



LOOKING CONFIDENT IN HIS LINEN BATTLE JACKET, HOLLYWOOD BARBER HARRY DRUCKER SUMMONS THE HELP TO TAKE CARE OF ONE OF HIS LOYALIST CUSTOMERS

## BARBERSHOP WAR

Battle between haircutting rivals splits Hollywood into armed camps

Neither doctor nor lawyer, nor bookie ever had a closer, more intimate relationship with his client than the Hollywood barber. Especially in Harry Drucker's shop on North Beverly Drive. Every actor, producer or agent who mattered, or aspired to, went to Drucker's to get trimmed and manicured and filled in on local gossip. It was Drucker's boast that "I am the man who invented the 'invisible haircut'—that doesn't look like you just had a haircut." In fact some of his customers looked

longer-haired coming out of his shop than going in.

But recently five of Drucker's best barbers seceded and set up a few doors away as the "Comb & Shears," taking along three manicurists, two shine boys and the boss's customer list, complete with private phone numbers. By last week the resulting war had divided Hollywood as nothing has since the case of the "unfriendly 10" screenwriters. On the next three pages an intrepid LIFE reporter-photographer team presents a report from the front.

LOOKING GRIMLY DETERMINED IN A MORE SEVERE UNIFORM, REBEL BARBER HARRY GELBART CALLS A MANICURIST TO HOLD HAND OF A SECESSIONIST CUSTOMER





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Barbershop War CONTINUED

## STICK WITH DRUCKER!



**RICHARD CONTE** tells Drucker, "You understand the actor's problem. My hair just can't be short on one day's shooting, long the next."



**BUDDY BAER**, brother of Maxie, gets shampoo from Veteran Phil Cali. To Baer and other loyalists Drucker's is a club for gossiping, making deals.



**PHIL SILVERS** listens to a Drucker joke. Some comedians reportedly get more of their material from Drucker than from their own writers.



**CARL LAEMMLE JR.** has thrown his weight (130 lb.) behind Drucker, says, "I've come here for 11 years and hope to continue for 111 years more."



**CHARLES CORRELL**, "Andy" of "Amos 'n' Andy," says Drucker "runs the most efficient barbershop I know of. Besides he's a great guy."



**DANNY KAYE** has also cast his lot with the loyalist forces. "Even if all of the barbers left Harry Drucker," he says, "I'd keep coming to his shop."



## SWITCH TO GELBART!



**LOUIS JOURDAN**, actor who has switched to Rebel Gelbart's shop because Barber Harry Sturner did, says, "My God, this situation is amazing!"



**ABE BURROWS** muses while Gelbart polishes his bald pate: "I'm the one guy the barber can cut his hair and go to lunch at the same time."



**ROBERT YOUNG** says to Barber Gelbart, "I've always followed the middle of the road in politics and I go where I can get the best haircut."



**ROBERT HUTTON**, actor, prefers Gelbart's jokes as well as his haircuts: "Been with Harry for years. A fine barber, a good storyteller."



**GREGORY PECK** also says, "I like Gel's jokes." Other movie people who have gone over to the rebels: John Hodiak, George Brent, Zachary Scott.



**MICKY COHEN**, in hospital after recent shooting, was refused shave by Drucker. "Gel" went to bedside, did the job, now has Mickey's trade.

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## Barbershop War CONTINUED

### THE OUTLOOK FOR PEACE: GLOOMY

Hollywood's barbershop rebellion began, appropriately enough, on the Fourth of July weekend. A loyal customer had tipped off Harry Drucker that an insurrection was brewing among his 10-man staff. It seemed incredible—but a new six-chair shop was, in fact, being prepared nine doors south on North Beverly Drive. Drucker approached each of his men to ask if they were seceding but was met with denials. He next called a meeting at which he said, "Gentlemen, when this attention was brought to me, I couldn't believe it. . . I have created here a fine service where the customers look on you as professional beings. You are making more money than if you went into business for yourself." But again, he says, he got only a "Who, us?" from his barbers. But several refused to sign contracts binding them to him for a year. Then Drucker demanded and got loyalty oaths of his manicurists. One, he says bitterly, even came up and kissed his cheek, saying, "I was 10 years loyal to you—I'll be another 10 years loyal." Says Drucker, "Being that skepticism was injected into me, I felt it was the kiss of Judas." Sure enough the manicurist took her tools a few days later and went over to the new Comb & Shears shop (a name suggested, perhaps, by the success of Hollywood's Cock'n Bull restaurant), where she began buffing male nails under the banner of Harry Gelbart. Presently Gelbart, who had been Drucker's head barber, and four other secessionists took an ad in *The Hollywood Reporter*. By that night the battle of the barbers was no longer a private feud—as Gelbart says, "It belonged to the people." It swept into Dave Chasen's and Mike Romanoff's restaurants and across the putting greens of the Hillcrest Country Club. At least 100 Drucker customers telegraphed assurances of support. Jules Stein, head of the huge Music Corporation of America talent agency, cabled from France: "HAVE FAITH. PEOPLE OF PRINCIPLE WILL REMAIN WITH YOU." Mrs. Abe Lastvogel, wife of the local head of William Morris Agency, began telephoning Drucker customers to stand firm. But the insurgents took a good many with them. At least one got into a little misunderstanding at home. For three weeks in a row he told his wife he was going to the barber—and then wasn't at Drucker's when she called. By the time she learned that he had switched to the Comb & Shears, she was ready to believe that there was another woman.

Today the war of the barbers has littered movieland with cooled or broken friendships. Producer Mervyn Le Roy told an actor's agent in mock severity, "When you go back to Drucker's, then you can bring in your client." David Selznick could not bear to part with his barber when the man left Drucker, but hated to be seen walking into the Comb & Shears when most of his fellow producers were loyalists. He solved it by having the barber come to his home. Actor Sheldon Leonard gets his basic haircut at the Comb & Shears, then goes to Drucker for a final trim. The rebels, meanwhile, say they are simply exercising their rights under the free enterprise system. In answer to Harry Drucker's plea that his clientele consider his loyal barbers ("They all got families with children"), Insurgent Gelbart screams, "He says his barbers got kids. What does he think we got—crocodiles?" —TED STRAUSS



**COMB & SHEARS FORCES**, headed by Gelbart (right), claim they have captured 40% of Drucker's clientele. Drucker says his losses are about 15%.

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