

The Ptomaine Canary

By HELEN TRAUBEL

AP Newsfeatures



Detective story writer Helen Traubel at home, making like a soprano and bird-lover. The bird is normally on a Traubel hat.

(SYNOPSIS) The Mel's brightest star, Soprano BRUNHILDE WAGNER, is an avid detective-story reader, so her manager-husband BILL WAGNER, invites all the nation's top mystery story writers to hear her sing and then have supper at the Wagner apartment. Present too are OTTO FURST, Mel conductor, and his former wife LILLY Brunhilde has been feuding with Otto. At the supper party, excited and gay, she treats each of her favorite writers to an enthusiastic analysis of his work.

Her next target was a woman, Brunhilde spoke in a voice that carried firm conviction. "Understand, dear, I like my stories occasionally leavened with romance, because I am myself a romantic. But why must your heroes go stumbling into dark attics and cellars just because they hear suspicious sounds? That's very silly, especially after six or seven syndicates have already been committed." The author addressed managed a polite smile. Then her face reddened, for Brunhilde was quoting a passage from her last book. "Had I but known, on that fateful night as we sat around the campfire on Angier's Island what ghastly horrors were in store for all of us, especially Casper, and how it would end with Lucy's lovely throat..."

"She stopped and left the rest of it hanging unspoken. "Know what I mean?" "Can you do better, Madame Wagner?" "Yes," said Brunhilde. "As a matter of fact I already have." She was instantly the bull's eye for a barrage of inquiry. "You mean you wrote a mystery?" demanded Eleri Queen, the detective novelist and editor, sniffing out material for his magazine. "Yes," Brunhilde was placid. "What's it about?" asked John Dickson Carr.

"She shook her head. 'I'm not telling.' "How many murders?" "Twelve." "All done the same way?" "Nope. All done differently." The assembled authors were now suffering from an acute attack of curiosity. Twelve different murder methods. It seemed impossible. Hanging, drowning, shooting, poisoning, strangling, stabbing, bashing—what else was there? But Brunhilde was adamant. She refused to tell. Some day, perhaps, they would see her story in print. "Can you tell us the title?" She just smiled.

"Please," Agatha Christie was pleading. "All right," said Brunhilde. "It's entitled 'Murder at the Mel.' "Admirable," said John Dickson Carr. "Excellent," said Rex Stout. "That seemed to be the consensus of opinion. Then Agatha Christie pointed at the bird cage and said, "That is the singiest canary I ever heard. What do you feed her?" "Italian Colorturas." Everyone joined into her roar of laughter. As usual, there were some moments before she had her breath back.

"And not only does the canary sing," she said, "but her repertoire contains a very unusual trick." "Oh no," groaned Otto Furst, making a sour mouth. "Not again." "Oh yes," Brunhilde was firm. "I want them to see how clever Gail is."

"Gail?" Erle Stanley Gardner looked puzzled. "That's the canary's name Gail-Curci. She doesn't have quite the same range, but she loves singing every bit as much as her namesake."

"What is this trick?" asked Eleri Queen. "You shall see," Brunhilde arose, wet to a highboy, pulled open a drawer, and found a small box of birdseed. Then she went over to the cage, slid the door back, and

held out a finger. The canary fluttered her wings and made a perfect three point landing. This was admired by every one except Otto Furst and the French poet. With her free hand, Brunhilde extracted a seed and offered it to Gail-Curci. Taking the seed in its beak, the canary flew straight to John Dickson Carr and put it between his lips. "Go ahead," urged Brunhilde, "swallow it. Gail-Curci is very sensitive and she'll feel lurt if you don't."

It was a small seed, and easy to swallow, and since Mr. Carr, a very gallant gentleman, had no desire to injure the little creature's sensibilities, he forced the seed down. The others, observing him closely, saw that his face registered no expression to indicate an unpalatable taste. This encouraged each accepted one of Gail's seeds.

The single major objection was filed by Otto Furst, who nevertheless fell into line, looking sour as ever. Gail placed a seed on his protruding lower lip. The instant he got it down he shot up out of his chair and repaired quickly in the direction of some plumbing facilities, presumably to upset the laws of gravity.

(Gracious! What goes with Otto Furst? Why is Brunhilde so determined to show off her canary's trick? Can she have a motive? Read tomorrow's installment and see for yourself what happens when sopranos become rabid detective fans.)

(To Be Continued)

Advertisement for Wrigley's Spearmint Chewing Gum. Text: "helps keep your throat moist". Image of a woman's face and a pack of gum.

Comic strip panels 1-4. Characters: Steve Roper, Tallulah, Orphan Annie. Dialogue: "THIS OUGHT TO BE GOOD FOR A FULL PAGE IN SPOTLIGHT MAGAZINE... LITTLE MISS B' BLOOD GRADUATES FROM MEDICINE DROPPER TO BOTTLE!"

Comic strip panels 5-8. Dialogue: "MY, YOU'RE BUSY TO-DAY! I'M WORKING ON MY INCOME TAX! I DON'T WANT TO DISTURB YOU - I HAVE YOUR DIME ALL READY! WOULD YOU MIND HOLDING IT A MINUTE WHILE I MAKE A FINAL CALCULATION? I'M SORRY! I WON'T BE ABLE TO ACCEPT IT. IT THROWS ME INTO A HIGHER BRACKET!"

Comic strip panels 9-12. Dialogue: "YEAH—I DON'T MIND A SQUARE MEAL—AND THEY DID BRING US A LOT OF GROCERIES—BUT WE WERE INDEPENDENT—DON'T EVER FORGET THAT— OH, DARN— OF COURSE— BUT THEY'RE ALL RIGHT— THAT GUY IS BAD ENOUGH— BUT THAT OTHER GUY— HE'S SO DUMB— AND ALWAYS STARRING AT ME— GIVES ME THE HEEBIE JEEBIES! I'M GOING OUT— TO THE 'CLUB.' THAT'S THE WAY IT GOES— BE A GOOD GUY— TAKE IN SOME BUM— FIRST THING YOU KNOW YOU'VE GOT ALL OF HIS CRAZY PALS ON YER NECK, TOO—"

Comic strip panels 13-16. Dialogue: "DON'T CHASE HIM, LAD. THAT'S 'ANKLES' AARDVARK. ALTHO HE'S DISGUISED AS A KID— HE'S THE MOST DANGEROUS CRIMINAL IN AMERICA— AND YOU'RE NOT ARMED, LAD." "S-SAY!— COME TO THINK OF IT— N-NEITHER ARE WE!— LET'S GO BACK TO THE STATION HOUSE, AND PICK UP A FEW REVOLVERS AND FRIENDS." "STOP, AARDVARK!! AH GOTTA SEE IF THAT'S A PIECE OF A GALE'S PHOTOGRAPH STUCK IN THE BINDING OF YOUR COMICAL BOOK?" "LOOK!!— A BIG BOMM TAKING A COMIC BOOK AWAY FROM A POOR LITTLE KID?"

Comic strip panels 17-20. Dialogue: "QUE BIEN! BOTH OF THEM WE GOT. NOW LET'S GO VAMOS!" "WE OUGHTA GO TO THE SILVER DOLLAR TONIGHT AND CELEBRATE, RAMEZ. WE DONE A GOOD DAY'S WORK." "GOOD FOR US AND GOOD FOR THE VULTURES... SOON THEY'LL BE MAKING FIESTA ON CASSIDY'S CORPSE"

Comic strip panels 21-24. Dialogue: "JEFF, WHAT'S THE IDEA RUNNING BACK AND FORTH LOOKING IN THE MIRROR? I'M GROWING HAIR! GROWING HAIR? HOW? READING A HAIR-RAISING STORY!"

Comic strip panels 25-28. Dialogue: "THERE GOES RUSTY OFF TO SCHOOL, TEX HAS GONE TO TOWN. THIS IS MY CHANCE TO TURN THE DOGS OVER TO BUCKY!" "HERE HE IS, BUCKY. GET HIM IN THE CAR IN A HURRY. THERE'S FOOD AND A CHAIN IN THIS BAG!" "OKAY, I PUT HIM IN THE CABIN— AND THEN WHAT?" "AFTER YOU CHAIN THE PUP IN THE CABIN, GET BACK TO YOUR PLACE AND WAIT FOR A CALL FROM ME. I'LL TELL YOU WHAT TO DO THEN. NOW GET GOING!" "OKAY, SPUD."

Comic strip panels 29-32. Dialogue: "THAT'S AWFUL CHEAP! I SUPPOSE YOU'LL TELL ME IT RUNS LIKE A TOP!" "WHY NO, SON... FRANKLY, IT WON'T RUN AT ALL... IT'S OUT OF ADJUSTMENT!" "IT'S STILL AWFUL CHEAP! SOME PARTS MUST BE MISSING!" "NO, SIR! MY WORD OF HONOR, NOT A PART MISSING! IT'S JUST A MATTER OF ADJUSTMENT!" "OKAY, WHEN IT'S A DEAL!"

Comic strip panels 33-36. Dialogue: "HI, BRICK! HOW'S EVERYBODY UP YOUR WAY?— HAVEN'T SUNK MY ELBOWS IN YOUR FEETIVE BOARD FOR WEEKS!" "I NOTICE THAT, JIMMY— EVERY TIME I BUY THE GROCERY BILL! HOW'S EVERY LITTLE THING?— SPECIFICALLY, ONE NAMED PEGGY MARVEL?" "AH, BRICK, BABY... I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU HOW WONDERFUL SHE IS— BUT I HAVEN'T TIME TO DO HER JUSTICE! GOT TO MEET HER IN JUST TWO HOURS!" "I SUPPOSE YOU HANG AROUND HER FRONT DOOR LIKE A HONEYSUCKLE VINE THESE DAYS?" "UH— NO!— MATTER OF FACT, WE ALWAYS MEET IN THE PARK!— SHE SAYS HER SISTER ANN OBJECTS TO HER HAVING CALLERS AT HOME!"

RADIO PROGRAMS WEDNESDAY—P.M. Table with columns for KGW, KOIN, KEX, KSLM, KOCO and various program listings.

FM Mts., KGW 100.3, 5-10 p.m.; KOIN 101.1, 6 a.m., 12 p.m.; KEX 92.3, 8 to 9 p.m.

THURSDAY—6 A.M. TO 4:45 P.M.

RADIO PROGRAMS THURSDAY—6 A.M. TO 4:45 P.M. Table with columns for KGW, KOIN, KEX, KSLM, KOCO and various program listings.

DIAL LISTING, KOAC 550

KOAC Wednesday P.M.—5:00, Children's Theater; 5:15, 10:15, Special; 5:30, AMO Sports club; 6:00, News; 6:15, Dinner Melodies; 6:45, American Red Cross; 7:00, Farmers' Union; 7:15, Evening News; 7:30, Artist in Character; 8:00, Hillcrest School; 8:30, Music; 8:45, Evening Meditation; 10:00, Sign Off.

Lebanon Merchants Offer Spring Opening

Lebanon — Street entertainment will be part of the spring opening celebration planned for Lebanon on Friday night, March 17, when the new styles and fashions for 1950 will be unveiled in local display windows. The Lebanon concert band will present a street concert that evening on a platform be erected at Main and Grant streets. Additional events will be scheduled for a full evening's entertainment.

Crossword Puzzle

Crossword puzzle grid with clues. ACROSS: 1. Runs away; 7. Stir up; 12. Vessel for brewing a beverage; 14. Wakes; 16. One from an opera; 18. Crooked; 20. Genus of grasses; 22. Turmeric; 24. Close of day; 25. Size of shot; 27. Light-colored; 29. Shade of red; 31. Nervous twitching.

Room and Board

By Gene Ahern. Advertisement for room and board services. Text: "WELL, HOW DID 'MORTON' DO TODAY AT NANHOLT PARK? DID HIS CHOICE COME IN THE MONEY?"

Solution of Yesterday's Puzzle

Solution of yesterday's crossword puzzle. DOWN: 1. Pertaining to a root; 2. Grain; 3. Barrel; 4. Foray; 5. River between Brazil and Paraguay; 6. Symbol for molybdenum; 7. Sarcastic; 8. Negative; 9. Young bear; 10. Trinity of the Elbe; 11. Articles of belief; 12. Property; 13. Writing implement; 14. Altered near; 15. Wildflower; 16. Heather; 17. Conceal; 18. Took solid food; 19. Small fish; 20. Charm; 21. Subsequent selling; 22. Tasty; 23. Tropical fruit; 24. List; 25. Espresso; 26. Symbol; 27. Egyptian god; 28. Jewish month; 29. Room in a house; 30. Corrode; 31. Syllable of the Latin word for electrical unit.