

THE PHONE BOOTH MURDER

by Phoebe Atwood Taylor

Chapter 17

Mrs. Doane Talks

"When'd you find the body, Mrs. Doane?" Asey asked quickly. "When'd you move it?" Punctuated by sobs, the story seemed longer than it actually was, in spite of Asey's promptings. "I see," he said at last. "Boiled down, you seen Syl's truck out front when you come home, so you went in the back way, intending to give blue blazes to whoever brought Syl's clams over for leavin' that truck where it was. An' when you didn't find anybody out back in the kitchen, you begun to wonder if maybe Syl's substitute had had the nerve to sneak into the front part of the Inn. Right? So that was why you went up the little narrow hall an' slid open the back door of the phone booth so cautiously. You was goin' to listen, an' then pop out an' confront whoever it was that brought the clams. Only, instead, you found yourself confronted with Miss Olive's body. An' right away, you knelt down, slung the body over your shoulder, an' lugged it out here to the porch. That's the story, an' it's all!" Mrs. Doane nodded. "I had to move it, don't you see? I couldn't let it stay there! I couldn't leave it there! I couldn't let it be!" Jennie wanted to know why not. "Why not?" Mrs. Doane laughed bitterly. "Why not? You stop and think! If something like this happened in the city, would the hotel ever be mentioned by name? No! They'd call it a downtown hotel, or a small hotel near Smith Street, or an old-established hotel. It would never be mentioned by name. Never! But if you think for a minute that would hold true here? D'you think the papers would just be content to call this a small Cape Cod Inn, never! It will be named. Murder at the Whale Inn. The Whale Inn killing. The reputation I've built up over all these years, the clientele I've built up, everything," she made a helpless little gesture, "that's the end of it, over my head. That's why I moved the body, don't you see?" Mrs. Doane, who had been wiping at her eyes, straightened up suddenly. "Twenty-six years ago, my sister Mary Mercer died, and left me this place, Mrs. Mercer's Boarding House. Ten dollars a week took care of no plumbing, I saw what it could be, and I set to work. It isn't much when you compare it to the Waldorf-Astoria, but I've spent twenty-six years making it what it is. That's why I moved her body. I didn't kill Miss Olive. But I moved her body. And I wonder," Mrs. Doane was looking earnestly at Jennie, but Asey knew she was talking straight at him. "I wonder if you've ever perhaps have done the very same thing, if you'd been me?"

The Martyr

JENNIE thought for a moment, and her answer was exactly what Asey expected. "I don't know," she said hesitantly, "but what maybe I might have wanted to. When you work awful hard on a thing, you hate to see it smashed into smithereens. But, on the other hand, I don't think I'd have been able to bring myself to move her body. No, someone I knew an' liked, who was a friend." Mrs. Doane's manner underwent another sudden change. There was the same slight touch of the martyr about her that Asey had noticed when she was talking to her daughter Freddy. "Of course," she said to Jennie, "you've never run an inn, have you? You've never had to run a business. You're not a business woman. Let me assure you that women in business can't always afford the luxury of indulging their feelings! The business must come first!" "I s'pose," Jennie said, "that's so. That reminds me. Here, this is for you." Fishing around inside her capacious pocketbook, she finally drew out a folded paper and presented it to Mrs. Doane. "What's this?" Mrs. Doane demanded in some bewilderment. "Syl's claim bill," Jennie told her. "An' if you hadn't spoke about business, I'd have forgot all about it. Shows you the kind of a business woman I am, I guess—what you chuckin' about, Asey?" "I just coughed, that's all," Asey said. "Kind of a tickle in my throat. Mrs. Doane, there's a little somethin' I'd like to ask you about, if you don't mind, an' then I—"

"Before you get started off on some other track," Jennie interrupted, "you can see to it they call it just a Cape Cod Inn, can't they? You can make Hanson see to that—an' Asey, where is Hanson, anyway?" "Golly!" Asey said. "I forgot all about him. Rakin'! I never give 'em another thought after I drove away from Artie's diner! I just left 'em there!" "That's what it sounded like when you told me what you'd

been doin'!" Jennie said, "but I thought I'd heard wrong. What you goin' to do about 'em?" "Nothin'!" Asey said. "I guess they can manage to get themselves back here. Jennie, pop inside an' phone Doc Cummings an' ask him to hustle over here, will you? I didn't want to drag him out till we had somethin' concrete for him to look into. Cummings, he turned to Mrs. Doane, "is medical examiner for this district, you know."

"I didn't know what, but I know him," Mrs. Doane said. "I'll go right in and call him."

"Jennie can go," Asey said. "There's somethin' I want to ask you about, if you don't mind, Mrs. Doane."

"Of course!" But she continued to stand blocking the doorway so that Jennie couldn't get past. "I'll be glad to tell you anything I can, only I think my daughter Freddy probably can tell you more. I wasn't here at the Inn this evening, you know. I'll send her out to you and call the doctor. Two birds," she added rather brightly, "with one stone."

The Gun

"JUST a sec," Asey said, "before you start your stone-throwin'. If you're bound an' determined that you're goin' inside an' call the doc, I suppose you can. Only first, hand over that gun, will you?" "Gun? What gun?" Mrs. Doane demanded. "Did you say gun?" "Uh-huh. The one you took out of the pocket of Miss Olive's tweed coat. I don't know how it got there. It was on the floor of the phone booth when I seen it first, but I s'pose you put it in the pocket when you brought her out here. Give it to me please."

"I'm afraid," Mrs. Doane said, "that you're sadly mistaken! I didn't see any gun!" "Maybe you didn't get a good look at it in the dark out here," Asey returned, "but it's that thing you drew out of her coat pocket an' put into your sweater pocket just before I spoke to you an' asked what you was doin'. It's a small, hard, metal thing. Just you fumble around in your sweater pocket, an' I think you'll manage to locate it without a lot of trouble."

Mrs. Doane started to protest, and then apparently thought better of it. Without another word, she gave Asey the gun.

"Thanks. Now, you really want the name of your inn kept out of the papers?" Asey inquired. "You know I do!"

"Then let me give you a few words of good advice, Asey said. "Instead of tryin' to ball things up any more, you already have, try an' cooperate for a change. I haven't got enough official power so's irritatin' me will make much difference, but don't go irritatin' Lieutenant Hanson when he gets back. Don't try to ball things up to him. Don't try to cover anybody up. Tell him the truth. And let him search the whole place, and question everybody. You'll come out a lot better. If you cooperate with him, Hanson, I think you'll find him willin' to protect you from sightseers an' thrill-seekers an' candid-camera fans an' such like pests. If you're half-way decent to him, he'll probably try to give you a break about the Inn's name. In short, nobody's goin' to make things hard for you. You don't. You take anything else?"

"No!" "Except what?" "Mrs. Doane hesitated. "Well, there were her glasses," she said. "They were broken on the phone booth floor. I swept the glass up into a dustpan and threw the pieces out here in the bushes. The frames I put in the fireplace and covered with wood ashes."

"Anything more?" "No!" "What gas station did you wait at for the current to come back so's you could get gas for your car?" Asey asked.

"What's that got to do with—?" "The name of the gas station, please," Asey said.

"Joe's."

"Okay. Now you can go phone the doc. An' I'd like your daughter to step out here."

Jennie sighed as the door closed behind Mrs. Doane.

"Isn't that a changeable one, Asey? There I was, feelin' so sorry for her after she told me about the Inn an' how hard she worked for it all these years! Didn't she make it sound hard?"

"An' wasn't you feelin' sorry for her, too?" Jennie asked. "Why, I was almost forgivin' her in my mind for movin' that body—an' then to think she stole that gun! Asey, what do you make of her?"

"Wa-el!" Asey said. "I s'pose if you've spent twenty-six years tryin' to please boarders an' guests, an' tryin' to 'em, you most like, by gettin' into the habit of sayin' what you think, someone would like to hear, whether you believe it or not. Havin' made this place her lifework, as you might say, I s'pose it's a lot more important to her than anythin' else is."

To be continued

On the Radio Chains

STATIONS:
Chain affiliation and where they are on the dial:
KALE (MBS) 1230, Portland;
KEX (NBC-Blue) 1190, Portland;
KGA (NBC-Blue & MBS) 1210, Spokane;
KGO (NBC-Blue) 810, San Francisco;
KJH (NBC-Blue) 630, Portland;
KJL (NBC-Blue) 1070, Los Angeles;
KOA (NBC-Red) 830, Denver;
KOIN (NBC-Red) 970, Portland;
KOMO (NBC-Red) 930, Seattle;
KPO (NBC-Red) 680, San Francisco;
KSL (CBS) 1190, Salt Lake City.

Time shown is PST

Sunday
5:00 p. m.—Edgar Bergen, KPO, KGO, KOMO; Blue Echoes, KGO, KEX; Columbia Workshop, KNX, KOIN; Gospel Clinic, KJR; Ministerial Association, KSL.
5:30 p. m.—Floyd Wright, KJR; One Man's Family, KPO, KGO, KGO; Spelling Bee, KNX; Clannam Bear, KEX; Musical Highlights, KGO; Castles of the Air, KOIN.
6:00 p. m.—Sunday Evening Hour, KNX, KSL, KOIN, Grandpappy and his Pals, KGO, KEX, KJR; Maibatan Merry Go Round, KPO, KOMO, KGO.
6:30 p. m.—Bookman's Notebook, KGO; American Album of Familiar Music, KPO, KOMO, KGO, News, KEX; Conf. of Jews and Christians, KJR.

SHOPPING TRIP

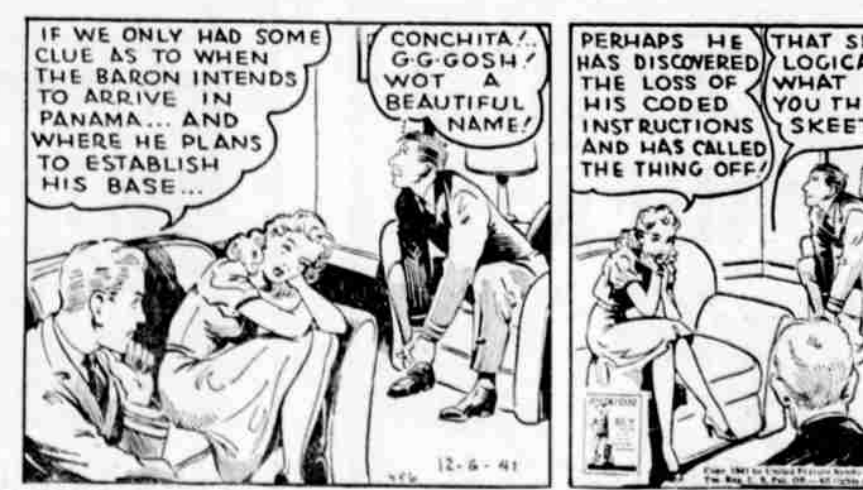
By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



LIL ABNER—The Fall of the House of Bopshire



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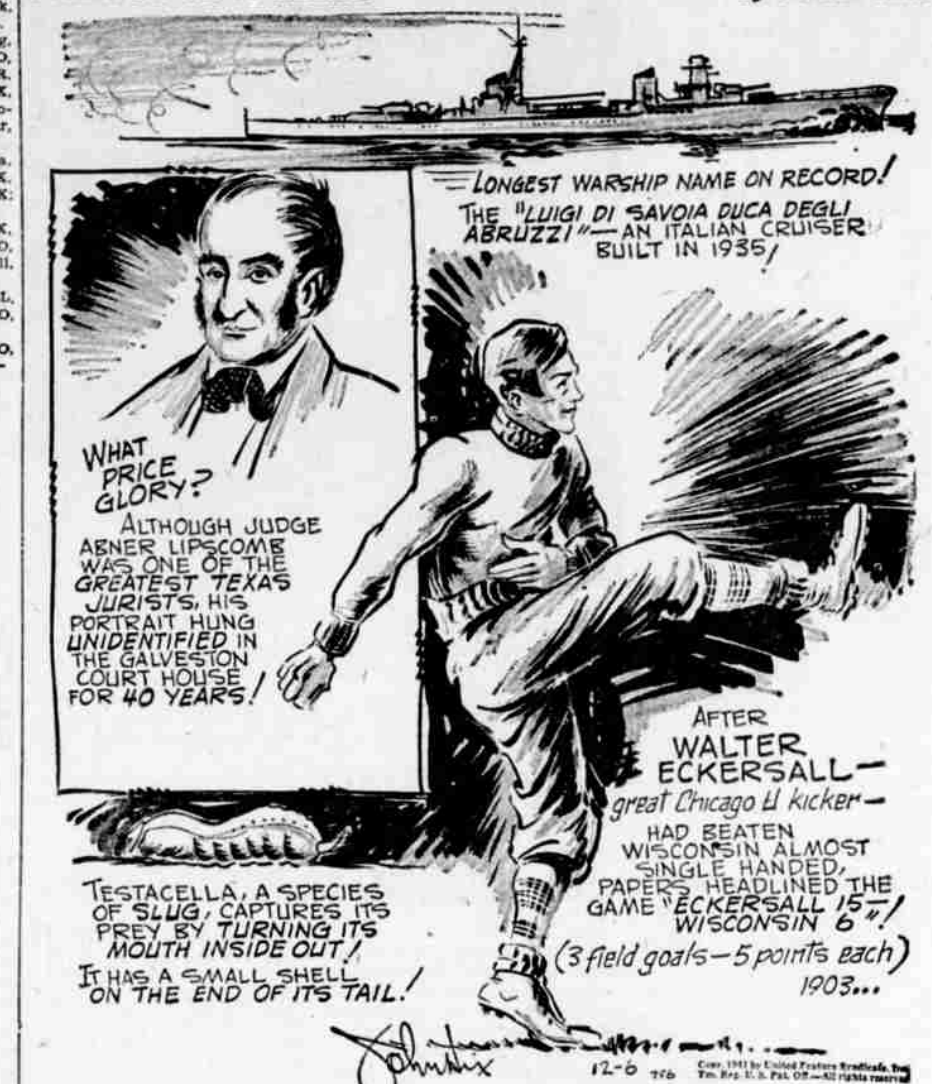
FREE BRITISH LADY
London, Dec. 6.—(AP)—Lady Domville, wife of Admiral Sir Barry Domville, was released by British authorities today after 16 months' detention under defense regulations.

NAMED TO BENCH
Salem, Dec. 6.—(AP)—Governor Sprague has appointed Charles W. Redding, 37, Portland attorney, to the Multnomah county circuit bench.

Use Mail Tribune want ads.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS

by JOHN HIX



KICKER
Walter Eckersall, one of football immortals, excelled in the art of drop-kicking goals from the field. In 1903 field goals counted five points each. In 1904 the rules were changed to allow only four points each. On two different occasions Eckersall kicked five field goals in one game!

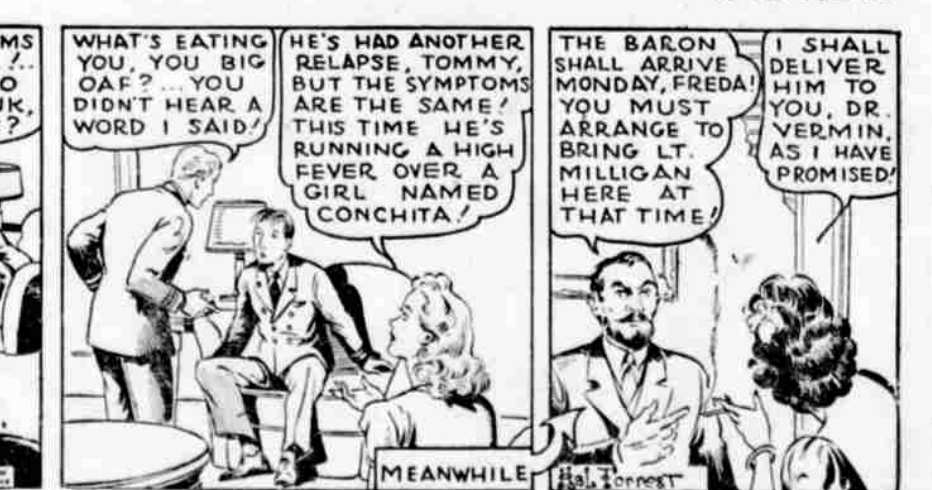
FICKLE FAME
For five years Judge Charles G. Dibrell, in whose office the mysterious portrait hung, attempted to learn whom the picture represented. Finally a newspaper ran a story about it and a distant relative came forward to identify the painting.

MONDAY: Flying Cowboy!

By AL CAPP



By HAL FORREST



By SOL HESS



COSTA RICA HIT BY SEVERE QUAKE

San Jose, Costa Rica, Dec. 6.

tell him

Merry Christmas

with a gift from

Barker's

Store for Men

Closing time for Classified Ads 9 a. m.—Too Late to Classify 12:30 p. m.

Public buildings and homes in central Costa Rica and northern Panama were destroyed and some residents were injured yesterday by an earthquake felt throughout virtually all of Costa Rica and part of Panama.

Rescue workers early today had reported no deaths.

Ten houses were destroyed at Santo Domingo Hederia, 10 miles north of San Jose, and property was damaged at Guadalupe, Carralillo Cartago and Puerto Jimenez.

The municipal building and a school were brought down at Santiago, a Panama provincial capital of about 2,000 population.