

By QUENTIN REYNOLDS

■ Back in the 1920s, the wage scale for reporters on New York newspapers was about that enjoyed by cotton pickers in the South. If you had the temerity to ask your city editor for a raise, he would look at you reproachfully and say, "We can't give you any more money, son, but after all—look at the interesting people you meet."

Like many clichés, this one is absolutely valid—in the writing business, you do meet a lot of very interesting people. Since I was

first able to peck away (four-fingered method) on a typewriter, I've made my living writing about saints and scholars and scoundrels, and many of these were the kind of people you never forget.

Who were the most interesting persons of all? They aren't necessarily the greatest, nor did all of them make a tremendous contribution to society, but I can say that I found them likeable and interesting.

In alphabetical order, they are:

Marlene Dietrich

The adjective "glamorous" usually precedes any mention of Marlene Dietrich. The untranslatable German word *gemütlich* fits her just as well. That strange word, for which we have no equivalent, means warm, friendly, comfortable—and Marlene is all of these things.

One has only to meet Miss Dietrich three or four times to realize that this is one of the most fascinating and interesting women in our land. Like Humphrey Bogart, she refused to conform to the Hollywood pattern; she always insisted on having a private life.

During World War II, she literally would go anywhere to entertain GIs, even if it happened to be within rifleshoot of the front. This didn't bother Marlene. I doubt that any performer ever worked before warmer and more receptive audiences than did the indefatigable Marlene Dietrich.

Playwright Moss Hart and his wife, Kitty Carlisle, are great friends of Marlene. They live in a New York penthouse which has a large terrace. One summer day I dropped in to see them. Marlene and Kitty were stretched out on deck chairs enjoying the sun. Neither Moss Hart nor I could get in a

word because Kitty was talking about her children, and Marlene was talking about her grandchildren. Kitty asked Marlene if she would stay for dinner.

"Not a chance," Marlene laughed. "Tonight I am having my grandchildren all to myself. Maria and Bill are going out and I am baby-sitting. You know, the one thing I can do is cook, and Maria is letting me cook for the boys, give them their baths, and put them to bed. I guess," she added, "I'd rather do that than anything else in the world."

Fabulous? Glamorous? *Gemütlich*? I truly think the word "wonderful" describes Marlene Dietrich better than any other.



Leo Durocher

Leo Durocher has been a controversial baseball figure all his life, but if you get to know him well, you realize he is much more than a former ballplayer and manager. Even his enemies in baseball will say with reluctant admiration, "You have to admit the guy has a lot of class."

When he was managing the New York Giants and the team had an off day, Leo and his then-wife Laraine Day used to travel to Westchester where I had rented a house. Invariably we played canasta for a quarter of a cent. Durocher hates

to lose at anything and more than once he'd keep us playing until 3 a.m. to get back the three or four dollars he and Laraine were behind.

Durocher is a creature of paradox. He never in his life avoided a fight. He once tried to take on Babe Ruth, who outweighed him by 100 pounds. He can be caustic, cynical, and hard except when it comes to children. Once when Leo was visiting us, publisher Bennett Cerf, a neighbor, asked us to lunch. We arrived early. The two Cerf boys, Chris and Jonathan, were awed at meeting their hero. Durocher was just as impressed with them.



Ernest Hemingway

Others can judge the eventual place in literature which belongs to Ernest Hemingway. I have known him for 25 years and have never spent a dull moment with him. But he has one blind spot—fishing.

Years ago, he owned a house in Key West, Fla., and I spent a week with him there. To my dismay, I found that I would have to go fishing with him every day. But if you are a guest of Hemingway, you have no choice.

The first day we went out, Poppa gave me explicit instructions on how to land a sailfish.

"When the sailfish strikes, let your line run out," he said. "The sailfish will think he has killed the bait; he will back away, then rush for it, then swallow it. You count 10, then jerk your rod high to hook him real good. Then reel in. You will lose the first few," he added complacently, "but after that you may get the hang of it."

We were about 15 miles off Key West, and mighty rough it was, when a fish struck my line. I forgot everything Poppa had told me. I just reeled in, and soon there was a sailfish nearly six feet long lying in the boat.

"That's no way to catch a sail!" Hemingway said angrily. "Well, I caught him," I defended stoutly. "There he is. Can we have him for dinner?"

"You don't eat sailfish," he said wryly.

"What do you do with sailfish?" I asked.

"You can have it mounted," he said sourly. "It will cost you 10 bucks a foot."

"Then throw him back."

We fished all afternoon and ended up with 10 barracuda, several kingfish, six mackerel, and one wahoo.

Hemingway was excited about the wahoo. "You don't get them often," he said. "They are great eating."

"We'll have it for dinner then?" I asked.

"Oh, no," he shook his head, "I always give whatever fish we catch to the crew."

I admit that it was fun, but then it's always fun being with Hemingway, whether on a boat, in a saloon, or in his own home.



The three seemed bored with the rest of us; finally they disappeared. They didn't show up until five hours later.

"Sorry," Leo said, "but I was having so much fun I forgot how late it was. Chris and Jonathan introduced me to their gang, and we went to the field where their team plays. I've been trying to teach the kids how to hit a curve ball."

"You're a great one to teach us to hit, Leo," Chris piped up. "You never hit more than .240 in your life."

"You're right, Chris," Leo admitted, "and I never could hit curve balls."

Well, that's the Leo Durocher I know.