublime compassion brought water to his wounded foes at Fredericksburg. The fighting men on both sides of the line called him 'The Angel of Marye's Heights.'"

Sgt. Kirkland also saw action at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. He was shot and killed on Sept. 20, 1863, during the Battle of Chickamauga.

— Jack Bales (PF-258)

The missing Hursts

(Continued from Page 3)

you see any of these anywhere, let me know; they may belong to me. But, to be sure, there is a book thief lurking in the shadows. Here is the story:

Each of us today usually sits alone and pecks away at our computers; then a few days later we find a box on our front porch containing our latest Alger book(s) or other treasures. Everything is automated with seemingly little interpersonal skill involved. All one needs now to build an impressive Alger collection is a computer, good credit, the right websites and an abundance of money. Sadly, there seems to be almost no collector camaraderie or that indefinable opportunity to share with a friend or two the pleasure and pure excitement of together finding a prize book somewhere on a dusty shelf in the middle of nowhere. Take it from me: the adrenaline rush is exciting and enormously fulfilling.

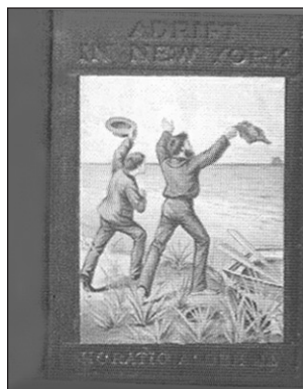
For years, I absolutely loved sharing that type of fraternal book hunting with Jim Thorp. Often, we used to meet with others at Morris Olsen's house in Mattapan, just outside of Boston. Together, with six or eight Alger collectors, we tasted the latest of Morris's Alger findings and, at the end of the day, Morris would treat us to dinner at his favorite seafood restaurant. I used to also delight in having Jim Thorp show me his favorite local bookstores. We always seemed to find good Algers around Nashua to enhance our collections as we roamed through the beautiful New Hampshire backwoods from town to town.

I recall on one unforgettable day Jim, along with Jim Towey, Ron Murch and I completed a circle of old barns, stores and cellars in Maine and New Hampshire. Towey and I traveled a carefree 600-plus miles that day leaving Connecticut at 6 a.m., getting to the Thorp Nashua homestead about 9 a.m. We then jumped into Jim's cool Cadillac and roared north to meet the Rev. Ron Murch in Maine, also a collector of old children's books, a scant two hours later.

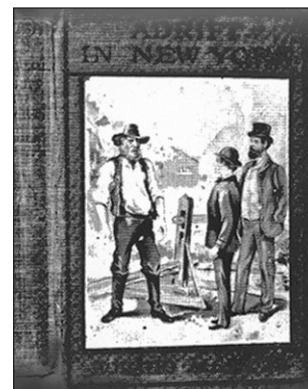
What a day that was!! Ron had called ahead and got six or eight booksellers to open up their doors to us, where we could uncover the best of the best in Alger, as well as a whole plethora of other old series-book authors.

Then, hours later when the store visits were completed, we said goodbye to Jim back in Nashua, clutching tightly to his many purchases. We promised to repeat that day as soon as we could. Jim Towey and I then returned to Connecticut, arriving around midnight, exhausted but filled with really good feelings and celebrating the closeness and camaraderie we had experienced.

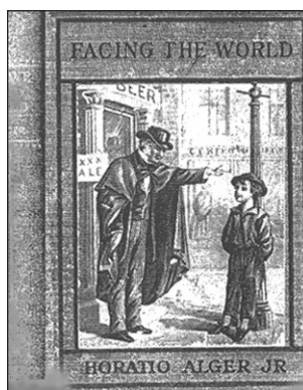
Jim Thorp often told us that he seldom went booking



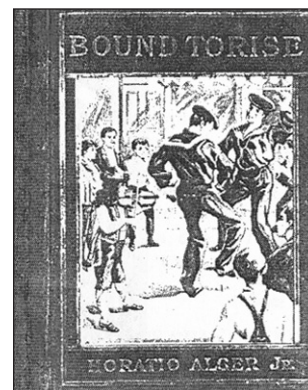
Format S9 B, Applique i:
"Calling Ship" (Page 119)



Format S9 B, Applique s:
"Two Men/Boy" (Page 124)



Format S9 B, Applique x:
"Cape/Boy" (Page 126)



Format S9 B, Applique y:
"Jig" (Page 127)

alone and loved these types of book-hunting trips with his Partic'lar Friends. He said that was how he acquired a large portion of his books, particularly the Small Hurst Algers. He and I both collected these little Hurst editions and would take turns in buying them when on such trips. Usually, if we both needed one that we found when together, we'd take turns in owning it.

One day I remember distinctly standing next to Jim looking up at shelved books encased in enormous floor-to-ceiling book stacks. All of a sudden his right and my left hand went up to a cluster of four Small Hurst books; our hands met, one on top of the other. We slowly turned and smiled at each other, took them down and split them so we each got two. As I recall he even gave me my choice; that was just Jim's way.

The last time I saw Jim was when I was writing my book about Small Hurst Alger editions a few years ago. I went to his home with my copying machine to inventory his 100-plus Small Hursts that he'd built over the years. It was an impressive collection. At the time, his was one of only three or four existing large collections of these Hurst books, and he had a bunch of them that I hadn't seen before. I copied the formats I needed and they became the source for many of the format pictures in my book. We had fun that day, talking Alger and Alger people. He,



Brad Chase and Jim Thorp at the 2010 H.A.S. convention in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Photo by Bill Gowen

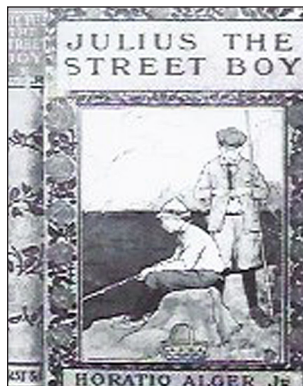
Carole and I then had lunch together at one of their local eateries. It was a good day. They are nice people.

Recently, I have revived my interest in collecting Small Hursts and now own just fewer than 100 of them myself. Needless to say I was excited when Bob Eastlack and the H.A.S. decided to accept the responsibility for auctioning Jim's entire Alger collection at the 2020 convention in Gettysburg. This, of course, would include all of Jim's Small Hursts. For essentially two reasons, I was excited and looked forward eagerly to bidding on the books when we met in June: I could now own something that was so meaningful to Jim and at the same time enhance my own Small Hurst collection.

Enter the pandemic and the cancellation of the convention (and the annual book auction). This was a substantial blow to those of us who had hoped to bid on Jim's books. Characteristically, Bob Eastlack, as convention host, kept his cool and arranged to auction the majority of Jim's books on the Internet, thereby giving the rest of us a shot at buying Alger books this year.

In preparation for the convention, Bob had personally driven to New Hampshire and brought more than 1,000 of Jim's books (33 banker's boxes) from Nashua and stored them in his living room in Pennsylvania. After the convention's cancellation, decisions were then made that a major portion of Jim's books would be auctioned online. That included Jim's Small Hursts, which sent a wave of excitement through my whole body. Bob laboriously conducted an exhaustive inventory of the entire Thorp collection, clearly detailing many individualized characteristics for each book. He then made the listing available to those interested in bidding.

I had spent weeks inventorying my own Small Hursts, constructing an Excel matrix that identified those I owned as related to the total number of such books Hurst presumably had published. One amazing result



Format S10, Applique d:
"Fishing" (Page 134)



Format S10, Applique i:
"Swing with Dog" (Page 137)

The foregoing six images show scarcer appliques not in Chase's collection among the eight "missing Hursts."

At right is the title *Charlie Codman's Cruise* in format S10c ("Camping") that was to be a new title addition to his collection in that format, along with the missing *Tom, the Bootblack* in this same cover. All images are from Chase's book on the small Hursts, with pages noted.



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of this was to find that if one were to collect every Small Hurst that the company advertised they had published, there would be well over 2,600 different Small Hurst books to collect! However, we just don't have enough information as yet to determine how valid that number actually is. Anyway, my individual spreadsheets when pasted together comprised a single matrix sheet (formats published by titles per format) that is about three feet by 18 inches in size. I then spent hours poring over Bob's auction list of Jim's Small Hursts, comparing it to my matrix showing what I didn't own so I would know what to bid on. I was now ready for the auction.

Bob conducted a well-run auction over several days, and as usual, those who bid the most per item, won; that's the way auctions work. I was pleased to win eight of Jim's Small Hurst Algers that I could hardly contain myself. I didn't win more because I just couldn't match what others were willing to pay. I knew that my prizes would fit nicely into key vacant spaces I had in my collection, I was absolutely delighted that these eight little gems would soon be on their way to a new home in Connecticut. Each one would likely remind me of really great collecting experiences with Jim and others.

In preparation for receiving my new acquisitions,

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The missing Hursts

(Continued from Page 7)

I had laid out on my worktable in my Alger room downstairs, all my Small Hurst books in order and by format as shown in my book. I noted with sticky notes exactly where my new eight winning trophies would snuggle in nicely. I was all set. All that was left now was for Bob to mail me the eight I had won. It was agony to wait even though it was only a few days.

Ann and I pick up our mail at a little mail building near the entrance to our condominium complex where we live. We had been out in the car to get a CVS prescription and stopped at our mail building on the way home. I was excited because I had an inkling the package with my new Algers would be arriving that day or the next. I was not disappointed. Ann got out of our car and opened the mailbox and I could see from my seat in the car that a box was inside. Wow, my Small Algers had made their journey from Pennsylvania to Connecticut and now they were going home with us.

However, something was wrong. Ann retrieved the box, then turned to me with one of those shocked, disbelieving looks and slowly said; "It isn't very heavy; it's empty." EMPTY...!! Now, this was really no time for joking, but that look on her face told me that this was no joke. She put the box on the car seat and indeed close inspection revealed that the tape on one end had been slit at the edges and the inside was absolutely bare — empty, nada, nothing! Not even any packing material. My books were gone!

We both sat there stunned. Who, how, when, where and most importantly, *why* would somebody steal eight Small Hurst Alger books from a package in the U.S. Mail? It's not like Alger books are the most popular items a thief would normally look for in random packages. I think also such mail thievery is a Federal offense and people go to jail sometimes when convicted for such acts. Who could even fence such items and where? (Well, yes, maybe on eBay; I'll keep my eye out.) But would stealing eight Small Hurst Books be worth the price of going to the slammer? And, how big is the market for Small Hurst Alger books, anyway? I honestly can't fathom what someone would be thinking that would do this. It is assuredly, from all aspects, a most astonishing and stupid act! It is hurtful, too. I actually felt violated.

Anyway, Ann and I drove home and I immediately called our local Post Office and reported the theft. They apparently already knew the condition the package was in when it had arrived at their building because they had earlier stamped on the outside: "Received at the Enfield Post Office with no contents." I was instructed

by them to report the theft to the sender and have him notify the local Post Office that he had used to process the original mailing. I then immediately called Eastlack and told him the theft details and what protocol to follow at his Post Office.

He called me back later that day and said he had made a report of the theft to his sending Post Office. He was told an investigation would be conducted right away by one of their investigative units. Bob asked that I send pictures to that investigation unit of the package as I had received it, which I did. He has checked with the Post Office people a couple of times since and has been told that the investigation is still open and active. During one such inquiry, the Postal Clerk told Bob that I (the recipient) was probably a con artist. She apologized when Bob took offense at such an inappropriate assertion.

A couple of things are now clear. Bob's cost to send the books appeared on the package by weight, so the package was received intact from Bob by the Post Office when he mailed it. When the package arrived at the Enfield Post Office, it was stamped there as being received with no contents. To me it is obvious that the books disappeared within the Post Office's closed system. Since the package had a tracking number, I would think potential theft opportunities would quickly narrow. We now await the results of the official investigation.

Well, that's my sad story. This is my saga of losing an opportunity to remember a good friend by owning a piece of his collection, as well as building my own. I will carry on, of course, and make do without being able to own any of Jim's eight Small Hursts. Hopefully better days are ahead. I will be patient and await results from what has so far been an unproductive Postal Service investigation to find my missing books. I guess I can even empathize with the thief who obviously has good taste in choosing what merchandise to steal. What I absolutely can't seem to get out of my system, however, is the hole the theft has left on my heart.

I had so wanted to own something that had belonged to my friend. I will have another shot at getting something at next year's convention, of course. It won't be a Small Hurst Alger book of Jim's for they are now all gone. It may not be one of Jim's first editions either. But it will be a Thorp Alger of some type. Looking forward to that helps a little to ease that awful nagging feeling I still have of being so personally violated. I had attempted to obtain something to remember all the good times Jim and I and others had together, as well as to enhance my own collection. Unfortunately, neither of these worked out because a thief has blatantly intervened and has now spoiled for me a very important part of how I view my hobby life.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,

I can identify with the news carrier experiences that keep turning up in *Newsboy* and would like to add to the collection.

In 1950, my very practical father, who had survived a month on Iwo Jima, started giving me an allowance of 35 cents per week. On my ninth birthday, two weeks later, he informed me that he had signed me up to deliver the **Syracuse Herald-Journal** newspaper around our neighborhood in Sherrill, New York. That wouldn't be allowed in today's world but on July 6, 1959, my allowance payments suddenly ceased after installment #2!

About a year and a half later I had saved up enough money to buy a brand new, shiny black, "Hawthorne" bicycle from Montgomery Ward. I had been riding a bicycle my uncle and I built from the parts of several other bikes. As you can see from the photo, the new bicycle stood almost as tall as I did when the handlebar basket was full of newspapers.

My paper route grew over the next five years as it absorbed two other paper routes other boys had retired from. Many of my newspaper customers hired me to mow their lawns on a regular basis and I earned a little more extra money by setting pins in the Oneida Community bowling alley. I bought most of my clothes, my school lunches, and two gasoline-powered lawn mowers. When I went to Boy Scout camp in the summer, my younger brother and sister took over the paper route for me. Eventually, they inherited the paper route when I got a job in a super market.

Delivering newspapers turned out to be great training for a WW II kid and it eventually led to a very successful high school science teaching career.

Sincerely,
Ed Evans (PF-1000)
979 Hamlin Center Road
Hamlin, NY 14464
Email: readyeddy@earthlink.net

P.S.: During the "paper route years" my father passed on to me a few books he had been given as a young boy — a couple of Horatio Alger books and some Motor Boys adventures. Alger's *Rough and Ready* really turned me on, and I even wrote a book report for school about it. Near the end of my teaching career I ran across a nice copy of *Rough and Ready* in an antique store. That started my collection of Alger books. I have collected, and read, one complete set of Alger's books and have another partially completed set. My heirs have been instructed to donate my entire collection to the Horatio Alger Society after my passing. (I don't think I have any first editions but I have some very interesting specimens).



Young Ed Evans on his paper route in upstate New York.

Dear Bill,

Just in case you had any plans for printing the Appleton-Century article in the near future, please wait until I am able to update it and send you a new copy. We had to replace our computers a while back, and nothing seems to work quite as well now. Updating is not anywhere near as easy as it once was, and sometimes it's virtually impossible. I have more information now than previously, so I want to incorporate that into the article. If you have decided not to run it all, in light of the fact that there are probably not more than 10 members who would be interested, I would not be averse to having it go to Gil O'Gara, who will take it. Anyway, just let me know what your plans (if any) are for this piece.

We have avoided the worst of the coronavirus here, although with my pneumonia history I have not been off the property since late March, when I had to go to Lincoln to straighten out my father's fiduciary matters after my sister's death. Mary Ann does the shopping, masked and gloved, and I clean the car with sanitizer after we unload the groceries. Everything else is obtained online, not my favorite way of doing things but far better than getting this virus. So, like most others, we await a vaccine. At least I can do the yard work, although the heat this summer, heading for an all-time high for Omaha, has slowed my activities outside. Mary Ann and I hope things are well with you.

Sincerely,
Bart J. Nyberg (PF-879)
4657 Mason St.
Omaha, NE 68106
Email: lewarcher@aol.com

Bart and I have agreed that we will run his article in Newsboy in the near future. The Appleton/Appleton-Century complex published several of my favorite authors, topped by Ralph Henry Barbour and William Heyliger. So yes, I believe we have at least 10 readers who will be interested!

The Milton Caniff *Steve Canyon* Series

By David Kirk Vaughan (PF-832)

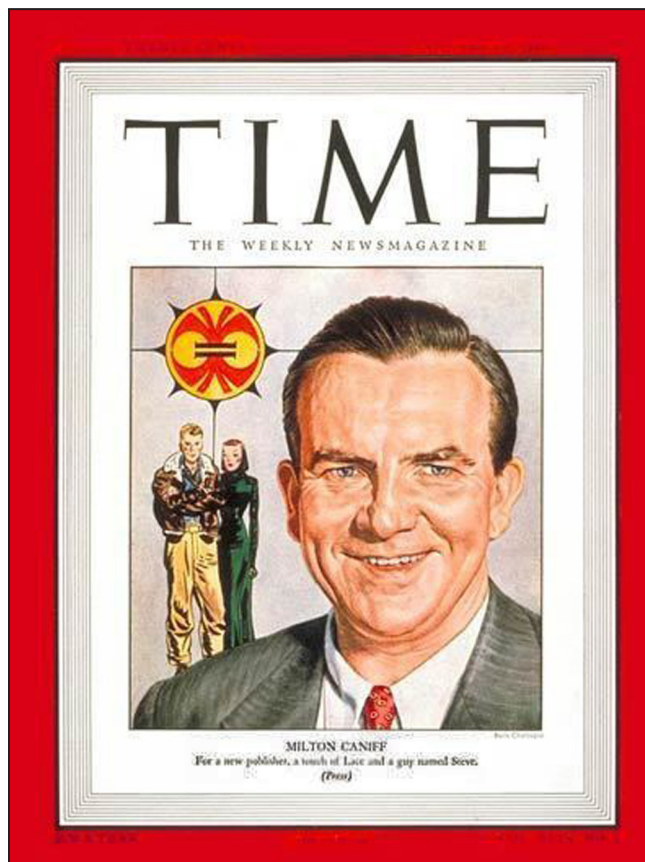
Ohio native Milt Caniff was an accomplished and admired comic-strip artist who specialized in military flying adventures. His best-known comic strips were "Terry and the Pirates" and "Steve Canyon." The action in Caniff's comic strips was based on current military and political situations, especially those associated with World War II and the Cold War. Although he was almost exclusively an artist, four series books describing the adventures of Steve Canyon, and attributed to him as the author, appeared in 1959. These are the titles of Milton Caniff's Steve Canyon juvenile aviation series, all with the word "operation" in their titles:

Steve Canyon Operation Convoy
Steve Canyon Operation Snowflower
Steve Canyon Operation Foo Ling
Steve Canyon Operation Eel Island

The adventures described in the series are based on Caniff's well-known cartoon character, Steve Canyon. Canyon had been Caniff's primary cartoon character since 1947, when Steve Canyon had replaced Caniff's first popular character, Terry, of "Terry and the Pirates." Terry had always been associated with the flying arm of the U. S. Army, especially during the World War II years, when Terry's activities were associated with flying activities in the Far East and Middle East.

One of the central characters in "Terry and the Pirates" was Colonel Flip Corkin, a character based on Philip Cochran, who was a pilot in the China-Burma-India Theater during World War II. That general area of the world was always Caniff's favorite locale in which to set his stories, and this preference remains true in the four Steve Canyon books; one is set in the Persian Gulf, one along the southern China border, one in China, and one near the Formosa (Taiwan) Straits.

Because all four titles were published by Grosset & Dunlap in the same year, the quality of the stories suffers as a result of their quick production. While the stories have their deficiencies, those deficiencies are not especially the result of the author's rapid pace of



Milton Caniff appeared on the Jan. 13, 1947 cover of *Time* magazine, the same day his *Steve Canyon* comic strip made its debut. Three months later, Caniff was also the subject of a cover story for *Newsweek*.

composition. Caniff, born in Hillsboro, Ohio on Feb. 28, 1907, was a cartoonist (an artist, if you will), not an author. He was so busy creating his cartoon characters' adventures throughout his career that he never, as far as we know, wrote anything longer than a short speech or a letter to a friend. Although Caniff's name is given as the author, other individuals probably wrote the narratives. The comprehensive 2007 Milton Caniff biography, *Meanwhile ... A Biography of Milton Caniff*, written by Robert C. Harvey, provides little information about the series:

Grosset and Dunlap produced a series of juvenile novels based upon early strips. ... The books were illustrated by artists who copied Caniff's drawings in the strip, adapting them to book page format (698).

The narratives of all stories describe adventures that had been depicted in Caniff's earlier cartoon strips. The earliest strips on which the stories are based appeared in 1948, nearly 11 years before the books were published. The scenarios of the stories reflect the post-

World War II Cold War political situation, in which, in the popular view, Communist forces threatened the political stability of smaller, more democratic countries, and thus by extension they presented a threat to the American way of life

In Caniff's cartoon strips of the early 1950s, the "Commies" nearly always present the direct or indirect threat that Steve Canyon and his associates work to thwart, especially in the areas bordering Red China.

In some of the strips, Steve Canyon receives assistance from locals who remember the Americans' presence (and kindnesses) during World War II and are willing to assist Steve and his friends.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the events of World War II would certainly have been fresh in the minds of people in the areas affected by the war, for those events would have occurred from three to six years earlier.

However, the more than 10-year time span between the appearance of the original strips (starting as early as 1948) and the books

on which the strips were based causes problems of historical relevance and internal consistency.

Given the long and enduring popularity of the Steve Canyon cartoon strip (it ran in daily and Sunday newspapers from 1947 to 1988), one might wonder why the Steve Canyon juvenile series books appeared so close together and so briefly. And one might also wonder why they appeared in 1959. It turns out that 1959 was an especially productive year for Milt Caniff's Steve Canyon franchise. The Steve Canyon television series appeared that year. The series starred Dean Fredericks, and ran from 1958 to 1959, and consisted of 34 episodes. That was the year also that a Steve Canyon Little Golden Book, designed for younger readers, appeared. That was the year that a

Steve Canyon board game appeared, as did paint sets, kids' clothing items and school lunch boxes. A series of Steve Canyon toys were introduced in 1959 as well; these included a Steve Canyon toy child's helmet and visor and a toy truck that launched a glider bomb. It is clear that 1959 was a "blitz" year for marketing Steve Canyon in all of his manifestations. (biographer Robert Harvey notes that Milton Caniff's involvement in these peripheral ventures was minimal).

One clue to the choice of 1959 as the year in which the image of Steve Canyon was so strongly promoted can be found in the illustrations contained inside the front



The illustrated endpapers for G&D's 1959 Steve Canyon Series. The buildings shown here are from preliminary sketches for the central campus of the U.S. Air Force Academy near Colorado Springs. It accepted its first class of cadets in 1955, when interest in the Air Force as a career was very high.

and rear covers of every Steve Canyon juvenile series book. The illustration shows a single-engine jet aircraft with Air Force markings flying over a mountain range at the base of which is set a modernistic group of buildings which look like a futuristic corporate headquarters complex. In fact, the buildings depicted are preliminary sketches of the central complex of the new U.S. Air Force

Academy, which had just been constructed along the front range of the Rocky Mountains north of Colorado Springs. Farther above the single-engine jet are two multi-engine aircraft of indeterminate type. On the right side of the illustration stands Steve Canyon, wearing flight gear, holding a flight helmet in his right arm and a clipboard in his left hand.

The U.S. Air Force Academy accepted its first class of cadets in 1955, one year after the establishment of the academy had been authorized. The campus was housed initially in World War II barracks at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, Colorado, for three years, while construction of its permanent site was completed. In the summer of 1958, the class of 1962 arrived,

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The Milton Caniff *Steve Canyon* Series

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thus supplying the Air Force Academy with its first complete contingent of four classes. In August of 1958 the first four classes moved from Lowry to the new site. In the following summer (the summer of 1959), the first class graduated from the academy, and a picture of the first class of graduates was featured on the front cover of *Life* magazine. So, 1959 was a milestone year for the Air Force Academy.

It is evident that in the full-scale appearance of Steve Canyon's products as well as fictional adventures, Caniff was helping to promote awareness of the arrival of a new source of eager young Air Force officers into the nation's military forces. These new young officers could provide a plethora of Steve Canyon types, patriotic, problem-solving, motivated, aggressive fliers. Caniff was also capitalizing on the success of his flyboy hero, Steve Canyon, who was riding at the height of the strip's popularity.

Although the titles do not suggest it, there was a plan of development for the four titles in the series. They appeared in the order in which the comic strips on which they were based appeared. The first, *Operation Convoy*, was based on the events in the Steve Canyon strips that had appeared in the summer of 1948. The second, *Operation Snowflower*, was based on strips that appeared in the spring of 1949. The third, *Operation Foo Ling*, was based on strips that appeared in the early spring of 1951, while the final title, *Operation Eel Island*, was based on strips that appeared in the summer and fall of 1951.

While Milton Caniff was undoubtedly the "author," as the stories were based on comic strips that he had created, he was probably not the person who wrote the books. Each volume appears to have been written by a surrogate author or authors who apparently were authorized to deviate as necessary from the original story lines.

Stories in the Steve Canyon comic strips ran for long periods of time; as one story moved toward a conclusion, a new story began, and the strands of the old stories and the new were intertwined. Each volume in the G&D series included illustrations drawn by Caniff (or his assistants), some of which were art from the original strips, and some of which were drawn specially for the series. In some cases, characters who appeared in the strips did not appear in the stories. These were undoubtedly removed from the stories to simplify and tighten the plot. Internal evidence in the books suggests that Caniff had little to

do with the plots of the stories beyond providing the original adventures, nor does he appear to have paid much attention to internal inconsistencies.

While most juvenile aviation stories included some illustrations, none were as fully illustrated as the Steve Canyon books. The usual juvenile series book of the period would have, in addition to a colorful dust jacket, a frontispiece illustration with at most two or three internal illustrations. The average number of illustrations in each of the four Steve Canyon books, in contrast, is 47. These include full-page, two-page, and half-page drawings. While each book contained visually appealing aspects, the accompanying stories were not always as appealing.

Operation Convoy

The first title in the series, *Operation Convoy*, is the least successful of the four. It appears to be a literal transcription of the original comic strip, emphasizing cartoon caricatures and unrealistic dialogue over character and plot. *Operation Convoy* opens with Steve Canyon riding in a B-25 medium bomber over the Persian Gulf. Little information is provided about him except that he is an "Air Force reserve officer"; we are not even told his rank. He is about to parachute out of the aircraft over the Ranid-i-Hurk Mountains, 50 miles inland from the coast.

His ultimate destination is the coastal city of Bandar Rasbah. Because there is no city by that name, this must be Caniff's version of Bandar Abbas, which sits on the Iranian side of the Straits of Hormuz, always a locale of potential conflict. Steve prepares to jump as the aircraft approaches two rivers that join to "form a perfect Y." This may be Caniff's version of the Naband River, located north of Bandar Abbas, which divides and rejoins as it meanders through the coastal plain.

As Steve buries his parachute after his successful jump, he is surprised to hear a greeting from his old friend and comrade, "Happy" Easter. Happy, one of the regular characters in the Steve Canyon comic strip, sports a white beard and wears an old campaign hat with the insignia of the United States Cavalry fastened to the front. The narrator describes him as looking like a "sly, overage Kewpie doll who had never shaved." No information is provided about why Steve has bailed out or how Happy was able to arrive ahead of him and meet him in such a remote location.

We have no information about where the B-25 departed from or where it is going. Like Steve Canyon, we are dropped into the middle of the story without any explanation. When Happy asks what their mission

is (he evidently does not know), Steve says only that does not know, but that “something’s mighty smelly near the Persian Gulf and it isn’t fish. We have to find out what it is.”

Steve and Happy make their way into the bazaar section of Bandar Rasbah where they are spotted as Americans by a “gang of street urchins” who ask for “Baksheesh.” Nearby police see the commotion and capture them. For some strange reason, Steve attempts to pass himself off as an American gangster type sent into the area to deliver a special commodity to the “Underground.” The police are only confused by this behavior and place them in “protective custody.” It is at this point that Steve Canyon has allowed himself and Happy to be promptly captured without having gained any useful information, not a promising start to the adventure.

They are promptly visited in jail by a group of children, some of the “street urchins” whom they encountered earlier. One of them is a small girl, who passes Steve a cloth shoulder patch from a World War II American army unit. Steve recognizes that she is sending him a signal that she will try to help them. The girl, named Convoy, is described as a “strange mixture of child and woman, too young to be grown up, too wise to be a child.” She is assisted by another boy, named J. P. Beel. Convoy was an orphan who was “adopted” by G. I. soldiers during the war. She and J. P. Beel were treated well by American soldiers during World War II and are committed to assisting Steve and Happy.

Convoy and J. P. Beel help Steve and Happy escape by throwing a smoke bomb in the jail and sneaking them out of the city in a cart filled with straw. When they are safe, Steve asks how he can thank Convoy for helping him escape, and her answer is prompt and simple: “Marry me!” When Steve asks where she got this idea, she replies that when GIs left they told her that someday a soldier would return and marry her. When Happy suggests that Steve ask Convoy what kind of dowry she can bring to the marriage (in an effort to discourage the girl), she produces a key to a storehouse of U. S. Army supplies left behind after the war.

As Steve and Happy stand looking out over the Bay of Bandar Rasbah, Steve spots a submarine in the process of submerging, and he tells Happy “now I know why I was sent here.” The submarine is heading for a shipyard at Bandar Rasbah. Convoy provides some papers that enable Steve and Happy to enter the shipyard, where they are promptly captured and meet Captain Akoola, an attractive, sultry woman wearing the rank of a navy lieutenant commander.

Akoola escorts Steve around a fake ship, a ship that looks like a freighter on the outside, but which can conceal a submarine on the surface. Akoola brings Steve, Happy and Convoy on the ship to demonstrate its capabilities. An American four-engine bomber flies overhead, and Akoola communicates with the crew of the bomber. Steve realizes that the American bomber, which looks like a B-29 in an illustration but is not identified as such (the Soviets had built their version of the B-29), is being flown by enemy agents and is using aerial television pictures to provide guidance for the ship on the water’s surface.

Steve and Happy briefly escape using one of the ship’s lifeboats but are soon recaptured. While they are in the lifeboat, Convoy realizes that Captain Akoola is attracted to Steve Canyon. Finally Steve and Happy escape by hiding in burial at sea bags which are tossed overboard. Before they are dropped into the sea, Convoy gives them knives (a ploy which Akoola approves of) with which they can release themselves once in the water.

Once ashore, Steve and Happy are apparently rescued by an American submarine, and Convoy returns to Bandar Rasbah. The story ends as abruptly as it began, with no sense of who asked Steve to undertake this mission or why. The story is mostly filled with insulting conversations and frequent fights between Steve and Happy and their hostile acquaintances. Whoever was responsible for transferring Milt Caniff’s cartoon episodes into narrative form in this story worked literally from the source, with little effort to adapt the original panels into an interesting, coherent, or logical narrative.

Operation Snowflower

Operation Snowflower, in sharp contrast to *Operation Convoy*, is a well-constructed story, with a reasonable opening framework, a coherent and even exciting plot, and good characterizations. The main male characters in this story, besides Steve, include rough-and-ready old-timer Dogie Hogan and youngster Reed Kimberly. The action takes place in fictional nation of Damma, a small country bordering the southern boundary of communist China. Damma probably represents Nepal, a small Himalayan country bordering both China and India.

In the opening chapter of the story, Steve meets General “Shanty” Towne in the Pentagon; Towne directs Steve to play the part of a contract pilot flying supplies from India to Damma. Steve’s job is to provide whatever unofficial assistance he can to support the government of Damma, which is trying to resist the efforts of the Red Chinese to take over the country. In this opening chapter we learn that Steve

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The Milton Caniff *Steve Canyon Series*

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holds the rank of lieutenant colonel and that his full name is Stevenson B. Canyon, information that was not provided in the first title.

In the second chapter, Steve has already found a job as a pilot with the Damma Mineral Company and is flying supplies from India to Damma accompanied by Reed Kimberly, a young man about 17 years of age, who had approached Steve for a job.

They land at the Damma airfield and are promptly confronted by Dogie Hogan, a rough character who initially has a strong dislike for Steve and his friends. When Dogie attempts to pick a fight with Reed Kimberly, Steve intervenes. Just as Steve and Dogie are about to come to blows, they are interrupted by their boss, Copper Calhoun, who reminds them that their primary job is to bring food and supplies into Damma and fly uranium ore out, not fight among themselves.

Copper Calhoun gives Reed Kimberly a special assignment, to provide information to an unknown woman referred to as the "Crag Hag," but who is in fact Princess Snowflower, the daughter of the High Rokk, the leader of Damma, and a young girl about the same age as Reed. Princess Snowflower wants to learn more about America, and Reed's task is to provide the princess with information about America. When this episode appeared in the original 1949 comic strip, Caniff asked the public to help Reed with this task. Reed has decided to show the Princess a film that would give her "a clear idea of our country and its people," and Caniff asked the American people, in a March 1949 newspaper article, to select the best film for this purpose:

It will be a tough job, but it also will be fun for you to go back through the years recalling motion pictures you have seen and selecting the one movie that you think best pictures us and our country. The film can be old or new, silent or sound; color or black and white.

Caniff evidently intended to use this episode to present to the world, through his comic strip, a vision of the robust and appealing American life, probably in contrast to the harsher world that existed in the communist countries. In an August 1949 newspaper



The Red soldiers rushed out on the fragile bridge.

Operation Snowflower, Page 151

article, Caniff revealed that the first choice of readers who responded to his request was "The Best Years of our Lives," the Academy Award-winning post-WWII film directed by William Wyler, which showed three American servicemen, soldier, sailor, and airman, who served in World War II as they attempted to adjust to normal life in America after the war. Other films that placed close behind were "An American Romance," "State Fair," "The Human Comedy," and "Our Town." Surprisingly, Frank Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life" was not among the finalists.

In the book, however, Reed Kimberly does not have time to provide an educational program for the princess, because the city of Damma is soon attacked by communist soldiers. As Steve Canyon is flying in with a load of supplies, he is shot at by the attacking soldiers. They shoot out two of the four engines on Steve's aircraft, but he manages to land safely. In one of the technical errors in the series, the accompanying

illustration shows Steve flying a two-engine, not a four-engine, aircraft.

In the attack on the city, Copper Calhoun is wounded but is flown out by another company pilot, while Dogie and Reed help Princess Snowflower escape from the city through a secret tunnel. Once outside, Canyon joins them. For the next several days they survive by living off the land and sleeping in a cave. After a brief encounter with hostile soldiers, Reed tells Steve he feels badly because he has killed a man by hitting him with a stone. Steve consoles Reed by saying "If you hadn't finished him, he'd have finished you and Snowflower and Dogie Hogan. This is war, and war is a nasty business. Lots of folks get hurt." He adds, "Good people don't start wars, Reed. But most of the time they have to finish them." There is more fighting than philosophy in the Steve Canyon series, but *Operation Snowflower* combines both effectively.

Steve, Dogie, Reed, and Snowflower are rescued by an American C-47 which carries them to Calcutta. At the end of the story, Princess Snowflower determines that she will visit the United Nations to plead for assistance to liberate her country and free her father, who is still a prisoner. Canyon, now wearing his Air Force uniform, says he will travel to the Pentagon to learn what his next assignment will be. And in a nod to the events of 1959, Reed Kimberly announces he will apply for the United States Air Force Academy. This is the only one of the four Steve Canyon titles in which the existence of the Air Force Academy is acknowledged.

Operation Foo Ling

The first two titles in the series, *Operation Convoy* and *Operation Snowflower*, were apparently published simultaneously, as the dust jackets for both books contain advertisements for the two books. The next two titles, *Operation Foo Ling* and *Operation Eel Island*, were also published about the same time, as these books also refer to each other, and all four titles are listed on the back of the dust jackets for these two books.

In *Operation Foo Ling*, Steve flies to Oto Jima, located about one hundred miles off the coast of Red China; only one location is so close to mainland China, Formosa (also known as Taiwan), so Oto Jima must represent Taiwan. Steve is placed in charge of a special task force to bring a group of military men out of Red China. The men are being held captive in a barracks area of an old 14th Air Force (WW II Flying Tigers) base in China.

Steve and his men are given a map of the area so they can familiarize themselves with the features of the camp. The men they are rescuing are part of a

Navy mission that attempted to liberate the ruler of a "certain independent mountain country" on the border of Red China. Foo Ling, a rotund Chinese man who accompanied Steve on his flight into Oto Jima, returns to China to arrange the escape plans for the men held there. Foo Ling is a combination of magician and master of disguises. In China, Foo Ling is assisted in his efforts to help the men escape by two young Chinese, Hai Yu and Mei Tu.

Because many of the men may need medical treatment when they are rescued, a number of flight nurses are brought in to train the members of the infiltration team in basic medical procedures, such as treating wounds. One of the nurses is Deen Wilderness, with whom Steve previously had an affair of the heart. Another member of Steve's team is a Navy Lieutenant named Jefferson Duval Brevard, who also is attracted to Deen.

The aircraft used to support the rescue mission is a four-engine cargo plane, the Boeing C-97. In 1951, when the original Steve Canyon comic strip appeared, the C-97 was relatively new, having entered the Air Force inventory only four years before, when it set a cross-country speed record. But by 1959, when *Operation Foo Ling* was published, it was already an outmoded aircraft. The plane that would have been a logical choice for a risky rescue mission would have been the Lockheed C-130 four-engine turboprop, which had entered the Air Force inventory in 1956. By 1959 the C-130 had already moved from an A-model to a B-model version. It was soon adapted for a variety of missions, including special operations. But because the Steve Canyon series was tied to the original comic strips, the C-97, ill-suited for use in tactical operations, was the aircraft that carried the rescue team. Incidentally, the C-130 Hercules is still flying today.

When it is first mentioned, the accompanying illustration features a different aircraft, one not even in the Air Force inventory, a British cargo aircraft (p. 55). However, a later two-page illustration (pp. 102-103) correctly shows the four-engine aircraft. The narrative reflects the writer's familiarity with C-97 procedures, as Steve and Jeff run through an initial cockpit check (pp. 87-88) and later, when Steve sets METO power--maximum except for take-off (p. 110). The C-97 had clamshell doors in the rear of the fuselage through which vehicles could be loaded, and some Jeeps (general-purpose military vehicles first built in World War II) are brought on board as part of the rescue operation.

Deen Wilderness conducts the medical training for the men who will be going on the mission. During

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The dust jackets for three of the four titles in Milton Caniff's **Steve Canyon Series**, all published in 1959.

The Milton Caniff *Steve Canyon* Series

(Continued from Page 15)

a coffee break, she overhears some folksy philosophy when a group of enlisted men briefly discuss the merits of living in the United States: "In the U. S. and A.," one enlisted man says, "nobody can force yuh t'do anything if yuh keep the peace. And if yuh don't like the rules where you are, yuh can still head for open country an' squat." This is Caniff's (or, more likely, the unknown writer's) attempt at inserting some colloquial American philosophy into the narrative.

When the call comes to launch the mission, it is delayed because no one can locate Jeff Brevard, who is participating in a social engagement with Deen Wilderness. As she delivers Brevard to the waiting C-97, she hears on the radio that the flight surgeon who was scheduled to go with the crew has been hurt when his Jeep overturned, and she decides to join the rescue crew in his place.

Originally, no women were scheduled to be on the mission due to its hazardous nature. Steve Canyon is in the cockpit, controlling the aircraft, and does not learn that Deen Wilderness is on board until after it takes off.

The plane lands at a deserted airstrip at night and Steve and Jeff stay with the aircraft while the Army Rangers, following Foo Ling's directions, drive to the prison camp where they break out the American

prisoners. Deen goes along to offer medical aid before Steve can stop her. After an intense firefight, the Jeeps return with the prisoners, many of them wounded. Jeff drives one of the returned Jeeps and uses it to block a Chinese vehicle that is closely pursuing the last American Jeep, which carries Deen and the wounded leader of the prisoners.

Jeff then fires at two other pursuing vehicles in an attempt to prevent them from ramming the C-97. Canyon is forced to leave Jeff (whom he knows has been wounded) behind and takes off over the last of the pursuing vehicles. When they land safely back at Oto Jima, Deen Wilderness is promptly arrested for being absent from her duties as duty officer of the base hospital.

Back at the airstrip, Foo Ling and his two youthful helpers, Hai Yu and Mei Tu, help Jeff reach a safe hideout before he can be captured by the Chinese soldiers. Foo Ling ends a message that Brevard is safe, and Steve flies a C-47 in to rescue both Brevard and Foo Ling. This is the second-best volume in the series. The details of the rescue mission are well told, supplemented by good visuals.

Operation Eel Island

Operation Eel Island, the final volume in the series, is based on adventures depicted in the Steve Canyon comic strips that date from the summer and fall of 1951. In these strips Steve is assigned to an advanced island base off the coast of Red China named Eel Island. His new job is base operations officer under General "Saddle" Sohr, a rigid disciplinarian whose defense against unpreparedness is to enforce military regulations, especially those pertaining to uniform

standards and personal appearance.

General Sohr's patience is severely tried by Lieutenants Bucket and Fitch, two newly arrived hotshot pilots who fly their aircraft in close formation at low altitude over the base. They make an especially low pass when they see General Sohr's daughter, Melody, sunbathing in her bathing suit on the roof of the general's quarters. The story describes them as flying F-80s, a then-modern jet aircraft. But the many illustrations that accompany the text when Bucket and Fitch are involved in their flying activities show propeller-driven World War II-era P-51 Mustangs instead (pp. 20, 35, 37, 48, 51). The P-51 aircraft would still have been in the Air Force inventory when the original comic strip appeared, but they had been replaced by jets by the late 1950s. This error, of illustrations showing aircraft different than those described in the text occurs in all four titles, and suggests that Caniff was not directly involved in the production of the texts and that they were produced without his personal review. He would have spotted the error.

When Bucket and Fitch, dubbed the "Hot Rod Kids," are forced to walk around the island three times as punishment for their low-flying antics, Lieutenant Bucket hears noises when he rests his head on the ground. In a later flight, they take photos of the sampans coming into and going out of the local harbor, they determine that the boats are more heavily laden outbound than inbound. Bucket theorizes that a secret tunnel is being dug under the island and that the sampans are carrying the dirt away and dumping it in the sea.

With Steve Canyon's help, they determine that a tunnel is being built from the General's house under the airfield to the nearest village. The tunnel is being constructed by communist-sympathizing natives, two of whom are in the general's employ as house servants. Steve learns that the tunnel is not to be used as means of enabling espionage activities on the base but as a gigantic booby-trap. In the process of their activities, they rescue the General's daughter, who has been taken by the ring leader, Suki Suzie, and forced to work as her servant. When Suki Suzie tries to escape, Bucket and Fitch follow her out to sea in a sampan, firing fire-tipped arrows into her boat.

As this narrative indicates, the plot of this story is much less interesting than any of the other stories in the series, and it would be a disappointing story if it weren't for the escapades of lieutenants Bucket and Fitch, whose insouciance and inventiveness add a consistent degree of cleverness and wit not found in any of the other stories.

Summing up the Steve Canyon Series

While the four stories that constitute the Steve Canyon stories have their exciting moments, the general quality of the stories is low. The best of the four is *Operation Snowflower*, followed by *Operation Foo Ling*. Perhaps the same writer was responsible for both.

The major flaw in the stories is the disconnect between the illustrations and the text, especially in the depiction of the aircraft involved. Because the artwork included in the books was based on the original comic strips, which dated from 1948 to 1951, the aircraft shown in those strips were often gone from the Air Force inventory by 1959, when the books were published. But in an effort to modernize the stories by including more modern, jet aircraft in the text, the illustrations were not updated, often showing the original, propeller-driven planes.

And, the Steve Canyon Series' visual connection with the newly developed United States Air Force Academy, shown in the endpaper illustrations in all the books (see Page 11), is reinforced by comments in only one of the four books.

Editor's note: Milton Arthur ("Milt") Caniff died on April 3, 1988, in New York City at age 81.

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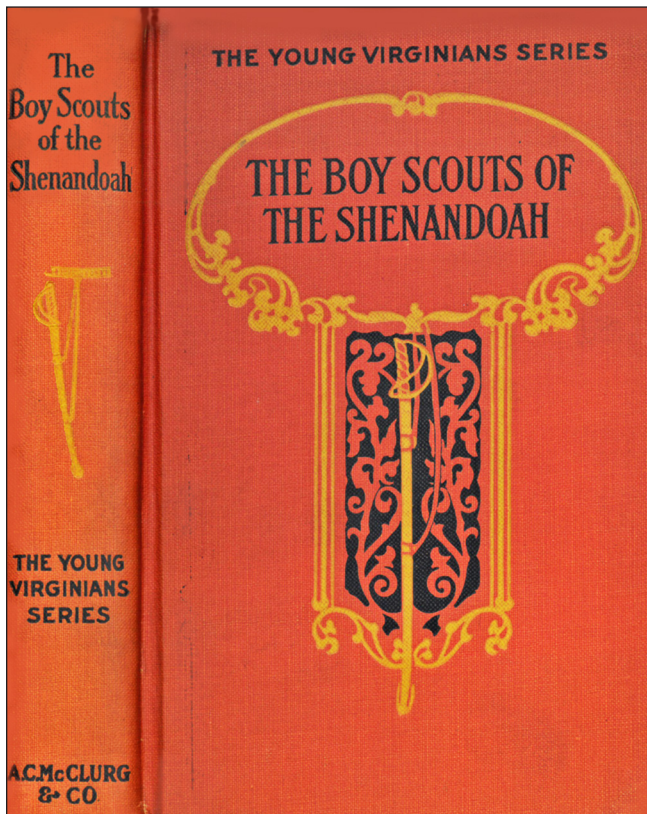
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Milton Caniff*. *Steve Canyon Operation Foo Ling*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap (1959).

Milton Caniff*. *Steve Canyon Operation Eel Island*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap (1959).

* Although the books' main characters and general story outlines were created by Milton Caniff based on his published comics, it appears likely G&D hired other authors to flesh out the plots and dialog. The illustrations were also adapted by other artists from Caniff's comic-strip originals.

David Kirk Vaughan, Ph. D., a former U.S. Air Force pilot and author of several aviation-related nonfiction books, is emeritus professor at the Air Force Institute of Technology in Dayton, Ohio, and currently lives in retirement in Texas. A longtime member of both the Horatio Alger Society and the Popular Culture Association, he has written numerous articles for Newsboy, Dime Novel Round-Up and other publications examining juvenile aviation series and their authors, many set in World War I and World War II.



The first title in Byron A. Dunn's *Young Virginians Series* came in red cloth, with the author's name missing from the front cover. The other two titles (observed in gray cloth) had Dunn's name on the cover.

Image courtesy of Jeff Looney

MEMBERSHIP

Change of address

Kathleen Chamberlain (PF-874)

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Kathleen is taking early retirement from Emory & Henry College, effective August 31.

J. Randolph Cox (PF-598)

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Editor's notebook

(Continued from Page 4)

when interviewed for the article, which noted departing faculty sold their books to her before leaving. The business has inevitably declined. "It was so sad," she said. "I've lost some good friends and good customers. I just feel the vibrancy going out of the town."

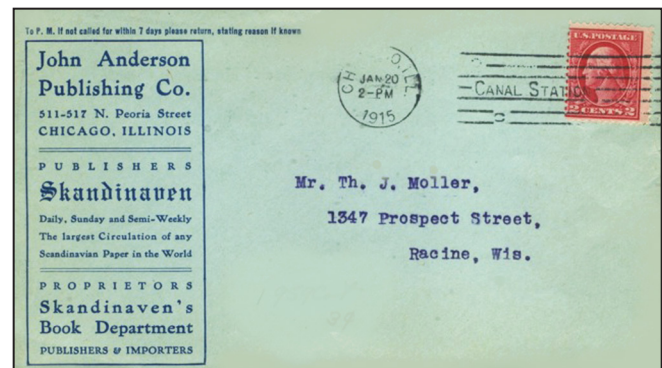
Byron Dunn update: At left is the cover of the opening title in Dunn's *Young Virginians Series*, which according to researcher Roy Van Devier, had only one printing of 1,500 copies, thus the series' scarcity. But this cover is in red cloth, which I believed did not exist, since I have the other two titles in gray cloth and assumed all three came that way. Partic'lar Friend Jeff Looney proved me wrong, sending this image from his collection. Since the books were published one year apart from 1916 to 1918, I should have been more careful with my research!

John Anderson Publishing Co.: Because of space limitations, I offered only brief of details on the Norwegian-language reprints of Dunn's *Young Kentuckians Series* by this firm, headquartered in Chicago.

John Anderson was born Voss, Norway, in 1836, and his family moved to Chicago in 1845, when he was nine. When his father died in the cholera epidemic of 1848 leaving his home unfinished, John (then age 12) began caring for his mother and infant sister and sold newspapers and apples on the street to help pay off the debt on the lot and house.

As an adult, John worked his way up in the Chicago newspaper trade, and he began publishing a Norwegian-language paper in 1866, *Skandinaven*, under his company's imprint. Eventually, the John Anderson Publishing Co. started issuing books, and the deal with A.C. McClurg to do the Dunn reprints was just a minor aspect of its widespread Norwegian editions, mostly translated reprints of popular titles.

An advertising cover for the John Anderson publishing Co., courtesy of Cary Sternick, is below:



President's column

(Continued from Page 2)

& Co. These firms are well known with relatively easy to find catalogs, book lists and the books themselves. The lesser-known firms can present quite a challenge.

As many of you know, I am as interested in the ephemera of the 19th century series books and publishers as much as the books and their publishers. To identify a previously unknown (to me) publishing house that printed a juvenile series or two is like finding the Holy Grail. But if I can discover ephemera related to that firm — well, it does not get better than that. Appreciate that right now in my bibliography there are close to 500 publishers. I suspect that even the most knowledgeable of our Alger brethren has familiarity with less than 50 of them. See the list here: www.19thcenturyjuvenileseries.com/publishers.html.

I thought that in this column I would give you a sampling of some of the work I am doing on the bibliography, and at the time mention a few of those "unknown" publishers.

Portland, Maine, with its population of 30,000 in 1870, was home to several firms that published juvenile series (compare its population at the time to metropolitan Boston's 900,000). Three of those companies are described here:

Dresser, McLellan & Co. operated in the 1870s. This firm published one juvenile series: "The Forest City Series," a two-volume set, written by Mary S. Deering.

Example 1 shows a book from this company.

Bailey & Noyes was established in 1859. It published two series of chapbooks for children (Example 2).

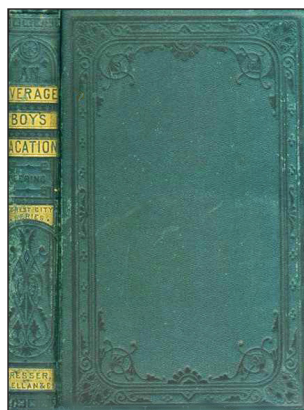
The Portland, Maine, outfit **H. Hallett & Co.** did not print any series but the advertising cover is an "all over" cover which is quite nice (Example 3).

De Witt Lent & Co. was a New York company that published one juvenile series. Lent had previously worked for Sheldon & Co. The "Oakhurst Series" is a three-volume set published in 1870.

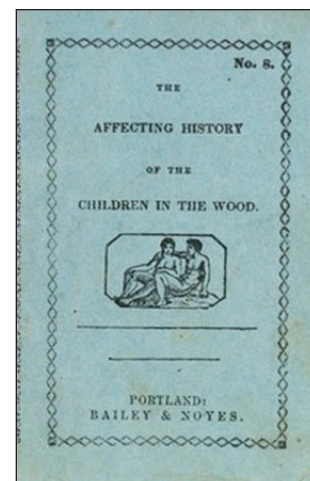
Cincinnati was a major book publishing hub in the 19th century. **Peter G. Thomson** published 17 juvenile series from the late 1870s to 1880s. Most of the books are oversized in wraps with numerous color illustrations. These books are very reminiscent of the McLoughlin Bros. books (Examples 4 and 5).

As you can see in this small sampling, the diversity of publishing firms and their books from this era is quite impressive. I hope to have the bibliography fairly complete by about 2025 or so.

That is it from Houston. I hope you and your families are doing well during this very difficult and challeng-



Example 1



Example 2



Example 3



Example 4



Example 5

ing time. Be smart and be safe and let's look forward to Fredericksburg the first weekend of June!

Your Partic'lar Friend,
Cary Sternick (PF-933)
26 Chestnut Hill Court
The Woodlands, TX 77380
(713) 444-3181
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Reference and Humanities Librarian Jack Bales teaches a class in historical research at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Photo courtesy of Claudine Ferrell, University of Mary Washington

Bales honored by UMW upon his retirement

By Neva Trenis, Director of Publications
University of Mary Washington

After four decades at Mary Washington, Reference and Humanities Librarian Emeritus **Jack Bales** has retired from the University of Mary Washington. But the meticulous researcher and expert on the history of baseball won't quit studying and writing about his beloved Chicago Cubs.

"What am I going to do without Jack?" asked University Librarian Rosemary Arneson, his friend and colleague. Bales has led about 100 research sessions for students annually, she said, and his *Citing Sources* is UMW Libraries' most popular guide, with over 6,000 hits online. Faculty depend on him for support, too, including some of his former students who now teach at their alma mater.

"He is happiest when he is in the library early on a Saturday morning, poring over the microfilm of early Chicago newspapers, and he loves nothing else so much as a good footnote," Arneson said in a tribute to Bales, who was included among the Faculty Emeritus honorees announced by the University of Mary Washington on August 13.

The Positivity Post, a UMW student-led weekly newsletter designed to spread good news during the gloomy COVID-19 days, recently described Bales as a UMW "institution." The article went on to say that

Writing Center director Gwen Hale once hailed Jack Bales as "the Mick Jagger of librarians." A student countered, according to the article, "Mick Jagger is the Jack Bales of rock and roll!"

In 2019, Bales released *Before They Were the Cubs: The Early Years of Chicago's First Professional Baseball Team*, published by McFarland & Co. A book about the life

of Violet Popovich, the woman who shot Cubs player Billy Jurgens, will be published later this year by The History Press. Bales' books include literary studies on American authors Horatio Alger Jr., Kenneth Roberts (*Northwest Passage*), and Esther Forbes (*Johnny Tremain*).

In addition, he's written extensively about the late Southern author Willie Morris, who is best known for his award-winning *North Toward Home* and the memoir *My Dog Skip*, which was made into a popular film. Morris and Bales became friends, leading to Morris' memorable guest lectures at Mary Washington in 1998, during which he captivated students, faculty and

community members.

"Jack is much more than a great teacher and researcher," Arneson said. "He is a generous colleague, always willing to take an extra shift on the reference desk or to offer words of praise. We will all miss him greatly. And we hope he doesn't have to wait another 100 years to see the Cubs win the World Series again."

