

'Fail-Safe' Does Job of Awakening Readers To Reality

By A. ROBERT SMITH
Mail Tribune Washington Correspondent

Washington (Special)—Last week was the wrong time to read "Fail-Safe"—a highly realistic novel about the possibility of nuclear warfare despite the most strenuous efforts of both the Soviet and American leaders to avert it.

Cuba isn't mentioned in this book; nor do any sabre-rattling hot heads shove the world over the brink.

What scares the reader to death about "Fail-Safe" is that atomic destruction occurs without genuine provocation, without threat to anything that might pass for "national honor" on either side, without any authentic threats posed by one side toward the other.

It's all a horrible accident. It's not that somebody bumped the button with his elbow while scratching his ear. Nothing so simple or easily remedied.

Co-authors Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler deliberately created a cracking good yarn in which our military leaders—and hence all of us—became the unwitting victims of the complicated machines which were created to secure us. They seek to show the heavy risk of placing so much reliance upon the presumed reliability of a vast network of electronic and computer equipment—and upon the mathematicians and scientists who have created it and defend its reliability even as the accident is taking place.

Burdick and Wheeler are college professors bent on shaking us out of any complacency we might have—and they succeed admirably. They acknowledge they are novelists with a message—and they hope even the Soviets will receive it.

The cause of the accident is that a small condenser blows unnoticed in a secret machine at SAC headquarters in the midst of a standard defensive maneuver taken by SAC bombers when an unidentified object is picked up over the North Pole. The bombers are on their way toward Moscow while efforts are made to identify the object, which turns out to be a crippled friendly commercial airliner. Normally the bombers never go beyond what is called the fail-safe point en route to Russia; there they circle awaiting instructions to return or, if it is the real thing, orders directly from the president on this special secret machine to proceed to their targets.

The condenser fault trips the secret fail-safe machine, causing one flight of six bombers to mistakenly receive a signal they believe means that war is on. All efforts to bring them back fail—even the dispatch of U.S. fighters ordered to shoot them down.

The president, who is nameless but has many of Kennedy's traits, gets on a special direct telephone line with Khrushchev to explain the accident and to try to convince him that no attack is under way, despite the approach of the six planes, loaded with nuclear bombs and headed for Moscow.

While this novel may have literary shortcomings, nevertheless it is superior to many fictional offerings which have nothing to say; and it has the merit of gripping the reader with both a good adventure story and a terrifying look at the world of military science upon which a tenuous peace is all too dependent.

The authors did considerable research in an effort to make their story as authentic as anything can be that is projected into the future five

New York News Employees Strike

New York (UPI)—Editorial employees today went on strike against the New York Daily News, which has the largest circulation of any newspaper in the United States.

Contracts of the American Newspaper Guild (AFL-CIO) with the city's other six major newspapers also expired at 12:01 a.m. (EST), but the union said strikes against them were not planned immediately.

At issue in the strike are guild demands for a 10 percent general pay increase, a top minimum wage for reporters and photographers of \$200 a week and a general reduction in the work week from 35 hours to 30 hours.

Year of Hard Luck

Old Farmer's Almanac Publishes 171st Edition Despite Many Setbacks

By DICK WEST

Washington (UPI)—The Old Farmer's Almanac has just published its 171st annual edition and I should like to pause here long enough to wish it well. I feel constrained to do so because the Almanac seems to have been through a rather trying year. Nothing catastrophic befell it. It was just one of those years when things seem to go wrong.

For one thing, the almanac, which is chiefly noted for its long range weather forecasts, predicted last autumn that the winter of 1961-62 would be colder than the year before.

It all began with what Sagendorph has labeled "the most interesting television appearance" of the year.

He was invited to exhibit on a network program in New York some of the old pictures, barometers and other memorabilia connect-

ed with the almanac's 170th anniversary.

On the appointed day he set forth from his Dublin, N.H., office only to be intercepted by a state policeman who brought him word that his part on the program had been cancelled.

He returned home and spent the evening, as he recalled, "answering calls from those who had tuned in at our suggestion."

Some months later, Sagendorph was visited by a reporter for a weekly news magazine, which led to what he has labeled "the most interesting article about us in 1962."

After spending two days being interviewed and photographed, and a week an-

swering telephone queries, Sagendorph was told to watch for the next issue. He did, and found a fine

Government Issues Pamphlet on Cancer

Washington (UPI)—The government Wednesday published a booklet setting forth simply what persons should know and do to reduce the risk of contracting cancer.

The pamphlet, entitled "Cancer, Cause and Prevention," is available for 10 cents from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

ALERT & EFFECTIVE

FISHER
As Your U. S. Congressman
Ed. A. Fisher for Cong. Com., 119 E. Broadway, Eugene, Ore. Ralph Cobb, Chairman

article about the Wall Street Journal. Still later, the scheduled speaker for the Manchester, N.H., Chamber of Commerce dinner was reported snowbound. Sagendorph was prevailed upon to substitute,

led to what he has labeled as "the most fascinating speech of 1962." He showed up at the banquet room and sat nervously through the preliminaries. Just as the toastmaster was about to introduce him in

walked the snowbound orator. After such a series of misadventures, I'm sure you'll agree that the almanac is due for a change of luck. For its sake, I hope we are all in for a hard winter, as predicted in the new edition.

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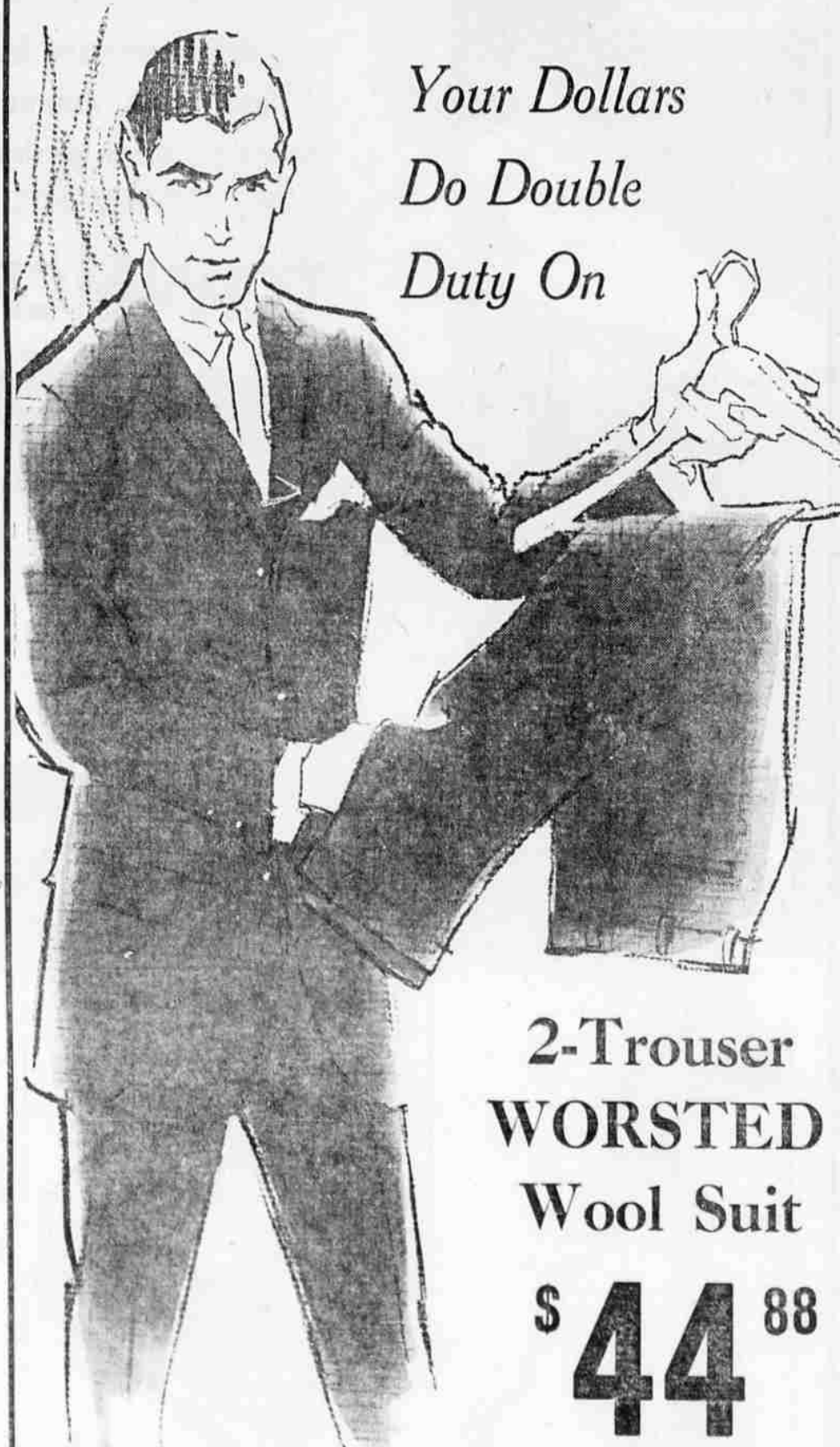


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