

HEAVENLY DAYS FOR THE JORDANS

Marion and Jim—'Fibber McGee and Molly' to You—Hit the Top in Radio After Years of Labor, Love and Laughter.

By WILLIAM C. UTLEY

"WHY don't you forget about that guy Jordan?" a suitor asked Marion Driscoll about 18 years ago. "He'll never amount to anything. If you marry him, you'll be living out of a suitcase all your life."

That settled it. For there was nothing Marion Driscoll would rather have done for the rest of her life than live out of a suitcase—with her Jim.

It was a good thing for you and me, too. If this swell romance hadn't blossomed into happy and lasting marriage, we would have had to do without two of the most good-humored and welcome visitors who "call" at our homes—Fibber McGee and Molly.

Marion and Jim Jordan "lived out of a suitcase" and worked like the dickens for a good many years before, as Fibber and Molly, they became one of the five or six top-ranking radio teams. In the rural areas and small communities they rank first. "We've got a bigger audience than even Jack Benny has," is the way Jim puts it.

Fibber Born on Farm.

No wonder, either. They've always been "small town folks," even though they've lived in Chicago for a long time. Like Fibber and Molly, the Jordans themselves are as genuine as the eggs in a home-made cake. One indication is sufficient: During the leaner years when they sometimes worked for \$35 a week, the Jordans and their two children—Katherine, seventeen, and Jim, Jr., thirteen—lived in an unpretentious residential district on Chicago's northwest side, where they had a lot of friendly neighbors, plain, ordinary folks like themselves. When they suddenly found themselves in the "big money" class at last, did they buy a fine mansion on the Gold Coast, with more servants than closets? They did not. They built a little seven-room house right in their old neighborhood; it was HOME to them, and that was important.

Fibber (or Jim, if you prefer) was born on a farm near Peoria, Ill., and worked on it until he was twelve; he had seven brothers and sisters to help him out. Marion was a Peoria girl, the youngest save one of a family of 13.

Now there hardly lives a gal who doesn't like to look into a mirror once in a while, and Marion was no exception. At sixteen she was a very pretty girl and had a voice good enough to land her in the church choir. It was at choir practice one day that she caught herself sneaking a peek into the glass above the piano. And when she



Fibber McGee . . . and Molly.

for the one hundred twenty-second engineers, but sickness prevented his seeing service, and he was in a hospital when the Armistice was signed. Meanwhile, was Marion, back home in Peoria, merely twiddling her thumbs, awaiting his return? "Heavenly days!" says she. "I was that busy teaching piano to 50 pupils, some good and some bad, I didn't have a moment to myself!"

They decided to get out of the show business when Jim came back, but it was no go. Jim wasn't very successful finding steady work and, with his brothers-in-law constantly taunting, "When are you going to get a job?" he soon found himself behind the footlights again. He and Marion had real success with their concert company, and no one complained that he was shiftless any more.

An Agent Gets Fired.

Billed as a 15-piece ensemble, the company was literally that—a 15 piece affair—but there were only five people in it; some of them played several instruments. This led to complications.

An advance man preceded them on tour and arranged for their billing. When they arrived they usually met a stage crowded with 15 chairs and a manager stirred with indignation at finding only six musicians. At this point Jim would become highly incensed at the audacity of his agent in permitting so gross a misrepresentation. Loudly and righteously, in the sight of all concerned, he would discharge the agent. Marion and Jim estimate that this hardy soul was "fired" in such a manner twice a week for four years.

There followed more success, this time as a harmony team in vaudeville. Then the night which was to open up new and miraculous vistas to them.

They were playing cards with friends in Chicago in 1924. An old

microphone for another year in the theaters. Then when WENR went on the air they returned, never to leave. The character of Fibber McGee may be traced by veteran listeners to that of an old man named Luke in one of their early broadcasts. Molly is much the same character as Mrs. Smith in their old skit, "The Smith Family." They had another program called the "Smackouts," which they intend to bring back to radio some day.

All this time it might be supposed that the national networks were overlooking them; in fact it has often been reported that they never had a chance at the networks until Fibber and Molly came to life. Nothing could be further from the truth, Jim insists. They simply made so much money off local broadcasts plus theater appearances that they avoided the networks. When NBC bought WENR they went to WMAQ, where they could remain a local team, but when NBC bought WMAQ, as well, Jim had to hit the national hookup as "Mr. Twister."

Marion Has Many Tongues.

The first Fibber McGee and Molly broadcasts was in March, 1935. The "show" was a "natural" from the start. That it has remained so, in fact has never ceased to add to its popularity, testifies to Jim Jordan's showmanship. The sponsor wanted to base the show on Fibber's "fish stories" and outlandish lies, but Jim saw that the listeners would soon tire of them and refused. Instead we hear this quaint Irish couple, genuine, witty, and at all times sympathetic, surrounded by some of the funniest characters radio ever has known. Fans have learned to love and laugh at the little girl whose tiny voice can ask the most embarrassing questions on earth; Geraldine, the tittering bride; Grandma, the old lady with the chorus girl philosophy; Mrs. Wearybottom, who always seems as if she will surely run down like an old-time phonograph before she finishes a sentence, but never does, quite; and Molly, herself, an able foil for the cocky McGee. All of these and more are played by Marion herself!

Horatio K. Boomer, the small time big shot; the raspy Russian, who says "Hallo, Petrushka! Hallo, Tovarich!"; the Scotchman, and other dialect characters, are played by young Bill Thompson, whom Jim discovered. Silly Watson, the politely uproarious blackface comedian, is Hugh Studebaker, who never acted at all until he got into radio—he was a pipe organist. Studebaker also has a show of his own, "Bachelor's Children." Harpo, the announcer who loves to "spoil" Fibber's favorite jokes by "sneaking in" a commercial announcement, is Harlow Wilcox, who is Harlow Isbell in real life. Fibber, of course, is Jim Jordan.

Coin Many 'Catch Phrases.'

You'll find no "mother-in-law" jokes on the Fibber McGee and Molly program. "Taint funny, McGee!" Molly said, and that was that. And you'll never hear anything on the program that you wouldn't want your children to hear; Marion and Jim have children of their own. Don Quinn, who has written the Jordan scripts for seven years, has taken a lesson from the honest-to-goodness romance that has followed the pair throughout their married life. You will never hear any serious arguments between Fibber and Molly; it's very apparent that they love each other, and you love them for it.

Seldom has any troupe in the show business coined so many catch phrases that have become by-words throughout the nation. Among all classes of people today you may hear repeated almost any time Molly's "Heavenly days, McGee!" and "Taint funny, McGee!"; Fibber's "Dad rat it!"; the little girl's "I betcha!" and Grandma's "Hi, Skip-ty!"

They're riding on top of the world right now, the Jordans. But would they quit if they could? "Just give me a chance," says Jim. "Boy, I'd like to go right back where I started. I'd like to live on a little farm by a lake and take life easy."

"Heavenly days!" says Marion. "You bet," Jim replies.

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Marion says these candid camera shots of Jim and her are typical of a Jordan day at home.

saw a slim youth of seventeen looking over her shoulder her heart beat like a studio gong; she decided right there that Jim Jordan (for that's who it was) was the man for her. It must have been a two-way mirror, for Jim Jordan decided the same thing.

Jim sang with a quartet which was rehearsing with the choir. They had their first date on New Year's eve. Marion can't suppress a little giggle whenever she thinks of it.

They Still Tease.

"His mother went along with us, and took him home afterward!" she laughs. Even after 20-odd years this charge still makes him hot under the collar. "Oh, here now," he objects. "Cut that out!" Then, with a grin: "Anyway, didn't you always bring your big brother along on our dates after that?"

For three years they courted before they were married, and for 19 years since. Before their marriage, Jim toured in vaudeville with a musical act called, "A Night With the Poets." He sang on the Chautauqua circuits, and later started a concert company that toured the tank towns, an experience which may have developed some of the "tank town tourist" flavor which characterizes the McGee and Molly skits.

Shortly after their marriage Jim left for France as a replacement

battery radio set was blatting away. Conversation was all but impossible as what might or might not have been a harmony team struggled with the notes in the upper ranges.

Jim Wins a Bet.

Jim stood it as long as he could. Then:

"Dad rat it!" he cried. "We can do better than that!" His host was a doubting Thomas with a bit of sporting blood and bet Jim they couldn't. So the next day found them seeking an audition at the station to which they had been listening—old WIBO, "the top of the dial," in Chicago.

They clicked immediately, and soon made their debut in a commercial program on the ether waves as the O'Henry twins—at \$10 a broadcast! They collected the \$10 they had bet, too.

Those were the days before anybody got fat eating on a radio star's salary. Marion and Jim for eight months broadcasted two hours a day for \$35 a week. They were known under dozens of different names, and it is a tribute to their amazing versatility that they did not run out of things to do. They sang songs, acted out little skits, dialogs and monologs, and Marion played the celeste.

But vaudeville still offered more money, and reluctantly they left the

Floyd Gibbons'

ADVENTURERS' CLUB

HEADLINES FROM THE LIVES OF PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELF!



"Human Bait"

By FLOYD GIBBONS
Famous Headline Hunter

HELLO everybody: You know, boys and girls, fishing is a harmless sport, and perfectly safe just so long as you don't get things mixed up the way Tony Benciven did. In all the fishing I've ever seen done, the fisherman stays in the boat, and uses a worm, or another fish, or maybe just a hunk of salt pork, for bait.

But Tony didn't follow the usual procedure. For bait, he used himself. And you know, there are fish that don't hesitate to chew up even a man, if they see him trailing along at the end of a fishing line.

Tony lives in Brooklyn, N. Y. He likes Brooklyn because there you can get a swell swordfish steak in a restaurant, without having to go out and catch it yourself. Tony is plenty sick of sword-fishing. There are enough dictators around waving swords nowadays without having the fish do it, too. And like a dictator, a swordfish can drag you into trouble faster than almost anything else on earth or in the water. At least, that was Tony's experience.

Tony says he never did want to go on that swordfishing trip in the first place. He had just arrived in Avalon on Catalina island, off the coast of California, and he didn't know any more about deep-sea fishing than the mayor of Timbucktoo knows about the North Pole. But his friend, Tom Martin talked him into it, and on the morning of August 17, 1931, they set out in a power boat for San Clemente island, about thirty-five miles away.

Then Tony Got His First Strike.

When they reached the north side of San Clemente, Tom showed Tony how to bait his hook and how to handle his line. Then they began cruising and looking for swordfish. Tony says they cruised for two hours before they saw one, and it was a half hour after that before Tony got his first strike.

"That strike," says Tony, "almost yanked me clear out of the boat. There was a tremendous tug on the line, and I caught my balance just in time. Behind me I could hear Tom yelling instructions and I began reeling in my line. I reeled in until another violent jerk told me that the fish was diving for the bottom, and then, still following Tom's instructions, I let the line reel out again."

"By this time my hands were raw and blistered, and I was panting from the exertion. When the line was almost all out, Tom shouted to me to reel in again, and slowly, laboriously, I began hauling that swordfish back to the surface. I must have had him almost to the top when suddenly the line went slack again. A second later I heard a hellish roar and the water burst apart close to the boat. The swordfish shot out of the water like a bombshell and fell back again with a loud splash. Then it was off again, in a series of mad plunges, taking most of the line with it."

"Tom yelled: 'It's a beauty.' And it was. It was every bit of eleven feet long, and it must have weighed close to four hundred pounds. And just then, the fish turned suddenly in the water and charged straight for the boat!"

Tom yelled to Tony to haul in the line, and Tony forgot about the reel and began hauling it in hand-over-hand. In the excitement of the moment he didn't notice that the line had become tangled around his foot. That swordfish was taking all his attention. At the last moment it veered, missing the boat by a fraction of an inch, and then Tony felt a tug at his entangled foot. He was knocked clean off his pins, and before he realized what had happened he was in the water, choking and gasping for air, being dragged along at the end of the line.

Overboard Among the Sharks.

Says he: "In vain I tried to untangle the line around my foot—and in vain I tried to break the strong cord. Down—down I was dragged by that diving fish, and I thought my lungs would burst before it shot to the top again. And then, while I was still fighting for air, I became aware of an even deadlier menace. Sharks! A number of them, swimming nearby, dim, ghostly shapes in the water."

Suddenly, Tony realized that he was no longer being dragged. He looked toward the swordfish and saw the reason. He had come to the surface now, and there was the fish, less than two hundred feet away, charging straight at him. Tony drew in a deep breath. This looked like the end, and he was getting ready to meet it. But the swordfish never reached him. Halfway in its course it was met by two or three darting streaks of gray. THE SHARKS!

"What a battle that was," says Tony. "The fierce struggle threw up mountains of water. And then the line began to drag me into that mad maelstrom. I was getting closer and closer, when suddenly it snapped—probably slashed by shark teeth. Then, free for the first time, I looked for the boat. It was coming toward me at a fast clip—but it was too late. For at the same time I noticed that two triangular fins were cutting the water around me in circles—circles that were getting smaller with every turn."

Bump on the Head—and Rescue.

Just the same, Tony began swimming toward the boat. The circling fins were now so close to him that he could see the bodies of the sharks. Suddenly, one of them darted madly. He felt its body touch his foot as it swam beneath him—and he shivered. Wasn't that boat ever going to reach him?

"The other shark would charge at any moment," he says. "It had turned on its side, jaws gaping. I tried to steel my nerves for the inevitable finish. Churning the water wasn't going to keep this one off. He was ready for the kill. I heard a roar and a rush of water behind me and remembered the other shark. Before I could turn, something struck my head, and that is the last I remember."

But when Tony opened his eyes again, he was in the boat, and Tom was pouring whisky down his throat. It was the boat that had given him that bump on the head—and it hadn't arrived any too soon. For Tom had had to fight the shark off with a gaff hook while he dragged Tony's unconscious body out of the water.

Tony says he looked over the side and saw nothing but a couple of fins circling the water where the swordfish had been a few moments before. And that's when he resolved that thereafter he'd get his swordfish in a restaurant, served up on a plate with a piece of lemon and a little parsley. This business of being shark bait was no fun at all.

No adventure is any fun—until after it is all over.

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Hudson and Staten Island

Staten island was one of the earliest discoveries of the explorer, Henry Hudson. He first saw the highlands on September 2, 1609, and on the following day entered the lower bay and anchored in the harbor of Sandy Hook. The next day he manned a small boat and sent it through the narrows to explore the bay, and the island now known as Staten island was discovered September 4. It was then inhabited by a branch of the Raritan Indians. In 1630 the Dutch West India company purchased the island from the natives, giving in exchange for it "some kettles, axes, hoes, wampum, drilling awls, jew's-harps and divers small wares." It was the Dutch who named the island, calling it Staaten Eylandt—Island of the States—after the States General, the Parliament of the Netherlands, which was popularly referred to as "The States."

Judge Advocate General, Adviser

The judge advocate general is the official legal adviser of the secretary of war, the chief of staff, the War department and its bureaus, and the entire military establishment. He advises concerning the legal correctness of military administration, including disciplinary action, matters affecting the rights and mutual relationship of the personnel of the army, and the financial, contractual, and other business affairs of the War department and the army. The functions of the judge advocate general's department include not only those of the judge advocate general and of his office in Washington, but also those of judge advocates serving as staff officers at the headquarters of army, corps area, department, corps, division, and separate brigade commanders, and at the headquarters of other officers exercising general court-martial jurisdiction.

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Pattern 5853

sleeves, or belt. Flower clusters, gay in garden colors of wool or silk floss, may adorn a blouse, or both bodice and skirt of any desired frock. In pattern 5853 you will find a transfer pattern of a motif 9 by 9 1/4 inches, one and one reverse motif 6 1/4 by 6 1/2 inches; two and two reverse motifs 3 1/4 by 3 1/4 inches and two strips of border 2 by 15 inches; color suggestions; illustrations of all stitches used.

Send 15 cents in stamps or coins (coins preferred) for this pattern to the Sewing Circle Household Arts Dept., 259 W. Fourteenth St., New York, N. Y.

Please write your name, address and pattern number plainly.

Household Questions

Removing Wallpaper.—To remove wallpaper quickly, put a heaped tablespoonful of saltpetre to a gallon of water and apply freely with a whitewash brush while the water is very hot. The paper then can be stripped from the walls quite easily.

Summer Salad.—Peel and cut into small squares or slices 6 medium-sized potatoes (boiled), add 3 tablespoons grated onion, 2 tablespoonfuls chopped parsley, 2 tablespoonfuls chopped carrot, 2 tablespoonfuls chopped cucumber, 2 tablespoonfuls chopped celery or beetroot. Pour over a generous supply of French dressing and set aside for several hours. Garnish with mustard and cress or shredded lettuce.

Clear Bleuing.—To prevent bleuing from streaking clothes on washday, dissolve a tablespoon of soda in the "blue" water.

Washing Linoleum.—Dissolve a lump of sugar in the water when washing linoleum or oilcloth, and a brilliant polish will result.

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