Story Of A Double Life . . .

Lawrence Bader Or John Johnson?

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Mystery still surrounds the figure of John (Fritz) Johnson, a popular Omaha, Neb., television personality, more than a week after fingerprint records showed he was actually Lawrence J. Bader, an Akron, Ohio, salesman who disappeared nearly eight years ago. A UPI reporting team of Robert Hoig, of the Omaha bureau, James R. Wargo, of the Cleveland bureau, and David Smothers, of the Chicago bureau, was assigned to trace this story of a double life. This is their report.)

By DAVID SMOTHERS
United Press International

Something was brewing that spring day nearly eight years ago when Lawrence Joseph Bader loaded fishing tackle into his car. The sky was clear, but a storm was blowing up.

His wife was four months pregnant and he hadn't paid any income taxes in five years.

He had to see about some bad checks he had been stuck with in the course of his business, which was selling kitchen appliances. And maybe, he told his wife Marylou, he would go fishing.

"Maybe I will, maybe I won't," he said.

Larry Bader was a nice guy. If he was an outdoors man—he won a tri-state archery contest and wore genuine buckskin when he went hunting — he was also a face in the crowd.

His education had some holes in it. He dropped out of high school to join the Navy. When he came back 18 months later and was graduated, he put in one semester at Akron University before going to work in a campus restuarant.

All-Around Nice Guy

A friend recalled him as a "red-blooded, beer-drinking, all-around nice guy who could talk your ear off and you'd love to sit and listen. You wouldn't say he was wild, though. He was a family man, too."

And a family man he was.

On that morning of May 15, 1957, he was 30 years old. He and Marylou had three children with another on the way, and a home in the very proper West Hills neighborhood. Also a $17,000 mortgage, a $10,000-a-year income and almost $40,000 in life insurance.

He had recently boosted his life insurance coverage by taking out a $7,000 policy with a double indemnity clause — in case of accidental death.

When he rented a boat at the Rocky River livery near Cleveland that afternoon, the lake was calm. But storm warnings were up.

Proprietor Lawrence E. Cotleur told him about the warnings. It didn't matter. At 4:30 p.m. Bader shoved off in the rented motor boat.

Boat On Rocks

The storm came up three hours later. The next morning, Bader's boat was found on the rocks at Perkins Beach. Bader was not in it. The Coast Guard said the lake had been so rough no man could have survived overboard.

Bader was gone. Authorities listed him as presumed dead. But Cotleur noticed that the gas line on his boat was disconnected. Gas lines do not accidentally become disconnected, Cotleur said.

Four days later, enter Fritz. In Omaha, Neb.

In fact, in the old Roundtable Bar at 19th and Harney streets, where so far as anyone can attest the man known as John (Fritz) Johnson was born. The girl behind the bar, now Mrs. Betty Augustine of Omaha, remembers the moment well.

"He was fascinating, debonair, well-dressed and not broke," she recalled. "He asked me out."

Mrs. Augustine was the first of many to be charmed by Fritz, the stranger at the Roundtable Bar, who bought an old hearse for his bachelor courting and equipped it with a coffee bar, pillow and an incense burner. The city licensed the bachelor hearse as a "hunting vehicle."

Fritz, who caught the city's eye by perching on a flag pole for one solid month, became successively, a radio station announcer, sports director of a television station, and one of the best known, best liked and most flamboyant personalities in Omaha.

One day he took up archery "to strengthen his back muscles after an injury" (he said). He won the Nebraska state championship five weeks later. He enthralled his friends with vivid stories of a boyhood in a Boston orphanage and 13 years in the Navy. He kept tropical fish — especially the Siamese fighting variety, the kind that devour each other.

And he hated the news. Even though he broadcast it, he hated it. His favorite program at one time was called "Good News of the Day," in which Fritz spoke only of the brighter things in life.

He was an "odd ball," but everyone liked him. In 1961, he gave up his bachelor ways and married pretty Nancy Zimmer, a 20-year-old divorcee and photographer's model. He adopted Nancy's daughter by her previous marriage and two years ago they had a son of their own.

Larry Bader was declared legally dead in an Akron court in 1960. The insurance companies paid off and the government provided the widow with Social Security payments, slightly reduced because Bader had fudged on his income tax.

Marylou Bader had already learned the life of the widow. She took off her wedding ring and put it away. And she settled down to the business of trying to rear four children alone.

Then Fritz Johnson, archer extraordinary, came east to Chicago. A Nebraska archery firm sent him to a sports show at Chicago's McCormick Place to show off its equipment.

There he was, flexing his bows and chatting with the people a week ago last Friday, when a man from Akron did a double take. He had, he was sure, just seen a dead ringer for the missing Larry Bader.

The man called Bader's brothers from Akron. They flew into Chicago, took a look at Fritz and said he was their long lost brother. No doubt about it.

Fritz said no. He was never in Akron. He didn't know who the two strangers were. Would he be fingerprinted? Why sure, he said.

Chicago police relayed Fritz' fingerprints to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which compared them with Bader's Navy fingerprints. No doubt about it, the FBI said.

Fritz went back to Omaha and hired a lawyer. He didn't remember a thing about it, he said. The lawyer explained that Fritz recently had an operation to remove a tumor in his head. Maybe his memory was affected, the attorney said.

Fritz went into the hospital for mental and physical tests. He was still there today. From his room during the weekend came the announcement that since he must assume he is still married to Marylou Bader, he and Nancy will live apart for the time being.

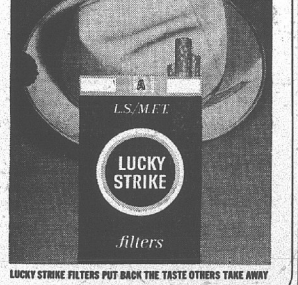
Sunday, Marylou told the Akron Beacon Journal in a copyright interview that the news a dead ringer for Larry Bader had been found in the person of Fritz Johnson hit her "like shell-shock."

"I haven't been able to think clearly since then," she said.

She said she would like to go to Omaha when the time is right. Asked what she thought such a visit would accomplish she answered:

"I'm not saying right now but I would like to go, yes."

"All I said was:
Show me just one filter that won't take away the taste and I'll eat my hat!"
[SO THEY SHOWED ME NEW LUCKY STRIKE FILTERS]



LUCKY STRIKE FILTERS PUT BACK THE TASTE OTHERS TAKE AWAY
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Wife Wants Compliments Over Chopped Herring

By ANN LANDERS

Dear Ann Landers: Will you please tell me why a compliment sticks in some people's throat? I know Ben likes chopped herring the way his mother used to fix it. Believe me it's a lot of trouble to bone and chop a herring but I do it because I want to please him. Why can't he show a little appreciation when I go out of my way to do something nice? What would it cost him?

Last night I said, "Ben, is the chopped herring good?" He answered, "I'm eating it, ain't I?"

I said, "Yes, Ben. I can see you're eating it, but is it good?" He answered, "If it isn't good then I'll tell you."

Ben is a wonderful husband and I wouldn't trade him for a million dollars. He has always been a good family man but this one fault of his has been eating on me for 30 years. What should I do?—LUCKY I DON'T HAVE ULCERS

Dear Lucky: If the worst thing you can say about Ben is that he doesn't rave over your chopped herring, you are lucky.

Some women are married to men who can't translate their feelings into words. Pray for another 30 years with Ben.

Dear Ann Landers: I am disgusted with the advice you gave the parents of a 20-year-old boy who got a 15-year-old girl in trouble. You said their son should return to college and the girl should go to the Florence Crittenton home to have her baby.

Why shouldn't the boy be made to pay for his mistake? Decent parents would not have found it necessary to write to you. They would have insisted that their son marry the girl.

Every child deserves to be raised by his natural mother and father and you should be ashamed of yourself for suggesting otherwise.—DISGUSTED WITH YOU

Every child deserves to be loved. Often adoptive parents can give far greater love than the child's natural parents — simply because they want the child and the natural parents did not.

A collared father and a trapped mother cannot help but harbor feelings of resentment. The bitterness is often directed against the child. These innocent victims — unloved and unwanted—grow up to be emotional cripples.

You'll never catch me advising parents to push children into marriage. It can be grossly unfair to the boy, the girl and, most of all, it can be unfair to the child.

Dear Ann Landers: I am an honor student in an eastern university. Recently you advised a 15-year-old girl who was pregnant to go to the Florence Crittenton home for unwed mothers. I am qualified to second the motion since I lived in such a home.

Three years ago I spent four months in a Crittenton home in another state. I was treated with kindness and respect. Some of the girls I met at the home will be my friends forever.

My son was adopted when he was 10 days old. Although I shall never see him again, it is comforting to know he will grow up with people who can give him the emotionally healthy environment I was unable to provide.

I have talked with several unmarried, pregnant girls in this area and have helped them make a decision. Many of these girls had considered only abortion or suicide. The best alternative, for some reason, never entered their minds!

Thank you for your strong stand, Ann. I hope this letter reaches thousands more through you.—V.O. EX.

Dear V.O. Ex.: And thank you. A letter from a girl who has been there says it best of all.

To solve some of the frustrations, disappointments and disillusionments of married life, send for Ann Landers' booklet, "What To Expect From Marriage," enclosing with your request 20 cents in coin and a long, self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Ann Landers will be glad to help you with your problems. Send them to her in care of this newspaper enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

White City Operating

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Normal operations at the White City Domiciliary near Medford have resumed, although the proposed June 30 termination date remains in effect, members of Oregon's congressional delegation said.

Congress recently placed a moratorium until May 1 on action to close 14 Veterans Administration hospitals and old soldiers' homes, including the White City complex.

Sens. Wayne Morse and Maurine Neuberger, both D-Ore., and Rep. Robert Duncan, D-Ore., said they would continue "aggressive action" to retain the domiciliary.

Improving

Randolph Hamm, 47, 2408 White Street, planerman at Weyerhaeuser, was reported improving at Klamath Valley Hospital Saturday night from injuries received Thursday when he was struck by a board falling from the roof of the mill.

He was taken to the hospital by Peace Ambulance.

Action Seen By Speaker

SALEM (UPI)—House Speaker F. F. Montgomery, R-Eugene, predicted Saturday that "three more of the six major bills" in the Oregon House will see floor action by March 1.

Montgomery listed them as legislation on workmen's compensation, the proposed merger of the Fish and Game commissions and the general revision of education laws.

A congressional reapportionment bill was approved by the House Friday. He said it was "one of the major measures."

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Negroes Planning New March At Selma, Ala., Courthouse

By United Press International

Negroes march today on the Dallas County Courthouse in Selma, Ala.—under the legality of a parade permit — and a spokesman said if all goes well the campaign here may close.

The march marks the beginning of the fifth week of a voter registration campaign headed by Dr. Martin Luther King and his followers in the solid rich section of Alabama where segregation has been rigidly practiced.

More than 3,400 persons have been arrested in Selma and in nearby Marion during the drive and King himself spent five days in jail. About 115 Negroes have signed an "appearance" book to be processed to register to vote.

Tensions ran high but a secret meeting between local whites and Negro leaders Saturday appeared to have had a cooling off effect.

Sheriff James Clark, who drew the ire of Negroes with wholesale arrests, fell ill Friday with chest pains and was hospitalized.

Negro leaders asked for and were promptly granted a permit to stage today's parade. The permit called for 600 Negroes to march but Negro leaders said that about 1,000 were expected.

Elsewhere:

Washington: Mississippi Gov. Paul B. Johnson said Sunday there were "some Communist influences" in the civil rights movement in last summer's civil rights movement in his state. Johnson said he assumed the FBI was keeping a close watch on a "hard core" of professional agitators who created an "intolerable" situation in Mississippi.

New York: Police sought clues today in the fire bombing of the home of black nationalist leader Malcolm X. The Molotov cocktails were thrown from a passing automobile and set fire to Malcolm's home in the East Elmhurst section of the city.

Jackson: Circuit Judge M.M. McGowan has urged local school boards not to sign pledges to desegregate in order to continue receiving federal funds. He said in a weekend statement that the pledges far exceed provisions of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

SINKS IN STORM

THE HAGUE (UPI) — The Norwegian vessel "Jodelta" sank Sunday night off the coast of the German island of Borkum in a storm. All crewmen were rescued.

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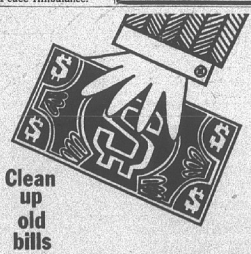

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...based on need NOT handout. The Medicare legislation (HR-1), now before Congress and backed by the Administration, is *unfair* because it promotes medical assistance for *everybody* over 65 years—rich and poor alike, *regardless of need.*

The only *fair* approach to Medicare is to make it available to those over 65 who are in *need* of health care assistance. Eligibility can be fairly established through an income statement or simple affidavit.

Other unfair aspects of HR-1 are increased taxes, watered-down benefits, more federal controls over *your* everyday life.

You can *help make Medicare fair* by contacting *your* Congressman immediately!

Write your Congressman to SUPPORT HR-3727...the FAIR-Medicare proposal!

OREGON COMMITTEE FOR FAIR-MEDICARE
R. O. Bissell, Treas., 19425 S. Old River Drive, Lake Oswego, Oregon