

Trabing

Mostly about People

By Wally Trabing



The Three Stooges

San Carlos — Remember the Three Stooges?

"Wham!, konk!, boooooingggg!, pop! Woo woo woo wo!!!" There, does that help?

When I was a U.S. Keddy, flickers would not be complete without these three masochists knocking each other about in a short feature.

They sort of took the place of hitting my brother.

Well, yesterday I found myself grown up and sitting in their dressing room at the San Carlos Circle Star theater where they will be appearing through next Sunday, and Moe was saying that his "publication age was 60."

Without his tough bowl haircut and aggressive grimace, Moe Howard is a quiet, pleasant man, much shorter than I imagined him (5' 3").

Larry, the wild-haired, hawk-face partner, ("publication age 55"), sat signing autographs for the kids.

Joe, the rotund, human punching bag ("publication weight, 210"—my guess 260), mauled a huge cigar and signed more autographs. He joined the trio in 1958 after the original Joe, Moe's brother, died of a stroke.

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These men, appearing as a second attraction to the ballet-play, "Sleeping Beauty" (shows 10 a.m., Sunday 2 p.m.—strictly for kids), are among the oldest faces in show business.

They've made 211 film comedies. Their 25-year contract with Columbia pictures is the longest on record for that company.

Moe said that contract expired in 1958. "And on the eve of that date we were all set to retire," chimed in Larry. Then the re-runs started and the Stooges were in business again.

Their latest venture will be a Stooges cartoon strip which will start in September.

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To me, the Stooges were the kings of slapstick comedy, but

Moe doesn't like the word.

"Slapstick originated in the circus when those clowns used two barrel staves with an explosive torpedo between them. It exploded when they hit another clown's behind and he fell down.

"Our comedy is farce. It is really more ridiculous than comedy.

"We have no message. People don't have to think to enjoy us. If you cut us off at the chin we could do our act and the audience would never miss the rest of us," said Moe.

In the drama circle, farce is a neighbor of tragedy, he says. Their trademark has been the konk on the head, the two fingers in the eyes, and elbow in the belly and the heavy tweak of the nose, with Moe doing the honors.

In the movies of yore, this was fine, but with TV piping it into the living room, the Stooges have run into criticism.

"The little tots see this eye-poking routine of ours and run over to where the old man is lying on the couch and, Whambo!"

"In our last five films we have eliminated this eye-poking and in our personal appearances we advise the kids after the show never to repeat their tricks."

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Moe started in show business on a showboat on the Mississippi before the '20s. He joined the late Ted Healy's vaudeville act in 1922.

Originally the act was called Ted Healy and His Stooges and it became one of vaudeville's highest-priced acts. Their screen debut in Hollywood was "Soup to Nuts" in 1930, written by Rube Goldberg. Eventually they went on their own and fame awaited them with Columbia.

Moe said the trio gets along fine because individually, they seldom see each other socially.

Moe has been married 40 years and is a grandfather. Grandfather Larry Fine has been with the same wife 39 years.

Strangely enough Moe's parents were not in show business and neither are any of his offspring.

Moe says he is disdainful of celebrities who duck autograph seekers or ignore their fans.

Larry wants to stamp out people who say: "Long time no see."

As an avocation Moe makes hook rugs.

As a vocation he hits Larry and Joe.

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