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TRUE ADVENTURES FOR MEN

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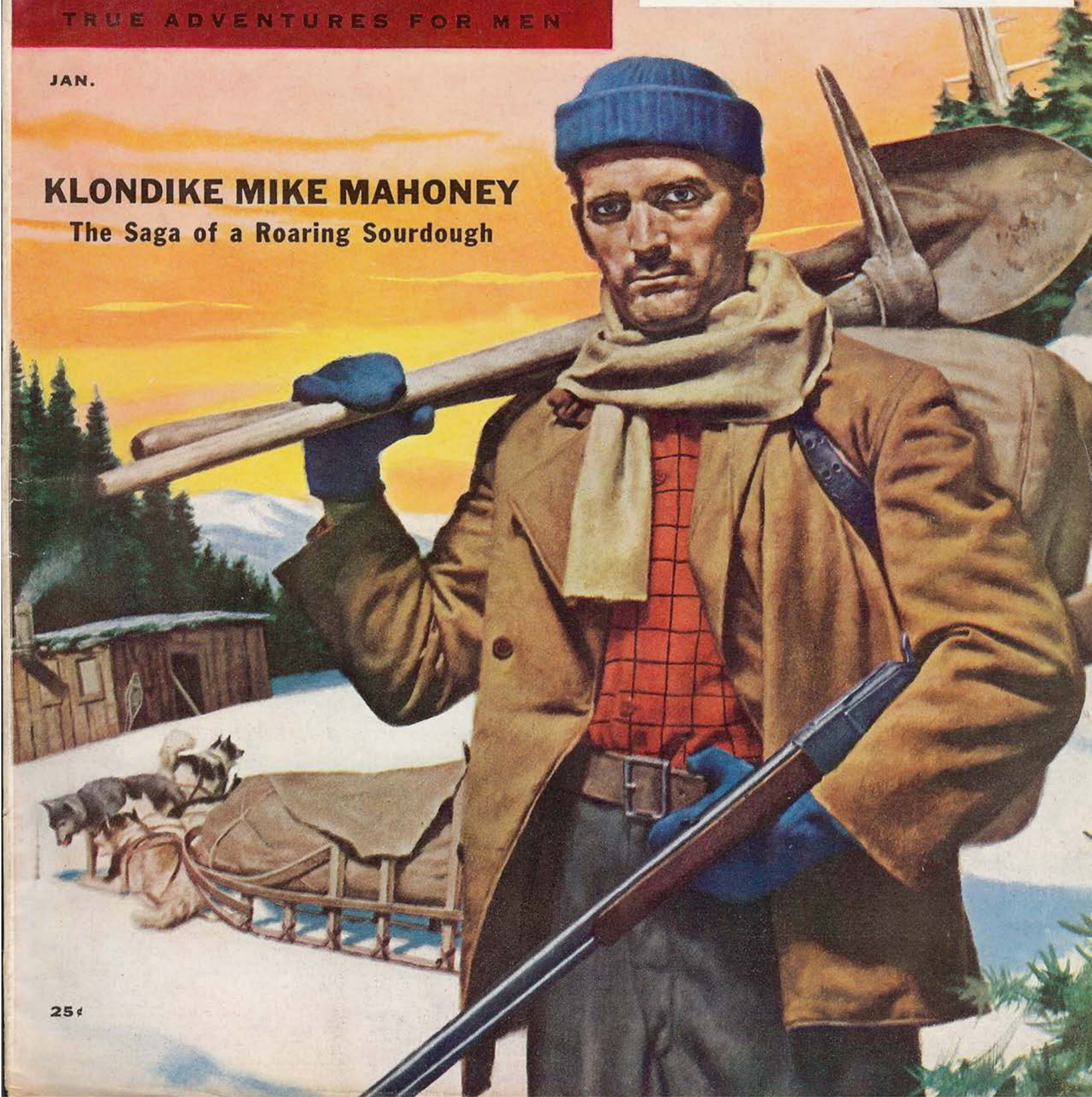
The Saga of a Roaring Sourdough

THE SHORT LIFE
OF HANK WILLIAMS



STORY OF THE 34TH INF. DIV.

THE "NIGHT PEOPLE" REBEL





The Night People have even created their own author, Frederick R. Ewing.

THE REBELLION OF THE NIGHT PEOPLE

In the wee hours when the Day People have put their gadgets, timetables and two-tone cars to bed, nonconformist Jean Shepherd and his legions are plotting to inherit the earth

By **EDWARD LINN**

PHOTOS BY ROY SCHATT

I, Libertine, the book that hit the best-seller lists before it was written, was launched from Liggett's drugstore on Times Square.



THE Underground had been alerted; the Night People were on the prowl; the assault had been launched. A few of the braver troops had even infiltrated Queens, a borough from which they had long been banned by the Mafia. Some of them carried a banner which bore the strange device *Excelsior!* All of them carried in their hearts the ultimate aim of all Night People, individualism triumphant and authority confounded.

The assault, loosed by Jean Shepherd, the after-midnight radio philosopher who is patron saint of the Night People, was aimed at the very vitals of the Day People—at their confidence in and dependence upon business routine, lists and surveys. The battle plan, simple and malevolent, was to force the Day People to strangle themselves in their own red tape. The weapon was a non-existent best-seller, *I, Libertine*, written by that renowned (and equally non-existent) author, Frederick R. Ewing.

Reports began to filter back to Shepherd in General Headquarters, a small studio in Carteret, New Jersey, seized from New York's independent station WOR.

From Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania: "Excelsior! The Drexel Hill chapter reports in again, with news that the underground movement is still insidiously spreading. Regarding a certain giant literary work, it doesn't appear to be on the list of published books that they have at Leary's. Are there saboteurs everywhere?"

From Teaneck, New Jersey: "The college paper has an ad on the last page placed by an operative. Huzzah!"

From Jacksonville, Florida: "My order in at all bookstores in Jax for the new exotic novel *I, Libertine*, by Frederick R. Ewing. Local library, inexplicably, has no information at this time but inquiries are out."

From Hempstead, Long Island: "I'm ready to stand up and be counted. I've got the Hempstead, Garden City, Mineola, Hicksville, Levittown, East Meadow and Westbury sections alerted. My friends and I are driving librarians crazy. Anxiously awaiting further instructions."

From Hanover, New Hampshire: "I have been authorized to pledge this small but fiercely loyal band of Dartmouth students in support of your underground movement..."

It was a glorious victory for mankind.

Jean Shepherd, the creator—and curator—of the Night People, is a mild, horn-rimmed, 33-year-old Chicagoan, who started as a disc jockey and developed into a non-stop, free-floating talker. In a day when politicians can't speak for half an hour on their deepest convictions without the help of ghostwriters and teleprompters, Shepherd can go on for four-and-a-half hours, seven days a week without notes.

And it is literate talk, witty talk, entertaining talk. It is easily the best talk going out over the air today.

His subject matter ranges from the historical troubles with the Mafia in Queens (there is now light but rather futile resistance around the outskirts of Flushing) to the scars inflicted on his psyche by the bi-sexual spelling of his given name (like the time he found himself assigned to the girls' personal hygiene class); from a remarkable old buddy of his who could call off the make and vintage of any refrigerator by rolling the ice cubes over his tongue, to a favorite Swedish uncle who rode around Chicago on tires filled with a hardy, buoyant pulp made from old Chicago *Tribune* editorial pages.

Sooner or later, though, the talk gets back to the Night

People. "There is a great body of people who flower at night," he may say. "Who feel night is their time. Night is the time people truly become individuals, because all the familiar things are dark and done, all the restrictions on freedom are removed. Night People like the quiet darkness; day people are terrified at suddenly becoming individuals, they are afraid to let the mind probe into unknown areas. Many artists work at night—it is peculiarly conducive to creative work. Many of us attuned to night are not artists, but are embattled against the official, organized, righteous Day People who are completely bound by their switchboards and their red tape."



Night People are easy to spot. They mill around aimlessly and shift from one foot to the other without looking at each other.



When Shepherd was fired from WOR, the Night People held a wake for him near the burnt-out ruins of the Wanamaker building.

That is not to say that night people are defined by the clock. Many people forced to work days and sleep nights are, Shepherd insists, legitimate members of the lodge. "Night Peopleism," he says, "is a frame of mind, not a time of day."

Night Peopleism can best be defined by spelling out what it is against. It is against turnpikes and supermarkets and the be-the-first-in-your-neighborhood mentality. It is against clubs and fraternities and organizations. It is against chrome and tinsel. It is against culls and trolls because culls and trolls sound as if you should be against them. Night People are bitterly against polls and surveys. The time is coming, Shepherd believes, when every citizen's ability and popularity will be rated by national or local surveys. ("Your Life-Trendex rating is down, Charlie. You got a pretty fair script there, but you've got to jazz it up and make it tighter. Pull it together. Make it sing!")

"We are against creeping slobbism," Shepherd says, summing it up. "The battle between the Night People and the Day People is the battle between the egghead and the meatball. We are completely and irrevocably against three-tone cars with jet-sweep styling and needle-point plastic upholstery."

The tone Shepherd takes runs somewhere between tongue-in-cheek and kick-in-pants. Since he works nights, when the radio executives are fast asleep (radio executives are Day People almost by definition), he can get away with the kind of personal criticism that would get a dayside guy kicked off the air. Teresa Brewer, in Shepherd's opinion, is synonymous with everything that's wrong with the bellowing, hog-calling music of the day. (What records Old Shep uses are strictly jazz. At this point it is customary for us jazz buffs—victims of creeping clichéism all—to nod wisely and say, "Very good

jazz, too.") To Shepherd, Jinx Falkenburg symbolizes everything that's wrong with radio: "Good old Jinx with that gushing, breathless, awe-stricken voice of hers. You know that crowd." In just mentioning *The Man in The Gray Flannel Suit*, he pauses long enough to say: "And incidentally, there's the world's worst piece of writing. What a nothing book that is."

And yet, if the Night People seem to feel superior, it is only because they know they are more vulnerable than the Day People. For it is at night that the sense of mortality creeps over us. It is at night that a man's horizons are limited by a stream of light in a lonely room. It is at night that a man is most frightened and most alone. "It will be all right," Shep will purr soothingly as he comes on the air. "It will be all right now. Don't worry, it's all going to work out."

The Night People know they are inept, inadequate, defeated. Not only are they aware that they have had their chance and lost, they are aware that even the chance was an illusion. "Every once in a while," Shep warns them, "delusions of adequacy creep up on you. Those delusions, you've got to watch out for them. The next thing you know, your foot's in the quicksand again."

In the end, they know, it always comes out wrong.

Fortunately, Old Shep is there to counsel his people in all phases of living. There are, for instance, his 220 Magic Phrases for breaking down female resistance. They are all neatly catalogued and pre-tested. There is a phrase in the collection, he maintains, to deal with any woman and any situation. Given proper timing and delivery, Shepherd personally guarantees their effectiveness.

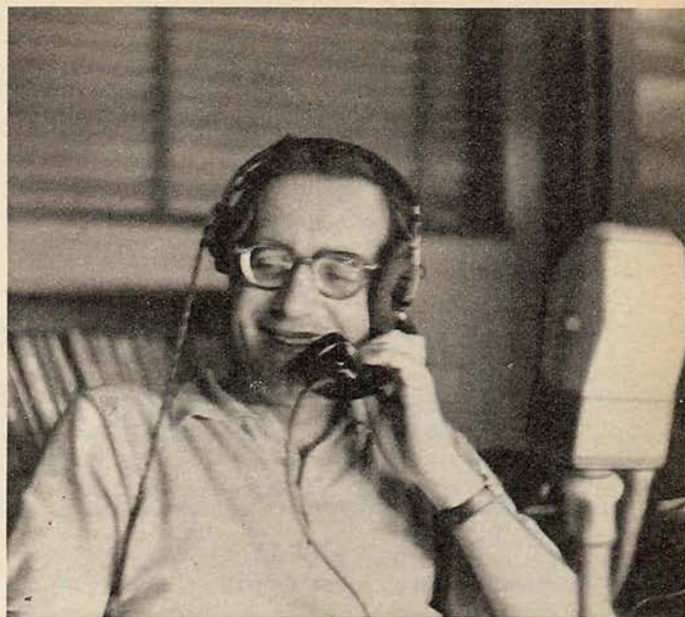
Examples:

1) "I don't know . . . there's something about you that makes me want to cry."

2) "Baby, there's something about you that's almost



Jean Shepherd (right) and Ted Sturgeon autograph copies of *I, Libertine* at drugstore author's party. The store sold 1,000 copies then and there.



Shepherd's radio show is so informal that his fans even phone to chat with him while he's on the air.

classical." (This is particularly lethal with the obviously non-classical women.)

Some phrases require a certain amount of spadework. When the big rush act seems to be failing miserably, for instance, you sit there for a moment just looking at the girl, then you say, in a tone of rising astonishment: "You know, I like you; I really do, I like you." This is known as "the disarming gambit" since it indicates that there has been a purification of the animal instincts. "If this line is delivered with any artistry at all," Shepherd says, "you can proceed almost at once to your real designs, which are, of course, nefarious."

Do not suppose for a moment, however, that the aid and comfort is only moving one way. This is a cooperative enterprise. The listeners are always phoning in, either to plot and plan the destruction of the dayside, to offer Shep some creative ideas of their own, or to participate

in a Night People project. Shepherd will be meandering along, when it suddenly occurs to him that as a child he had the ambition to be invisible. It then occurs to him that he still has the ambition to be invisible, that everybody has the ambition to be invisible. "Oh boy, wouldn't that be great!" he'll say. "What would be the first thing you'd do if you suddenly found yourself invisible? No, not *that*! The women and children are still with us. What would be the second thing?"

The first call comes in, and Shepherd says: "Oh, come on, buddy, we only want clean thoughts here. Thoughts that would fit the pages of the *Readers' Digest*. How's that for a title, 'The Cleanest Thought I Ever Thought?'"

Night People calling in always greet Jean with that clear, happy cry of affirmation: "Excelsior!" Shep shouts back the equally proud counter-cry: "Seltzer bottle!"

There is a running competition (Continued on page 66)

The Night People are everywhere, working tirelessly and unobtrusively for the cause, spreading the word of victory—*Excelsior!*



among the Night People in cartoon ideas; particularly for no reason immediately apparent, cartoons based upon Hannibal's march through the Alps. Example: A procession of Hannibal's soldiers are marching through an Alpine pass, helmets and shields and elephants gleaming in the afternoon sun. Down in the foreground, a private is saying to a sergeant: "Gee, Sarge, this is like something right out of Homer."

There are non-Hannibal cartoon ideas, too: A drunk is standing in front of a mirror in the men's room of the local tavern, saying: "Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who is the fairest of us all?" The drunk stares expectantly for a while, then he screams: "Charlie? Charlie? Who in hell is Charlie?"

The program is not only co-op, it is co-ed. Women, Shepherd sometimes believes, are the real Night People. (No, Charlie, that isn't what he means at all.) Organization, business, machinery and red tape are all creations of the masculine mind. (That's what he means, Charlie.)

The first phone call Shep ever got was from a woman. Her exact words were: "I am calling on behalf of mankind. You've got to stay on the air because what you have is Truth."

When Jean asked who she was, she said, "That doesn't matter. I'm just the listener."

The Listener she became. Shep didn't get her name, but he did get her phone number. He calls her regularly, at some time during the course of his program, just to talk for a few minutes. He still hasn't met her, although he has learned, through the Underground, that the Listener is Lois Nuttleton, one of the most promising young actresses in New York.

One night, The Listener mentioned rather shyly that she had once made up a joke—at a party seven years ago—and that it had failed miserably. "What breakfast cereal," she asked, "do ghosts eat?"

Old Shep assured her it was a great joke. Great. And although his people phoned in for months after, he steadfastly and loyally refused to divulge the answer. The guessing game became so popular that Greenwich Village comedians began to use it in their acts. "What breakfast cereal," they would say, suddenly, "do ghosts eat?" Those who laughed in recognition labeled themselves as Night People; those who looked on bewildered . . . well, let's not talk about them.

(We'll give you the answer, though. No, Charlie, it isn't Ghost Toasties. It's Shrouded Wheat.)

One night, Shep was saying that man does not fear the great problems of the day, as the politicians seem to think; his fears are about the little things. Shep said he had always had a secret fear that some day he would find himself on the Triborough Bridge without any money to pay the toll. Later in the program he got a call over a "mobile phone," from a guy who said he was about a mile from the toll gate in Lincoln Tunnel. "I've been pondering the whole philosophy of toll-bridgism, I deplore it and I am not going to pay."

The phone was kept open for about five minutes while he drove up to the gate. "What raw courage," Shep kept saying. "What raw courage. There aren't many men who'd have the guts to do this."

There were about 15 cars ahead of the man in the traffic line and as he moved

up, he told Shep he was getting nervous. When he reached the gate his voice was shaking audibly but Shep could hear him say: "I'm not going to pay. This is a public highway and I'm sick of paying tolls to ride public highways, I'm never going to pay a toll again as long as I live."

The astonished guard said, "Aw come on, Mac, you're holding up traffic."

When the guy repeated that he wasn't going to pay, the guard had him drive through and pull over to the side. After waiting for a couple of minutes, our man decided to start driving and see what would happen. Nothing happened. Contact with him was lost as he went through the tunnel, but then his voice came through loud, clear and exultant. "I made it! I did it! I'm on the ramp leading into 42nd St. I'm passing through the 43rd St. light and swinging into 8th Avenue. I'm home free."

Time was up as Shep shouted, "You are a magnificent human being."

One of the most successful of Shep's projects has been the Endowed Debauch. It occurred to him, as he was rattling along one night, that we all yearn for hellfire and damnation. The route to heaven, he said, is paved with the fears of our neighbor's opinion.

"Let's admit it," he said. "We all have within us, lurking just beneath the surface, the seeds of complete decadence."

He proposed that all Night People achieve a vicarious debauchery by permitting one of their number to actually experience it. In accord with standard radio-TV procedure for charitable drives, he initiated a Telethon (Operation Downfall) in which the Night People were to pledge \$2.00 each, until a sum was raised which would allow a man to debauch himself in style. "One among us will be selected," he announced, "either by Australian ballot or by lot. Within him will rest all mankind's hopes, desires and dreams." The only stipulation was that the beneficiary of this philanthropy had to guarantee to completely debauch and debilitate himself. "Can't you see him there," Shep said, "standing on the fantail of the *Ile de France* as it pulls away from shore, the collar of his great-coat up around his neck, the dancing girls on either side of him, the champagne waiting back in the cabin?"

Pretty soon, promised Old Shep, we'd see pictures of him, in dark glasses, homburg and ascot, attending the races at Aintree. And then later, in St. Moritz, standing in aristocratic coolness, between Elsa Maxwell and Prince Rainier. "And we'll say, 'Ahh, he's one of us . . . he's one of us . . .'"

As time passed, and the project became more and more successful, Shepherd went on, we'd read that the debauched one was being seen at some of the best watering places on the Continent in the company of one of the Gabor sisters. "Complete success will be finally achieved when he refuses to acknowledge us. We'll know we have triumphed, for we will have created a snob. The perfect snob. He'll have nothing further to do with us, but we'll know that he is our creation. He won't deign to recognize our existence, but we'll know . . . we'll know . . ."

Jean claims that \$100,000 was pledged. He is completely confident that it would all be forthcoming upon demand.

The great triumph, of course, has been the *I, Libertine* hoax. What gripes

the Night People more than anything else is that the Day People have managed to hold onto those delusions of adequacy. Because Day People deal with things, rather than with ideas, they do not realize that in the end it all goes wrong. They have an unquestioning faith in their systems and their apparatus; their machines, their switchboards, their filing cabinets. They believe not in their own infallibility, but in the infallibility of the "they" who make the rules.

Old Shep was talking about such things one warm April morning. Most precious to the day mind, he said, was the compilation; the phone book, the surveys, the best-seller list. The beauty of the best-seller list, he said, was that it shielded the reader from the agonies of independent thought by guaranteeing him that he would like only those books that everybody else liked.

"Let's hit them," he said, "at the point where they think they're most impregnable! Let's create a book! They can argue with abstractions, they can debate whether best-seller lists are good or bad, but they can not argue with hordes of people asking for the same book."

If the hoax were to succeed, he warned, there would not only have to be a great demand, there would have to be an absolute consistency of detail. Everybody would have to be in agreement as to title, author, plot and price.

The book, Shep decided, would be an 18th Century novel of English court life, in which the hero would be outfitted with a 20th Century mind. He would achieve his goals by unconsciously using the advertising techniques of our own day. "He will be the fore-runner of modern man, the first of the breed of sincere double-thinkers." (When our forefathers acted like thieves and murderers, he explained, they knew they were being thieves and murderers. When the Duke availed himself of his right to rape the farmer's daughter, he did not try to convince himself that he was doing it for her own good.)

The idea came to him at 1:30 A.M. and he immediately requested that titles be submitted from the floor. Calls poured in until Shepherd called a stop at 4:00 A.M. During those two-and-a-half hours, four lines were kept constantly busy. The title, *I, Libertine*, was submitted by a genius who, to this date, has chosen to remain anonymous.

With an hour and a half of air time left, Shepherd called for the name of the author. The response was statistically gratifying but artistically disappointing. In the end, Shepherd had to make up the name himself. Frederick R. Ewing, he felt, not only had an official sound about it, it had a familiar ring as well. Ewing, he said, sketching in the background hurriedly, was an Oxford graduate who had made his reputation through a series of BBC broadcasts on "Erotica of the 18th Century." During the war, he had served as a commander on a minesweeper in the North Atlantic. ("All British authors served on minesweepers in the North Atlantic.") *I, Libertine*, it was decided, was the first volume of a projected trilogy and was written while Ewing was working in the civil service in Rhodesia.

Once the demand had been created, Shepherd assured his people, the system would take over. After that, it wouldn't make the slightest difference whether the book existed or not. It would make the best-seller lists and be talked about, intimately, in cocktail parties. (It is one of Shepherd's fancies that few people

actually read the best sellers. They either put them on their shelves as prestige displays or just read the reviews and convince themselves they have bought and read the book.)

The Underground, thus exhorted, struck quickly. WOR reaches 27 states and a good hunk of Canada during the early morning hours, so this was no mere local action. One of the Night People found himself trapped at Miami Beach's swank Eden Roc Hotel, an inviolate stronghold, one would suspect, of Day Peopleism. But when he strolled into the hotel pool, his pulse quickened at the sight of a huge floral display swathed in a banner which read: "Welcome Frederick R. Ewing, author of *I, Libertine*."

A cell of Lafayette U. students presented Ewing with the Ronald W. Burbage Award for "Outstanding contribution to English Letters" and managed to get the distinguished subject of this honor interviewed over the local radio station.

The *Village Voice*, a Greenwich Village weekly, printed a front-page interview with Ewing. "Staying with friends in Greenwich Village last week, ex-Commander Frederick R. Ewing, author of the controversial *I, Libertine*, admitted that he'd been 'scared as a jack-rabbit' by the fast-growing success of his first book . . . the mustached English author, on a six-week visit to this country from Oxford, left for Boston Monday, but plans to be back in New York for publicity appearances later this month."

A Columbia U. student submitted a review of *I, Libertine* as his thesis. It came back with a B+ crayoned atop the title page, and beneath it the flaming word *Excelsior!*

An unsung hero from the newspaper cell even got *I, Libertine* into the Books-to-be-Published section of the fiercely accurate *New York Times*.

It got everything, you say, except banned in Boston? Well, it *did* get banned in Boston. At least, it appeared on the Legion of Decency's banned list.

A Pan-American pilot asked his colleagues to order *I, Libertine* at their various destinations. Reports were received from Canada, Paris, Stuttgart, Hamburg, Amsterdam and Finland. One New York book store received 27 inquiries in a single morning.

The gears were grinding and so were the teeth of the booksellers. For the booksellers, finding no record of the novel in their catalogues, had passed the orders on to their distributors. The distributors, finding no record of the book in *Publisher's Weekly*, made inquiries among the separate publishing houses. The publishers told them there was, to their knowledge, no such book. "What do you mean there's no such book?" screamed the distributors. "I haven't got just one order for this. I've got orders from dozens of reputable dealers."

Eventually, though, they had to pass the word back to the booksellers. "What do you mean there's no such book," roared the booksellers. "I haven't got just one order for *I, Libertine*, I've got almost a hundred orders!"

Many booksellers had answered the requests for the book by saying: "We're out of stock," or "We're just reordering," thereby implying that the book had once been on their shelves. A few even said: "I just sold my last copy this morning."

Better still, those agents whose jobs took them around to the literary cocktail parties reported overhearing bookish types arguing the merits of *I, Libertine*



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with some heat. But there were tragic overtones, too. One operative reported rather sadly that he had playfully asked an old and dearly respected friend what he thought about *I, Libertine* and had been told: "I'd rather not voice an opinion yet. I just bought it a couple of days ago and I've barely had a chance to glance through it."

Creeping phonyism was being uncovered everywhere.

The book was legitimized, as it were, when author Ted Sturgeon—one of the Night People—arranged for Shepherd to lunch with Ian Ballantine of Ballantine Books. Ballantine, having been told about the demand for *I, Libertine* by his salesmen, had been trying to trace the English publishers so that he could bid for the reprint rights. Sturgeon, a top phantasy-fiction writer (he won the International Award in 1954), had frequently touted Shepherd to Ballantine, but he gave no indication that Shep had anything to do with good old *I, Libertine*. After he had deftly turned the conversation to the book during lunch, Sturgeon said: "Allow me to introduce Frederick R. Ewing."

Upon hearing the story, Ballantine roared. As Jean was getting up to leave, Ballantine said, "Why not write it?"

Shep finally agreed to try, on condition that Sturgeon collaborate with him. They wrote it in 30 days, with first one and then the other of the authors banging away at the typewriter. What resulted was not only a historical novel of the 18th Century, but a kind of parody of all historical novels. The story was built around an actual court lady of the period, named Elizabeth Chudleigh, who had achieved some renown by appearing at a diplomatic ball in a completely transparent gown—thereby anticipating modern packaging methods as surely as the double-thinking hero of the book had anticipated modern morality.

On the backside of the paperback version of the book is a picture which purports to be that of F. R. Ewing but is actually Jean Shepherd's. It is a masterful picture in that Old Shep not only has the rumpled, scholarly, irritated look of a noted English author, he also manages to project the defeated look of a Night People. He not only looks, defeated, he looks—to be honest

about it—as if he lost by a TKO.

"Greeted with unprecedented acclaim by the English press," says the publisher modestly, in an outline alongside "Ewing's" picture, "*I, Libertine* is a novel which American readers will no doubt agree is destined to leave its mark on English letters."

The cover drawing looks like every cover you've ever seen. In the foreground is a brightly uniformed cavalier; in the background, a beautiful woman—the neckline of her gown teetering on the one-yard line.

Says the caption: "Gadzooks!" quoth I, "but here's a saucy bawd."

Says the blurb: "Turbulent! Turgid! Tempestuous!"

The book, at this writing, has sold over 200,000 copies (mostly paperback). Ian Ballantine, no amateur at this sort of thing, says it has the smell of a million sales.

The irony of it all was that just as the coup was coming off, just as it was being announced that *I, Libertine* was going to be published, Jean Shepherd was being fired by WOR for being non-commercial.

With his tenure coming to an end, Shepherd suggested that the Night People get together somewhere for one last "meeting." The word is in quotes because Night People, by their natures, do not have meetings, so much as non-meetings. They collect in the same area, mill around aimlessly, scratch themselves, shift from one foot to the other, avoid each other's glances and, generally, do their utmost to convey the impression that they all happen to be there by coincidence or mistake. An earlier non-meeting at Washington Square had been a brilliant success.

It seemed to Shep that "one last pitiful show of non-strength and disorganization" should be asserted the night before he went off the air.

The Night People, always ready to associate themselves with a lost cause, responded with some heroic suggestions. For a while, it seemed as if the non-meeting would be held at The Plaza, an open square which features a statue of Venus within a functioning fountain. "We'll shuffle around," promised Shepherd, "shifting from one foot to the other and muttering obscene remarks about Venus under our breath."

Boy, won't it be great! Won't it be great! Maybe somebody will even dive fully clothed into the fountain. No, that's too much to hope for. They don't make heroes like that any more."

In the end, though, somebody pointed out that the gaunt ruins of the old, burnt-out Wanamaker building would provide the perfect background to what was, after all, a wake.

The occasion demands and the Night People respond. Four hundred souls—lost but immortal—showed up at Wanamaker's. So did Billy Maxted's Dixieland band, which rushed down from Nick's in the Village during their intermission to provide a suitable—or maybe unsuitable—musical background.

The beauty of a non-communicative, disorganized, non-meeting—from the Night People's point of view—is that it completely baffles and frustrates that ultimate in organizations, the police. The cops say, "All right, you guys, break it up," but there is really nothing to break up. There is no gathering, no meeting. There is only a vague collection of 400 passive people milling around, shifting from foot to foot, taking up space.

The police of the 8th Precinct, who had been breaking up rock-and-roll meetings all week, didn't know quite what to make of the Night People. When they stopped one of them to try to find out what it was all about, their answer would be a grunt, a shrug or a smile. When they tried to keep them moving along, they only succeeded in moving them from one side of the street to the other. The cops finally got in the spirit of it, though. "This," one of them said, "is like trying to shoo away a bunch of friendly puppy dogs."

At length, the word was passed that if the Night People would gather in an empty parking lot around the corner, they would be left to shuffle and shamble to their hearts' content. It was a big cinder lot enclosed by a wire fence. As a lady reporter covering the affair for *Life* observed, it was difficult to escape the eerie feeling that all the Night People had been put in a cage, so that they could be gazed upon briefly by the Day People and then forgotten. When Jean Shepherd, who is not the most punctual man who ever lived, finally arrived he was moved to make a short speech, a lamentable violation of the spirit of a non-meeting.

The farewell gathering was premature. Embarrassingly premature. The station had badly underestimated the number—and certainly the loyalty—of Shepherd's people. The combination of the Wanamaker publicity and the flood of protests that descended upon WOR caused the station to put Shep right back on the air. That the Night People rose up in anger was a kind of victory in itself. Night People are the kind that write nasty letters, but never have the courage to mail them. We know that crowd all right.

Shepherd came back on the air and began to discuss the possibility of holding an author's party to launch *I, Libertine* in a manner befitting its shabby lineage. It goes almost without saying that the usual cocktail party—with its inevitable cargo of dainty hors d'oeuvres and phony intellectuals—was dismissed out of hand. The book's pedigree was such, Shepherd decided, that it could only be launched from Liggett's drugstore at 42nd and Broadway. Refreshments would be cherry Cokes and stale tuna-fish sandwiches.

There was hardly time for the plan to jell, though, for Shepherd's second

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tour of duty at WOR lasted only four days, barely enough time for Old Shep to get the frog out of his throat. One of the Night People greased the chutes by phoning in to protest that the newspaper stories about the non-meeting had all said Shepherd had been fired because he couldn't sell soap. "In the first place," the caller said, "you didn't have a soap sponsor. In the second place, I bitterly resent the implication that Night People don't use soap."

The cause of pure research, it was obvious, demanded that Shep deliver a soap commercial so that the powers of his soap-salesmanship could—once and for all—be measured and recorded. Subsequent callers suggested that Sweetheart Soap, a company which does relatively little advertising, would provide a valid test.

Jean debated a full half-hour before he decided to go ahead with the free commercial. He might have debated even longer if he had known that a WOR vice-president was sitting up monitoring him in order, apparently, to find out what all the commotion was about. As soon as Shep went into the Sweetheart Soap commercial, the v.p. phoned the engineer and ordered him to throw the switch. Shep was cut off "amidword."

But, at this stage of the game, Shep was being watched, not only by his management, but by the newspapers. The circumstances of the firing were too good to pass unmarked.

"He Sells Wrong Soap — Station Foams," headlined the N. Y. Post.

"Shepherd in Soup over Soap as WOR Fires Him All Over Again," said Variety.

The Night People, the smell of past victories still in their nostrils, bombarded the station again. Two girls had to be assigned the exclusive task of placating the indignant callers and sorting the indignant mail. One guy threatened to boycott all firms which did not sponsor Jean Shepherd. He had already started—on a preliminary basis—with General Motors and Standard Oil.

At this point, sponsors started to make their appearance, but while WOR now had sponsors for Shepherd, it didn't have Shepherd. Jean, having been slapped across the teeth, assumed that his contract was at an end. The station tried to get him at his home in New Jersey, but Jean had moved into New York. Spot announcements were made over WOR, advising him that he had a soap sponsor and a program anytime he wanted to come in and pick them up. Big block advertisements were placed in the papers. (Fittingly enough, the original ad went out with his name misspelled.)

Meanwhile, the plans for the pre-publication author's party had proceeded apace. A week after Shep had been cut off the air, advertisements—placed by Ballantine Books—informed the Night People that the momentous event was going to take place.

Before he showed up at Liggett's, Shep finally walked into WOR's Broadway offices and signed up for a 9:00 P.M.-1:00 A.M. Sunday show. Hadn't he heard the urgent announcements that had been going out over the air all week, he was asked?

Men wait their entire lives in vain for straight lines like that.

"You don't think I listen to this station," Shepherd told them.

Don't ever let anyone tell you that there is not a tide in the affairs of men.

The night at Liggett's was a great artistic success. The management roped off the book section and fountain for the exclusive use of the Night People. Book-

lovers came from as far away as Pittsburgh. Close to a thousand copies of *I, Libertine* were sold.

The risk he was running did not escape Old Shep. "Before becoming a moving force," he said, "I was a free man. I made it my business to miss appointments faithfully, refused to consult a physician when a headache persisted, and smoked cornsilk. Since becoming an author, I've been on time for three appointments in a row, and—I don't know quite how to say this—the other day I saw a sign that said THINK! And do you know what I did? I THOUGHT! In capital letters, too."

Those were the great days for the Night People, comparable—in their own way—to the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome. In times to come, when all the battles have been fought, a couple of graying old veterans

will nudge each other, like a couple of veterans from Hannibal's march through the Alps, and say: "You remember those days at Wanamaker's and Liggett's? You had to be there to know how it was. Boy, wasn't it great! Wasn't it great! These kids today . . . they just don't make heroes like that any more."

By now, you should know whether you're a Night People or a Day People. If you're a Day People, you have been forewarned that there is a vast underground plotting ceaselessly to confound you. Or, worse than that, to convert you.

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