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From William Saroyan:

Sirs:

As I remember Bob Capa in London in 1944 and in Paris in 1945, he was a poker player whose sideline was picture-taking, a business he loathed. Next to myself, I believe he was the worst poker player in the London and Paris games. It is not unlikely that I am the only player in the world who lost to him. Half the time I am proud of this distinction, half the time I am proud of Capa, and as he might go on to say, half the time I am proud of everybody. It's better than being ashamed of them.

In London, Capa arranged some good games. He always picked out a fancy suite of rooms at a fancy hotel and there was always a lot to drink. Once there was a ten-gallon glass jug borrowed from an atomic research laboratory, and it was full of fresh peaches floating around in spirits, as the English put it. Three dozen hangers-on were dipping cups into the jug and guzzling the stuff and not paying for it. Capa's notion, I believe, was to get everybody cockeyed and then sit them down in the big game and take all their money, and in that way pay for the peaches—there must have been eleven of them—but when the game got going, damned if Capa wasn't cockeyed himself. He never dropped out, though, and he never won. I kept figuring out his expenses and his losses, and together they came to enough to start a shoestring moving picture studio.

Robert Capa

I asked him if he wanted to start a shoestring moving picture studio and he said, "Capa only sells shoestrings," whatever that meant.

In Paris one night we met at the Scribe bar just as a private of the American Army was being politely refused a drink because only officers and correspondents and photographers and similar draft dodgers were permitted in the place. Capa said something soothing in Hungarian to the bartender—his name was Luigi; he was trying to pass for a Parisian and an undergrounder; actually, he was a native of Naples—and I said something soothing to the private in Armenian, whereupon the private, the bartender, Capa, and myself began shaking hands and drinking cognac.

I was at the bar to meet a French publisher who had invited me to a literary party. Knowing no French, I urged Capa to go instead, which he did. He said there had been a good-sized bowl to drink out of at the party, although without peaches. I wondered how that omission had been permitted and Capa said, "Only Capa knows how to grow peaches." This, I believe, was an exaggeration. The eleven peaches had been brought over to him by the State Department, which was probably under the impression that the order from Capa deserved respect and the employment of a destroyer because the peaches were needed either to help cement Anglo-American relations, or in some secret project which it would not do to investigate at that time, in the interest of security.