

Incidentally . . .

Did you ever see a dream waiting to come true before your eyes? We did a couple of years ago, and the thing has haunted us ever since. Maybe a printing plant doesn't sound like Santa Claus to most people, but editors are all crazy. It was a magazine plant, where regional editions of *Time* and *Life* magazine were produced, and to us it looked too good to be true. We were there on a day when both *Time* and *Life* were 'in the works.'

The impression that has stayed with us ever since was the speed and efficiency of the operation . . . all the way from the automatic linotype machines which set the type to the method of loading trucks for post-office delivery. As we watched, paper in 2000-pound rolls fed endlessly into a great rotary press, and out of the other end of the mechanical monster flowed copies of *Life* magazine . . . complete except for the cover . . . at something like 2,000 copies an hour. Automatic machinery carried on as cover and inside pages were brought together, stitched, trimmed, addressed, bundled and bumped along an endless belt conveyor onto trucks. We didn't think, but elapsed time between roll of paper and finished magazine on the way to the post office could not have been much over five or ten minutes.

All this was very well, of course . . . for *Time* and *Life*. The *RIFLEMAN* was something else again. When we stopped to figure it out, our circulation at that time would have been just about enough to get that press to full speed before the last copy came. It was obvious that the *RIFLEMAN* couldn't be handled in that big a pond without a lot of headaches . . . and perhaps some sacrifices. The plant was just too big for the size of us.

Even so, the memory of that printing plant came something of an ideal. On days when there was nothing better to do we'd

dream of a scaled-down version, where the *RIFLEMAN* could be produced as smoothly, efficiently, and as rapidly as are *Time* and *Life*. We'd drool every time we saw a picture of a shiny new high-speed press, or an automatic stitching machine. We seem to our printers have been ahead with some plans of their own, meanwhile, were listening without coming to our tiresome dirge about printing.



A few weeks ago, the dream of ours is coming true. By the time this issue comes off the presses our presses will have been replaced by a brand new addition to the plant. Early next year, right in the middle of that nice new wing, they're going to set up a press that looks a lot like the one we saw a couple of years ago. That's not all. When the sections of the magazine come off of that press, they'll be stacked in hoppers at one end of a long looking machine that will be almost as fast as the press itself. This near-human trapion picks up the three 32-page sections of the magazine (signatures, they call them) along with the cover, stitches them together and passes them on to an automatic cutting machine that trims extra paper from the sides of each copy. From there they go to another complicated gadget called a Cheshire mailer. This little number calls an address sticker right smack on the cover (. . . which is another story. We'd like to leave something for readers to think about). Elapsed time from paper to finished magazine? We'll have to take bets, though, that it will be possible in less than two minutes! Regardless, however, we think that the quality of the magazine has been promised, and we've just to keep our mouths shut (as this column is concerned) about future production headaches or the lack thereof. for a couple of issues, anyway.—J. S.

COVER

Old-timer Tex Cooper has watched the West grow up. Born in Texas more than 85 years ago, Cooper journeyed to Oklahoma a covered wagon during the Civil War. Once grown, Cooper became successively an Oklahoma deputy marshal, a performer on Buffalo Bill, Pawnee Bill, Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch and finally a 'wild west' shows, and finally a movie actor via occasional appearances in western epics. Cooper bears the distinction of being the only man to have been a cowboy, a performer, a deputy marshal, and a movie actor. The photo was taken by Barnum Phillips.



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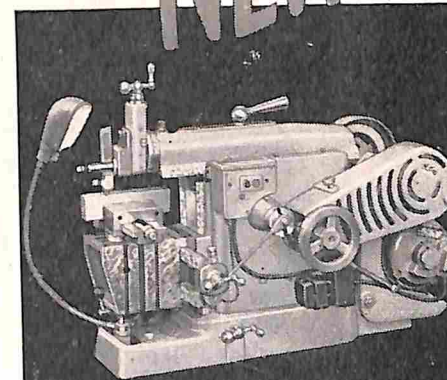
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