

# PAGEANT

February, 1956

p. 96

## BOGIE VS. THE FOURTH ESTATE

*Says Humphrey Bogart about the press: "Today's newspaper is tomorrow's you know what"*

BY N. & M. RAU



■ WHEN ROCKY MARCIANO battled Archie Moore for the heavyweight championship, spang in the middle of the working news and sports reporters at ringside sat none other than Humphrey Bogart. Bogie was covering the fight for International News Syndicate.

Why? He didn't have to take on the job in order to get a ringside seat, nor did he do it for publicity. Money for front row locations, and publicity, Bogie has plenty of. Possibly he did it because at heart he's a newspaperman. Maybe he did it because he's an old pro and knows what makes good copy.

For instance, back in 1949 when the Hollywood Women's Press Club voted Bogie its Sour Apple Award for his treatment of the press that year, he wired them:

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR HAVING SELECTED ME THE MOST UNCOOPERATIVE ACTOR OF THE YEAR. I SHALL DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO DESERVE IT.

Lately, now, Mr. B. has been sounding off in general about newspaper men—and women. To the discerning, his activities in this direction are clear indications that the pro in Bogie is at work again. His latest movie role is as a sportswriter and press agent in the film version of Budd Schulberg's novel, *The Harder They Fall*, for Columbia Pictures. And so Bogie is sounding off about the press. But whatever his reasons are, the man makes good talk—talk worth listening to, especially about his favorite sub-

*Hollywood Press*

ject, the press.

Mr. B. likes to describe one recurring dream which his good friend, newspaperman Frank Sullivan, used to have. In this dream Sullivan would roll a sheet of paper into his typewriter and type away for about 20 minutes. Then he would look up and see nothing written on the paper at all.

"If this would only happen to a lot of these so-called reporters and columnists the world would be a lot better off," Bogie contends. "Some of the reporters I'm speaking of may be good in their profession, but at the same time they are loathsome, crawling creeps. And there are some columnists who are just lazy bums. They sit down with a pot of paste and a pair of shears and a lot of stuff press agents have sweated to collect and they make a column out of this."

On the other hand, Bogie has a genuine affection and admiration for newspapermen in general, many of whom he numbers among his good friends. This ambivalent feeling can be explained by his ready admission that he believes he is a sort of disappointed newspaperman himself.

"At times," confesses Bogie, "that is, after I've had eight drinks, I fancy myself a great reporter.

"Hell," he says respectfully, "most newspapermen can drink and drink well. And that's the best tribute I can pay them."

Once, according to Bogie, a reporter who came to his home to interview him got so crocked he didn't remember a thing.



"It took him three days to get that interview," says Bogie with satisfaction.

One of Bogie's chief gripes in the field of reporting is against those newspapermen who take up an hour to an hour and a half of his time and who then go out and deliberately misquote him, either to make a sensational column, or, he says, to satisfy their alter egos.

"They probably feel like being nasty and don't care," he says, "so they put it in your mouth. You have to watch out for them. They are very dangerous fellows."

### *Hollywood Press*

Bogie claims that the interviewers who are most malicious at this sort of thing are the London newspapermen who, being intensely nationalistic, have an axe to grind

You have to mine an awful lot of rock to get to that heart of gold.

*Leo Guild, Hollywood Reporter.*

with foreign visitors. By the choice of a few select words and an adroit shift of emphasis they can make their victim look like a fool.

As for the British system of interviewing, which is to let all the newspapermen descend en masse on the hapless victim, Bogie has no use for it.

“You never get a chance to talk because of the crowd,” he complains. “And then just as you do manage to get into something pretty interesting there’s always one old bag who’ll come up and ask you a question like, ‘What do you think about the Queen?’”

And that remark brings him to the subject of women reporters. He

I’ve had my run-ins with Bogart but I have to admit he’s the best interview in town. There’s one thing certain. Humphrey Bogart is never boring. *Sheilah Graham, Hollywood Citizen News.*

prefers men to women, not because he finds the women obnoxious—just boring. “But then,” as Bogie puts it candidly, “I guess I don’t like women in general.”

However, he does admit that his most unique interview on record was with a woman reporter, Inez Robb. It took place a number of years ago in New York just before he and Lauren Bacall were married. It was about seven-thirty in the morning and Bogie was up with a terrible hangover shaving, because he had to meet Lauren, who was planing in to New York to visit her mother. He had left the door slightly ajar so that his orange juice and coffee could be brought in, but since he wasn’t expecting any visitors he hadn’t bothered to dress.

“I was standing stark, staring naked before the mirror in the bathroom when in barges Inez.”

As he relates the story, Miss Robb

We women reporters ask him crazy questions because he gives such crazy answers. Actually, he loves the press and enjoys reading about himself in print. Although he doesn’t really need publicity, he enjoys giving a good interview. *Aline Mosby, United Press.*

*Hollywood Press*

charged across the hotel room and poked her head through the bathroom door.

"Oh, good morning, Humphrey," she exclaimed while Bogie tried desperately to locate a towel. "Has Miss Bacall arrived yet?"

"No," he answered still fumbling for the elusive towel.

"Well, just when do you expect her?"

Bogie told her and she left.

"It was just as business-like as that," Bogie says admiringly. "And I'll say this for her, so far as I could observe her eyes never left my face. That's what I call a sample of good reporting."

The most obnoxious question ever asked in the Bogart household, according to Bogie, was not put to



put to him. That was when he was a newcomer to Hollywood.

"But I can't take it any more," says Bogie, shaking his head. "I've had to cut the fan magazines off my list entirely. Just the sheer smell

Humphrey Bogart never says the same thing twice, but I hope the day never comes when he believes everything he says. *Bob Thomas, Associated Press.*

of them drives me crazy. They stink of milk. The interviewers themselves treat you like a two-year-old child with their Will-Debbie-Marry-Eddie and Can-Lance-Fuller-Live-Without-a-Wife kind of idiocy. You know the whole sorry groove of the thing."

The day Bogie made his decision about fan magazines was doubtless a memorable one in the life of the girl who was interviewing him.

"If you had it all to do over again would you do it?" this earnest young writer demanded.

He started out to say whether he would or he wouldn't. The reporter began laboriously writing

*Hollywood Press*

down every word.

Finally the girl moved on to her next inquiry: "What do you think about women?"

Up until that day, Bogie claims, he used to answer this question and even tried to be bright in doing

Bogie's bark is better than his bite.  
*Emily Belser, INS.*

it. But this time it struck a nerve.

"What the hell am I doing?" he suddenly asked himself. "I knew then I couldn't go through with it, not any more. My stomach just wasn't as strong as it once was."

Instead he leaned toward the girl. "Now let *me* ask *you* something," he snapped. "What exactly do you think about *men*?"

The girl became so nervous she almost dropped her pencil.

"It was obvious she had either never given the subject a thought before or else she had given it too much," Bogie says, amused.

"Now when I get tired of things I just turn the tables and interview the interviewer. This ends things almost before they get started."

As to who will carry on for the fan magazines, Bogie gladly bequeaths that chore to the gallant galaxy of today's up-and-coming stars—those whose gay names show an extraordinary imagination on the part of publicity agents: Tab

He is the kind of guy who tries to fool us into believing he's the kind of guy he plays on the screen.  
*Army Archerd, Daily Variety.*

Hunter, Lance Fuller, Rock Hudson, Lash LaRue and Touch Connors. Bogie would like to add to this list another name which he claims is more down-to-earth.

"I've been trying to persuade a young friend of mine, MGM actor Jeff Richards, to adopt it in place of his rather prosaic one," Bogie says. "Dungg Hill; sounds much stronger, doesn't it?"

Bogie does admit, however, to enjoying some articles which have been written about him. (He gave up keeping a scrap book years ago.) One of these articles was George Frazier's "Man in a Trench Coat." Another was by Nat Benchley for the old New York *Tribune*.

"It was all about the questions he should have asked and didn't because we were too busy covering the bars," recalls Bogie.

Because Bogie is an extrovert whose escapades are usually before the public eye, he has never had any objections to having the truth printed about him.

*Hollywood Press*

Whatever Bogie says makes news because he is never one to mealy-mouth. But the periodic explosions which once marked his Hollywood life are less frequent since Lauren Bacall entered the picture. Through sheer contentment, marriage seems to have reduced Bogie, like a time-weary volcano, to rare eruptions—just enough to let everyone know he is still around. As for his “quotable quotes” on fan magazines—they make good copy for Bogie. *Dorothea McEvoy, Movieland.*

“If I get drunk in a night club and fight to protect my property when some silly chorine tries to steal my panda and have to stand trial for it,” says Bogie, “they’re at liberty to splash the whole thing across the front pages.

“After all, where would we be, actors and reporters alike, if everybody in this town just stayed home and loved his mother and got married and had children and maybe judged the Soap Box Derby?”

Bogie maintains he doesn’t care, either, if the reporters do a little embellishing of their own, because he realizes the unvarnished truth can be pretty dreary at times.

“But I think one of the prerequisites of a newspaperman is to be basically factual,” he says, “since getting the truth is, after all, his profession. The wire service boys I know, and the reporters from the big dailies, always carefully check their news. Some columnists, like Louella Parsons, check theirs. You don’t see these people figuring in libel suits. But there are a lot of asses running around who throw all the salacious stuff they hear into print, and you hear an awful lot.”

Until recently Bogie made it a point to ignore such stories about him. In his day he has even talked a number of other actors and actresses out of suing or writing letters or perhaps committing mayhem on inaccurate reporters.

Just lately Bogie restrained Sid Luft, his neighbor, from searching out and punching a columnist in the nose for printing an untrue and scandalous story about him. Next he quieted Judy Garland, Sid’s wife, when she was threatening to sue over an article about her.

“For God’s sake, don’t tangle with them, Judy,” he told her. “Forget it and in a few days everybody else will have forgotten it too.”

Two days after Bogie had given this worthwhile advice he was storming up to the Luft house waving a magazine in one hand.

“I’m suing this! I’m suing this!”

*Hollywood Press*

I write for some of the fan magazines, and not one of them has asked me to do a piece on Bogie. Do you suppose he's bitter because the fans prefer reading about young leading men such as Rock Hudson, Tony Curtis and John Derek? But bitter or not, the thing I like about Bogie is that he can always be counted on for a salty quote or a sock story to fill a hole in a column. *Mike Connolly, Hollywood Reporter.*

he shouted, to the great hilarity of Judy and Sid.

"Two hundred and fifty dollars says you won't sue," Sid said.

"You've got a bet," Bogie said.

"So now I have to sue," Bogie explains. "It was the first suit I ever brought in my life and I wasn't exactly angry about it. I must even admit the story had its funny points, though everything in it was not only completely false but in very bad taste. And as I've said before, I can't stomach bad taste."

Bogie goes on to give his remedy for this state of affairs.

"Tighten up our libel and slander laws to equal those in England," he snaps. "Of course this'll throw some of the boys operating around here out of business. But it won't hurt us legitimate reporters.

"Us, did I say?" Bogie suddenly grins. "By the way, did you read my coverage of the Marciano-Moore fight? Hell, now I'm a full-fledged reporter myself!" ■ ■

