



## Left-Handed Press Agent

By Don Glendon

How baseball ever got along without him is a mystery to everyone, including the Great Walter Mails himself.

REX HARDY, JR.

WHISTLING blithely because the advance sale reminded him of the Golden Era of Sports, Charley Graham, owner of the San Francisco Seals, entered the club's offices at nine o'clock of 1938's opening day and then stopped suddenly as he saw a couple of ushers tramping by with smudge pots in their hands.

"What are you going to do with those things?" said Graham.

"I dunno," said one of the ushers. "Walter Mails ordered them."

Puzzled, Graham stepped to a door on which was printed: "WALTER 'THE GREAT' MAILS—THE WORLD'S GREATEST PRESS AGENT." He turned the knob and entered. There sat Mails, with his coat off and his eyes flaming. When he saw Graham, he stood up, grabbed the owner by the shoulder and shouted: "I've got it—Charley—the greatest opening-day stunt in the history of baseball. You think that Joe Engel of Chattanooga is smart, don't you? Well, I've got something that will make Engel climb into his hole. Listen—I've got thirty smudge pots. I am going to start them around noontime. Everyone will think the stadium is on fire and turn in the alarm. Every piece of fire equipment in town will be here and you know that everyone likes to follow fires—they'll follow those engines right to the box office! What do you think of it?"

Graham started to fall. Mails grabbed him and said, "What's the matter, Charley?"

"My heart," moaned Graham. "You'll kill me yet, Walter. What would you tell the fire department if they came out to arrest you for that hoax?"

"What would I tell them?" stormed Mails. "Why—I'd tell them we were getting rid of those termites that eat up the stands!"

You can put this down as a sure thing: Walter "The Great" Mails, whom Billy Evans called the greatest left-handed pitcher he ever saw and whom friends and foes alike still call "The Big Lip," is going back to the majors.

Mails, now forty-two, is not going back to repeat his miraculous achievement of pitching Cleveland to a World's Series, as he did in 1920. He is going back as Walter—The Great—Left-Handed Press Agent! His work as a promotion man on and off the field for baseball and the San Francisco Seals has earned him a nationwide reputation.

### Not on the Program

Here's one for your scrapbook:

The scene is Seals Stadium in San Francisco, late October, 1937.

In a benefit game for the Catholic Youth Organization, minor leaguers were playing the major-league stars, led by Joe DiMaggio. Eight thousand people were out to watch DiMaggio, just after electrifying fans with his hitting, fielding and throwing.

Along came the fifth inning. The game was dragging. People were sitting on their hands. The Great Mails, in uni-

form, had been at the loud-speaker, striving to put some life into the drab exhibition.

Joe DiMaggio was on deck, swinging a couple of bats. Mails, taking the spotlight in his usual impetuous manner, bellowed into the public-address system, "Ladies and gentlemen—this is The Great Mails speaking! I notice that Joe DiMaggio—the killer-diller of the New York Yankees—is ready to hit. How would you like to have me go out there and strike him out?"

Thundering cheers and boos greeted the announcement. The crowd stood up as a sort of accolade when Mails jumped over the railing, grabbed a glove and in his best pouter-pigeon walk—known as the Mails strut—took the mound. DiMaggio started to move out of the box to give Mails time to warm up, but the "Great Walter" snapped: "Get in there, busher! I don't have to warm up for you!" Mails looked straight down the alley and squarely into the laughing eyes of DiMaggio. For Joe, like everyone else, thought that Walter was out there clowning.

Dramatically, Walter wound up in slow motion, then cut loose with a fast ball. The umpire raised his arm for a called strike. The crowd roared, not at the strike but at Mails' antics after the pitch. For Walter started to hold onto his left arm and point to a sea gull circling overhead.

He screamed, "Get a gun—somebody—that buzzard is after my arm." After the laughter had subsided, Walter was

again the pitcher. He shook off the catcher's signs three times in a row, while DiMaggio stood at the plate, grinning. Finally, Mails nodded pompously, wound up quickly and floated a curve ball, low and inside. The change of pace caught DiMaggio off stride. He took a terrific cut and missed the ball a foot.

Now, the crowd was laughing at DiMaggio. Mails, realizing that Joe was a bit embarrassed, knowing that it was a benefit game and yet diabolically wanting to set up DiMaggio for the kill, walked halfway down the pitching line and shouted, "It's a pretty lucky thing I'm not in the American League now, Joe. You'd be out there in that crab boat of yours making a living!"

DiMaggio didn't like it. He tightened. Mails grinned. He swaggered up to the rubber, reared back and zoomed a fast ball, shoulder high, that went by DiMaggio like a bullet for the third strike!

### No Time for Modesty

Unbelievable? Certainly. But so is anything that The Great Mails does. He's screwier than "Dizzy" Dean or Buck Newsom ever thought of being. He's a better actor and a brighter showman than Maxie Rosenbloom. And he's almost as smart as he says he is. How many ballplayers do you know who have been on a pay roll for twenty-five years? For pure swashbuckling audacity, for glorified conduct in the thick of battle, Mails' life story is so cockeyed that only

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The reporters surged forward, barking questions. Toby said, "Don't crowd me, folks. I'll talk"

## Romance in Crimson

By Octavus Roy Cohen

ILLUSTRATED BY ELMORE BROWN

### The Story Thus Far:

**H**ELD up and robbed on Long Island by a bandit and his "moll," Wally Andrews and his wife, Madge, return to Karnak, their Southern home city. A few hours after the holdup, Gregg Stuart, an architect who had grown up in Karnak, saves the life of a total stranger—Lynn Harrison—when a man (to whom she refers later as "Rick") tries to shoot her on a New York street. Then, to protect her from her assailant, he takes her and her friend, Toby Fuller, to Karnak.

There a series of shocks awaits him. The first comes when Lynn—whom the Andrewses say bears a striking resemblance to their bandit's girl friend—admits that it was Rick who had held up the Andrewses, and that she had been with him at the time! The second comes when Gregg sees Rick on a street in Karnak. And the third comes when Madge Andrews is murdered, and Lynn (against whom the evidence is very strong) is arrested and charged with the crime.

The trial begins. Various witnesses testify, and Lee Winthrop, the district attorney, brings out these damning facts, among others: That Rick Norton, accompanied by a girl, had attacked and robbed someone in Ohio; that he had been caught and sent to prison; that he had escaped; and that his accomplice in the robbery had been—Lynn Harrison! Also, that one Norman Bailey, whose son had been kidnaped, had given the ransom money to a go-between—a girl: Lynn Harrison.

But Jason Marsh, who is defending Lynn, does not lose hope. . . . Finally, Lynn takes the stand. She says that, infatuated with Rick Norton, she had been with him when he held up a filling station in Ohio. She insists that, misled by what Norton told her, she had believed him to be innocent. She says that, after he escaped from prison, she met him in New York City; and that, at his request, she called on a "Mr. Bailey," who had given her "an important letter"—which, unknown to her, contained the ransom money.

Jason Marsh stares at her. "When," he says, "did you know that Rick Norton was a criminal?" Lynn's eyes are steady. "The night Mr. and Mrs. Andrews were robbed on Long Island," she replies. The courtroom is tense. Jason Marsh says quietly: "Tell us about that night, please."

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**I** WENT riding with Rick," Lynn began. "We found ourselves in a fashionable section of Long Island when the car stopped. Rick said it had broken down and I believed him. He pretended to try to fix it. Then he asked me to flag any car that came along."

"Why you?"

"Because he said they wouldn't stop for a man in such a lonely spot. But they would for me. We had dressed, you see; and had danced at some place where we ate dinner. That seemed logical. I waved to a car, and it stopped. It was an old machine. Two young men were in it. Rick asked them if they had something—something with a technical name—and they said no. Then they drove off and he asked me to try again, but with a big car because he said jalopies wouldn't have it. Then a big sedan came along and I stopped it."

"The Andrews' car?"

"Yes."

"What happened then?"

"Mr. Andrews was driving. I turned to call Rick, and saw him. . . ." She bit her lip and continued with some diffi-

culty. "He had a gun in his hand and he was telling Mr. and Mrs. Andrews to give up their money and jewelry."

"What did you do?"

"I don't remember. The shock was great. I think I protested, but I can't swear to that. The whole thing didn't take five minutes. There wasn't any argument. Rick got the jewels from them, and shoved them into my evening bag. He put the money into his own pocket. They drove away and so did we. Fast."

"And then . . . ?"

"I still blamed it all on his false imprisonment. I thought I understood. But Rick started to talk, and for the first time I discovered that I had been wrong about him."

"Meaning . . . ?"

"His voice had changed, and his manner. He said that if I was thinking of telling the police I'd better check it out. He said I was in as deep as he was . . . and I said I'd take that chance."

"Go ahead, please."

"He admitted then that he had been guilty of the assault back in Ohio, the one for which he was originally convicted. That changed everything I felt for him; everything I had felt. I was disgusted and shocked—and scared. Then he repeated that I'd better keep my mouth shut—because I was involved. And he explained."

"He explained what?"

"About the packet I had gotten from Mr. Bailey being ransom money. He summarized the whole thing. He said that it would look bad for me; that apparently I had been his sweetheart back in Columbus. That I definitely had been his companion the night of the gas-station robbery. That I had worked for him when he was in prison. That after his escape, I had sheltered him and given him money when I knew he was an escaped convict. That I had acted as go-between in a kidnaping. And that now I had helped in a holdup. He said that my story might be believed on any one of those things—but not on all."

"What did you say?"

"I said I'd talk anyway; that I didn't believe I was as deeply involved as he said. Then he told me something else. . . ."

"What?"

"He explained the details of the ransom—his fear of marked bills, just as Mr. Bailey testified. He said he still had the little boy. He told me that no harm would come to the boy if I kept my mouth shut. But that if I talked, the boy would be killed."

"Aaaaah! I see. . . . Then your reason for keeping silent since then was not to shield yourself, but to save the life of a poor, unfortunate, kidnaped boy. Is that it?"

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