

"THE MAVERICK"

By R. E. SHAFF

SEVENTH INSTALLMENT



SYNOPSIS

Robert Ashley, wanders away from home and gets lost, but is believed to be burned to death in a fire which destroyed his home.

He is found by Joe MacDonald and the story continues 15 years later when we find that young Ashley is known as Robert MacDonald, or "The Maverick," as he had been called since MacDonald found him on the desert. He enjoys the company of Ida Peterson, a girl living near the MacDonald ranch and he and Roger Hines become bitter enemies over her.

While chasing a coyote he crosses the line and on the Grue ranch where he finds Old Grue ill in bed and unable to care for his sheep. The Maverick cares for the man and sheep but is afraid that his father will find it out and cause a bad situation, as the sheepman and the cattlemen are on unfriendly terms. Roger sees The Maverick at the Grue place and then gets a half-breed Indian, Joel Lamosch, to change the brand on one of Joe's yearlings into that of the Maverick's and then gets Joe to investigate. The Maverick goes to the Grue place for the last time and old Grue shows him a bear's tooth bound with gold and his money which all bore the same date.

Now go on with the story--

Soon Joe came and they rode out across the wheat ground to go thru the pasture gate, and kept on out towards the west. On toward Sand Butte they rode, neither saying things. One was borne down by the thought of what might be the outcome, the other exulting by the thought that this was the beginning of the end for his hated rival. They turned and bore southwest towards the end of a long draw. As they neared the brush-filled entrance, Joe stopped his mount. He was sniffing the air.

Smoke? He turned off to the right. The smell came stronger as they advanced. Joe, who was unable to curb himself, started out thru the dense growth at a run. Rodge was close behind. The dull glow of a smoldering fire gleamed thru the bushes close at hand.

Joe had started to circle the fire when a critter scrambled to its feet awkwardly trying to run. Out came Roger's rope as he went in pursuit. The race was short. No critter can run far, especially in the brush. His front feet hobbled with a short piece of rope. Rodge tied up the knelt and came back to where Joe knelt looking at the ground.

"Funny we didn't hear him ride out of here, Rodge. Couldn't have had much of a start on us by the looks. Must have dragged that critter considerably. Hmmm, Rodge, someone has started something." Little did he realize that Rodge knew who did.

They went over to the critter lying there on its side, its eyes rolling. The horse stood there, the rope partly taut. They turned the critter over and there, freshly burned into the hair, was a new cross after the bar. Rodge undid the rope and off went the yearling into the dark.

"No use trying to do anything more tonight, Rodge. Guess we don't stand any chance of overtaking the one who did this." They rode back across the long level sweep of pasture land in silence, each filled with his own thoughts. They had taken care of the mounts and when Joe turned for the house, he hesitated an instant and said: "Not a word about this to anyone. Good night." He stumbled up the grade towards the house—entirely disillusioned.

Joe sat down on the wide stoop and looked off toward the rim of Sand Butte showing black against the starry background. His thoughts wandered back to that time such a few short years ago when he had found that bundle of misery, in nearly the same place. He had found just as much, and more misery this evening.

The Maverick had come and gone as he pleased. Why shouldn't he? There was some great mistake. Tomorrow the thing was sure to clear itself up—God, it was unthinkable!

Mom came out and put her hand on that solid shoulder.

"Joe, you'd better come in, instead of sitting out here in the damp mooning at the big dipper. First thing you know you'll have spring fever."

"Bobby in yet?" he asked.

"Uh-huh. He came in not long ago. Ate his lunch and went right to bed. That's where you ought to be this minute." Mom said as she kissed his ruddy cheek.

They walked into the house.

"What is the matter with you, Joe?" Mom asked. "You look as tho you had lost your last friend."

"Nothing. I've been over near the butte, looking after a sick crit-

ter. Going back in the morning and either kill or cure the poor thing."

He might as well make a plausible excuse for a getaway for the morning. Anyway, a little white lie could be lived down for a good cause. He took her face between his hands and kissed her.

"Mom, I wish breakfast a little early in the morning."

Joe had more than one reason for an early breakfast. It got him out before the hands were up, and saved him from having to sit and torment himself needlessly with Bobby at the table.

"Guess I'll have Rodge up to eat with me, if you don't mind. He is going with me," Joe said.

They retired for the night.

Again the east gave way to the rising sun. Two horses stood with reins sweeping the ground. Joe and Rodge looked over the scene of the night before. The tracks of the horse that had carried the rider to the spot was plain. It was a good-sized track, the footprint of the man was a number eight riding boot.

Rodge picked the Maverick's iron from under the edge of a bush and handed it to Joe, watching his face. He seemed to recoil from the thing, thrusting it upon the ground. "Take it along," Joe ordered curtly.

Joe followed the tracks back several rods thru the brush. "Come up from the south, as near as I can make out. We better follow him up. Perhaps we can see his tracks in the soft ground."

They took the trail down the draw out across the level. The tracks were plain in the short grass. A glove lay on the ground. Rodge had been looking for this last bit of strategy that he had paid the breed to do. Joe picked up the glove and tucked it into his pocket. That glove had been bought by Joe's own hand at the Plains for his Christmas offering to the Maverick.

From there the tracks led to a higher dry ridge that ran to the foot of Sand Butte. No longer were the tracks visible. The Joe got down and tried as best he was able to ferret them out.

They turned for home. Joe was a beaten man. There he sat, loosely swinging to the stride of his horse. His head throbbed forward, his chest drawn in—he was a crushed man. Joe MacDonald had been dealt a crushing blow.

His thought were of Mom and of how to deal with this thing. It was going to break her heart to learn of this. It must be some terrible nightmare. He slid his hand inside his coat pocket—there was the glove, sure enough. The iron still swung at the horn of Roger's saddle. The only thing to do was to face the boy at once. Perhaps he might be able to explain it all away. Again that torn, bleeding face came to him, lying there on the ground amid the brush at the foot of the butte, giving that animal cry.

Was it possible that the terrible ordeal which the lad had passed thru had at last come to haunt him? Had something that had laid dormant all these years, to come to the surface in this manner? Life took queer turns, he well knew. People had killed in cold blood. People who were known never to harm even a mouse. Thus his thoughts kept coursing thru his mind, as he and Roger slowly returned to the ranch.

The Maverick splashed cold water on his face to drive the sleep from his eyes while Mom finished putting his breakfast on the table. He heard a sly step behind him, and a pair of strong arms circled his head. Two hands closed over his eyes.

"I'll give you three guesses. What have I here for you?" It was Mom.

"Something to eat?"

"No."

"Something to wear?"

"No."

"Something to read?"

"Yes, a card," said Mom. "Joe brought it in from town last night when he came. I put it at your place at the table. Now, honey, I don't want you to be angry, but Roger came up for early breakfast. He and Joe rode over to Sand Butte. It seems there's a sick critter over there. I forgot the card when I put on their breakfast. As I came in to pour the coffee, Roger was still reading the card. There was a queer look on his face, even before he knew that I saw him."

The Maverick combed his hair before he turned, and his face was red. "Mom, that's too bad. Rodge doesn't like me. We had some trouble down at the bunk house some time ago," he said.

"Why, Bobby?"

"Ida Peterson?"

"Bobby," her voice was full of feeling, "I do hope you won't have any more trouble—especially since he has read the card. I read it too, sonny. Ida is a nice girl—but you are young. Mom doesn't want to lose her boy. Not yet, anyway."

He ate his breakfast in silence. Inwardly he seethed. Why had Joe taken Rodge with him over to Sand Butte this morning? Rodge was

needed out on the fence with the hands. It was his plan to go with dad, part of those cattle belonged to him. It might be one of his own stock. Something was wrong, that he was sure. Had Rodge found out about his going to Grue's. If he had he was making good his threat. He would of course tell dad everything. Roger would do all in his power to set Joe against him.

Anger was clutching at the Maverick. There was nothing fair about this, just a dirty deal cooked up by the foreman to cause him trouble. At first, he was inclined to go to the foreman and settle the score, but on second thought, he knew that would not do. It left only the one alternative—to go away. Something was being held back from him. Joe had never acted this way before.

Outside the sunshine bathed the world with spring. Ambition welled up in the Maverick. He would go to the barn and oil up some of the equipment. As he worked, he turned the events of the morning over in his mind. There was certainly trouble ahead of him. The foreman had read the card, yet what was this other trouble brewing? Must be that his going to Grue's was known to Joe. Rebellion took hold of him. He simply was not going to stay here and have the foreman ride him. As long as Joe knew about Grue, there was nothing to do except to take what he had coming for breaking the rule of the forbidden fence.

Joe and Rodge came riding up to the corral bars, dismounted, led the horses thru Joe came back to put the bars in place behind him, then turned and started for the house. Then he stopped and came back towards the open door of the barn.

The Maverick rose as Joe pulled the door shut. The older man's face was ashen gray in color and his mouth was set—hard and grim. A sinking feeling took possession of the Maverick. The crisis had come. He might as well have it over with first's last if Joe wanted to believe what the foreman told him. He could be driven away. The only thing that bothered the Maverick was to be driven away for doing some one good when they were down and there was no one else to care for them.

Joe came close to the back of the buckboard where the Maverick leaned. Sweat was standing out on the older man's face in little beads. There was a silence—except for the crunch of the horses eating their hay in the stalls at the back of the barn.

"Where were you last night, Bobby?" Joe asked.

"Out riding around," said the Maverick.

"Where did you go?" Joe asked again.

"Nowhere in particular," was the answer.

"Now listen, Bobby. I must know just where you were last night. Were you over by Sand Butte?" Joe demanded.

"No, I wasn't, Dad."

"Can you take me over the ground that you covered last night?"

"No, I can't, Dad."

"What?" Joe was astonished.

"I could, but I'm not going to," said the Maverick.

"Son, this is serious. What are you going to do? I simply must know where you were—that is, if you'll tell me."

"You'd better go and ask Rodge. He'll tell you everything he knows about me if he hasn't already," said Bob.

"I know all about your trouble in the bunk house. This is something different," said Joe. "Better tell me the whole thing."

"No, I'm not going to tell you anything," the Maverick's voice was raising, "I'm not going to tell you anything. I'll get out before I'll be ridden by a foreman. I'm old enough to do as I please." The Maverick's voice broke in a sob, and his blue eyes filled with water.

"Bobby! Do you know what you are saying? Do you realize?" Oh, how he wished that this was only a dream.

"I've been thinking about this for some time. I knew you would be angry at me if you found this out. Don't think I'm sorry. I'm not." The Maverick was determined to stand his own ground.

Joe recoiled as tho he had been struck.

"There's no use staying here. I can see that," the Maverick went on. He strode to the door. Joe reached there at the same time. "You'd better cool down a little son. If you go up to the house like this Mom will know everything. You can pick up and go if you want to. That is all right with me, but please don't go back to the house and break Mom all up."

They walked back to the buckboard.

"Now, no one need know about this, except the three of us. I haven't the least idea why you did this thing. Yet, if you feel this way about it, the best thing for you to

do is to go—and stay," Joe's voice trembled. "I'll not force you to tell anything. If you have your mind made up, go up and pack. Tell Mom you're going to the city for a few days. I'll get the team ready and take you to the train. Now remember, not a word about this to anyone."

The Maverick walked slowly to the house. Mom was in the kitchen so he went in the front way up the stairs to his room. Swiftly he dragged out boxes and drawers, sorting the things he wished to take. He changed his clothes and threw himself across the bed.

Joe came into the kitchen, kissed his wife and took off his coat.

"How was the critter, Joe?" Mom asked.

"Guess she'll come thru all right," Joe said.

"Joe, why did you take Rodge with you this morning instead of Bobby?"

"Well, Mom, I had my own reasons for taking the foreman."

"Where is Bobby, Joe?" Mom was wondering. Everything was not right.

"Upstairs changing his clothes," he told her.

"What for?"

"He's going to the city for a spell. It was going to be hard to tell her."

"Joe MacDonald, what are you talking about?" Mom was surprised.

"That's what he just told me down at the barn. I'm taking him in to town this afternoon," said Joe trying to be casual.

She stared at Joe. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing."

"You must know as much about this as I do. Bobby just told me out at the barn."

Mom walked to the stairs.

"Bobby?" There was no answer. Mom climbed the stairs and entered the room.

"Bobby, you're not going to leave us, are you?" Her voice quivered, the hands resting on the Maverick's shoulders shook.

"Yes, Mom, I've simply got to go back to the city."

"But, Bobby. What'll we do here at the ranch without you?"

"Don't do that, Mom: I've got to go."

That card from the city flashed thru her mind. Again she saw those lines: "How I wish you were here."

Slowly Mom's eyes opened wide with terror. The hands on the young shoulders loosened. With a sob in her throat she returned to the kitchen.

Joe slid his arm around her and pulled her closed. "Mom, it's hell, but directions say take it even tho it's bitter."

Mom cried on Joe's shoulder. She had found out all about it.

Joe's usually ruddy color faded.

"Yes, Joe, the lad is in love." Remember the card that came last night? I understand now. He is going to the city to be near Ida. I am sure he won't be gone long."

Joe dropped into a chair by the side of the stove. "Thank God," he said under his breath. "She doesn't know."

Bright lights glistened from the end of lamp posts that lined the street sides as the Maverick left the station. The same lights he had left some months before. He knew he must find work. But that could wait until tomorrow.

But the next day did not find him at work. He had gone from one place to another, but to no avail. A week went by. He was homesick and beaten—but he could not turn back.

At last he found work driving a team draying about the city. He thrilled at the feel of the powerful horses—the rush of traffic. The work was hard, trundling boxes and bales, but it gave him an outlet for his pent-up energies. All day long he and his helper worked like Trojans to complete the work that never seemed to end.

The Maverick was learning to forget the things that had been weighing him down these past weeks. Youth soon heals a wound, no matter how deep. Only, the deeper the wound the larger the scar.

Boxes and bales of merchandise were trundled into the rear of stores—down long slides thru door openings on the sidewalk, boxes and bales were thrown, to be swallowed up below.

People passed, some to stop and stare, others to hurry on, their head held high. The Maverick liked to watch them go scurrying up and down as he worked.

An extra large box resisted his efforts to force it down the opening. There was plenty of room, but in sliding from the truck, it had become turned. This had caused it to jam in the opening. Descending to the side of the box, he tugged, but the box was tightly wedged there. Grasping it with both hands on the corner, the Maverick heaved with all his might. With a ripping sound, the board gave way. This caused him to go hurtling backwards several steps to crash rudely into someone. He turned to apologize. There, with hands outstretched, stood Ida Peterson!

Around Our House

REMOVING FRUIT STAINS

Fruits may be appetizing and colorful, but they often result in spots and stains on clothing.

Most fruit stains, if treated while fresh, can be removed if boiling water is held above the stains and poured thru them, says the New York State college of home economics. Soap usually sets a stain and should not be used. If the stain is dry, old, or has been laundered, it may be bleached with javelle water, or potassium permanganate and oxalic acid, provided the fabric is cotton or linen. These bleaches will injure silk or woolen fabrics and remove color.

Javelle water may be used full strength and applied with a medicine dropper. For the potassium permanganate solution, allow one teaspoon of the crystals to one quart of water. If a few drops of sulphuric acid is added, it is more effective. The potassium permanganate should not be used alone, as it leaves a brown stain on the fabric. It should be followed by oxalic acid for cotton, linen and silk, or peroxide for wool, and the fabric should be rinsed after each application. Both the potassium permanganate and oxalic acid are poisonous, so the bottles should be marked POISON and placed out of the children's reach.

White linen or cotton clothes with fruit stains may be boiled in heavy suds to which peroxide has been added. Use one tablespoon of peroxide to one gallon of pure soap suds. The suds should be brought to a boil before the peroxide is added, then the stained material may be put in and boiled ten or fifteen minutes. If the fruit stains are on silk, wool, or any colored fabric, spread the garment over a bowl filled with hot steaming water to which a few drops of ammonia have been added. Then apply peroxide at five minute intervals. Try a sample first.

COLLEGE PLANS FAIR EXHIBITS

Dairy, Plant Breeding, Horticulture and Publications Included.

At least eight departments of the state college of agriculture will be represented at the New York State fair this year. Exhibits are planned by the departments of plant breeding, dairy, agronomy, ornamental horticulture, entomology, plant pathology, poultry and the office of publication.

The plant breeding display will be built largely around the new soybean variety Cayuga and the work on corn conducted by the agricultural experiment station at Cornell. Also to be shown are several varieties of wheat, oats, and barley which are recommended for New York conditions. Special help will be given farmers who plan to seed wheat this fall.

Part of the dairy exhibit consists of types of cheeses that may be made on the farm. Its purpose is to show how to use surplus milk on the farm, thus converting it into food without the expense of transportation. Other dairy products included in the dairy display are butter and buttermilk. The correct operation of the cream separator will be emphasized, and a special part of the exhibit displays the manufacture of the so-called home dairy spread which is made from rich cream and is intended to replace butter.

The department of ornamental horticulture plans to display a model farm home grounds design. Not a large and elaborate one, they say, but one of typical size. The exhibit shows a one and one-half story house of New England colonial design, a dairy barn and silos, shed, milk house and poultry house. Landscape plantings and lawns will be arranged.

The office of publication is planning an exhibit of the publications and services of the college of agriculture. It intends to serve, also, as a source of information to state fair visitors.

Agronomy features soil erosion for its exhibit, and the department of entomology gives attention to household insects. The poultry department emphasizes pedigree work in its display, and plant pathology and entomology sponsor exhibits on the Dutch elm disease and the alfalfa snout beetle, both of which are timely at the present time.

Home Relief Costs Drop Farther

Since spring, monthly outlays for home relief administered by towns have shown decline. Payments for July, as shown by the report to the TERA from Welfare Commissioner Howe's office, detail a saving of \$381.42 over the amount necessary for June.

The total reported for July was \$3,185.28, against \$3,566.79 for the month before. But 186 families were aided, compared with 216 in June, and the individuals assisted dropped from 1,114 to 1,032. Individuals receiving both home and work relief numbered 214. There were 47 applications for help during the month.

The division of aid rendered in money was as follows: Food, \$1,875.41; shelter, \$499; light, 96c; fuel, \$56.61; clothing, \$53.67; household necessities, \$9.67; medicine \$542.82; seed, \$1.25; moving furniture, \$11.

Of the 700 species of trees in the United States and Canada, only about ten per cent are put to important economic use at present.

Our Three Ring Circus — by A. B. Chapin

