

CARL & JERRY

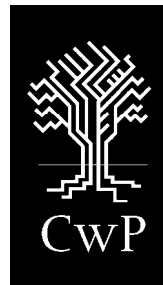


By John T. Frye W9EGV

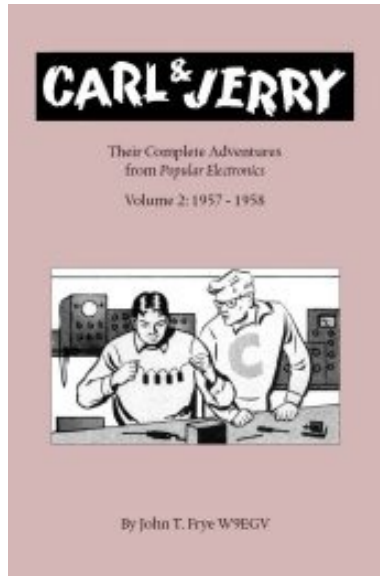
“Electronic Cops and Robbers”

from the February, 1957

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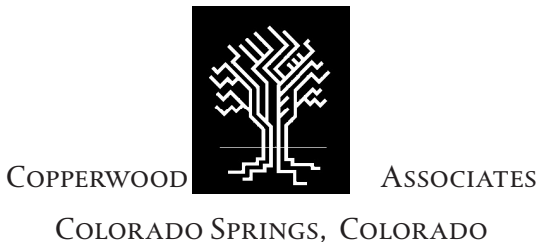
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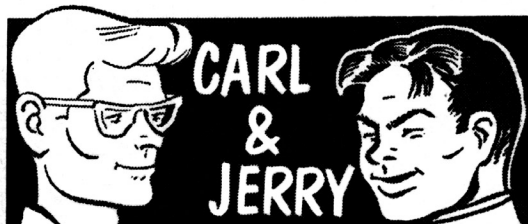
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ELECTRONIC COPS AND ROBBERS



February 1957

Carl and Jerry had a very distinguished visitor in their basement laboratory. It was none other than Chief of Police Morton. Carl and Jerry sat stiffly on the leather couch, frantically reviewing their acts of the immediate past in an effort to guess which particular misdeed might interest the chief officially. Chief Morton, on the other hand, seemed to be having difficulty in stating the reason for his visit.

“All right; relax, you two,” he finally said gruffly. “You’ve done nothing wrong—or at least we’ve not caught you at it. I’m here on the off chance you may be able to help us with a problem. Here is the dope: For the past few weeks we’ve been having a series of car thefts in this town that point to the operation of an organized gang. Only new, flashy, sports-type cars are taken. So far, not a single stolen car has been recovered. We’re pretty certain the cars are being repainted and worked over somewhere near here and then transported a long way off for sale.”

“Why don’t you ‘plant’ a car and follow it when it is stolen?” Carl asked.

Chief Morton gave him a searing look. “You know, Son, that is a very clever idea! After watching TV whodunits, I can’t imagine how we on the force ever managed to think of it too, but we did. There’s only one joker: it is practically impossible to ‘tail’ a good driver who is thoroughly familiar with the streets and alleys under the crowded traffic conditions that exist in this town. All we did when we tried that was to lose a fine new sports car, and that is a little too much like using caviar to bait rat traps to suit the Police Commissioner.

“Some of the boys down at the station suggested you two might be able to dream up a way we could trace the car without actually having to keep it in sight. Maybe I’m wasting my time, but—”

“Wait a minute,” Jerry interrupted. “This shouldn’t be too hard. It will be just like the ‘hidden transmitter hunt’ our radio club puts on. All we have to do is conceal a continuously operating transmitter in the ‘bait’ car. We’ll get ‘fixes’ by installing direction-finding equipment in a couple of other cars that have two-way communication with each other. By plotting the ‘fixes’ furnished by these two stations on a map, we should know exactly where the stolen car is all the time.”

“Maybe you’ve got something there,” the chief said slowly. “We could use a regular squad car to determine what direction the stolen car was taking and relay this information to a fast panel truck job we have. There is enough room in the back of the truck to set up a receiving station and have a large map of the area spread out on a plotting table. While it looks like an ordinary truck, this baby will hit up to about a hundred miles an hour. Now, where can we hide the transmitter?”

“Almost anywhere,” Jerry said casually. “It won’t be larger than a grapefruit, including batteries. With transistors and printed circuits, you can put a lot of transmitter in a mighty small space. If you like, we can put it inside the spare tire.”

“That will be fine,” the chief agreed. “This sports job we’ll be using for bait has an ornamental antenna mounted on the side of the rear deck, but this time it will be more than ornamental. We’ll connect it to the transmitter inside the spare tire. How soon do you boys think you can have all this equipment ready?”

“By tomorrow night,” Jerry said promptly, “Tomorrow is Saturday; so we don’t have to go to school. We have receivers, and Carl and I will build the transmitter tonight. Tomorrow we can install it in the bait car and also get our receivers set up in the squad car and panel truck. We can run some checks in the afternoon, and then tomorrow night we’ll see if the fish bite.”

“Hey! You two really work fast!” the chief said admiringly. “I didn’t imagine you could be ready for a couple of weeks.”

“We do so much experimenting that we’ve almost always got equipment lying around that can be converted to special uses in a short time,” Carl explained.



“Okay then; I’ll get out of here and let you boys get started,” the chief said as he picked up his cap. “Give me a call when you’re ready tomorrow morning, and I’ll have a truck come over and take you and your equipment to the garage so the mechanics can install it for you.”

The Late-Late Show on TV was nearly over by the time Carl

and Jerry got to bed that night, but they were up bright and early, eager to get on with this new game of *Electronic Cops and Robbers*. The chief was as good as his word. The truck took the boys and their equipment to the police garage, where two mechanics were put at their disposal, and in a couple of hours everything was installed in the sleek sports car, the squad car, and the panel truck.

Right after dinner they gave the equipment a test. A plainclothes detective took the sports car out and tried to lose it. Carl rode in the back seat of the squad car and operated his receiver and the loop antenna that was mounted on a slender rod running right through the roof of the car. One policeman drove the squad car while another relayed the information Carl gave him over the two-way radio. Two other policemen in “plain clothes” performed similar functions in the panel truck. Back in the body of the truck, a third policeman plotted bearings furnished him on a large map. Jerry’s direction-finding equipment was on a table bolted to the floor, and his loop

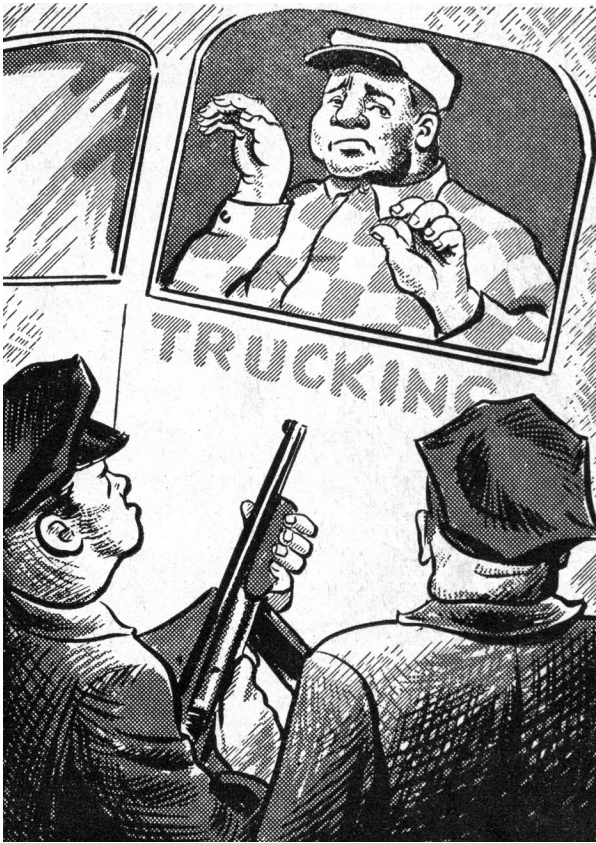
antenna on the roof was concealed inside an inverted cardboard carton, with other empty cartons piled about it in a luggage-carrier. This was done so that the truck could pass in sight of the bait car, if necessary, without arousing the thief's suspicion.

The equipment worked to perfection. No matter how fast the detective drove or how he doubled back and forth, the two direction-finding cars knew where he was all the time. It was soon discovered that the most accurate spotting could be done if the two direction-finding cars maneuvered so that the bait car was kept roughly at the apex of an isosceles right triangle. When all three cars returned to the garage and compared notes, it was found that the route traced on the map agreed in every detail with that described by the detective.

Carl and Jerry returned home, bolted their suppers in record time, and then returned to the police garage. As soon as they arrived, Chief Morton ordered the bait car parked on a dark side street where it could be watched by a concealed policeman equipped with a hand transmitter. If and when it was stolen, this man was to flash the word to the squad car parked on a side street and the panel truck at the garage.

Contrary to all considerations for the niceties of suspense, the car had hardly been parked when the policeman with the hand transmitter reported someone fooling around it. A few seconds later he reported the guy wasn't fooling: The car was being driven away. The chief got into the back of the panel truck with Jerry and the fix-plotter, and the truck roared out of the garage. No attempt was made to close in on the car as it drove aimlessly about the town. Both direction-finding cars tried to keep at least three or four blocks away from it at all times. Finally the 'fixes' relayed back and forth showed the car was standing still at a deserted spot down in the factory district. Apparently the thief was satisfied that he had shaken off any possible pursuit and was ready to be picked up by the gang. The two police cars now parked in positions well removed from the car.

Once again, though, they did not have long to wait. The directional antennas indicated the car was moving again. This time it headed for the country. The squad car drove along a road roughly parallel to the highway on which the stolen car was moving, while the panel truck stayed a half-mile or so behind it.



It was confusing trying to keep the exact position of all three cars plotted at the same time, and suddenly it was found that both the squad car and the panel truck were giving each other nearly the same bearings for the stolen car. Apparently the stolen car had pulled off the highway and the panel truck had gone beyond it. By the time this was clear, the panel truck was

a half-mile from the point where it was first noticed. Suddenly word came from the squad car that the stolen car was apparently moving again. The direction indicated by the loop on top of the panel truck still pointed straight back along the highway, but Jerry noticed the signal strength was increasing rapidly. He reported this to Chief Morton.

"Drive along slowly and let that guy overtake us" the chief ordered as he peeped cautiously out the small rear glass. "I'd like to get a look at him."

Almost as he finished speaking the signal built up to a very high level and then fell off. The loop had to be turned around, showing that the signal source had passed them; yet the only vehicle in sight was a huge tractor-trailer.

"That thing must have flipped," Chief Morton grunted. "No one could make a sports car look like that truck—at least not in two or

three minutes—unless—tell the boys in the squad car to join us!” he snapped. “We’re going to stop that truck!”

In a few minutes the squad car caught up with them, swung around in front of the truck and waved to the driver to pull off the road. Since the waving was done with the barrel of a submachine gun, the order was promptly obeyed. As soon as the huge truck was stopped, Chief Morton began tugging at the fastening of the rear doors; and when he threw them open an astonishing sight met the bulging eyes of the policemen and the two boys.

Sitting inside the truck was the sports car; but while the rest of the body was still the original cream color, the hood was streaked with brilliant red. Standing in front of the car was a man with a paint gun still in his hand. Two other men stood along a bench mounted to one side of the truck. The inside of the huge trailer was fitted out as a complete body shop, with paint sprayers, grinders, and row after row of cans of paint, enamel, and lacquer. There was a huge exhaust fan to take out the fumes, and a power-operated ramp folded into the floor.

This ramp had undoubtedly been down waiting for the sports car in a secluded spot just off the highway. In a matter of seconds the small car had driven into the trailer, the ramp had been lifted, and the doors closed. The truck pulled back on the highway and went on its way while the men in the trailer started their job of completely changing the appearance of the stolen car. When the camouflage job was done, the car could be returned to the highway without fear that even its owner would recognize it. And there was no fixed garage to arouse suspicion. The whole operation could be quickly changed from one town to another.

In response to a radio call, the “paddy wagon” came to collect the members of the gang. Carl and Jerry rode back to town in the panel truck with Chief Morton.

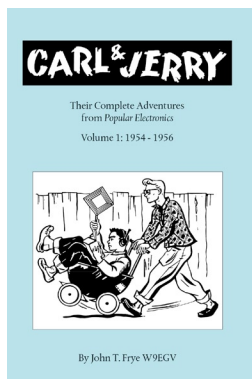
“I certainly want to thank you boys for the fine job you did,” the chief said. “Without your help, there is no telling how long it might have taken us to catch up with those crooks. I just wish there was a reward or something for catching them, but there isn’t.”

“Golly, Ned, we don’t want any reward,” Carl said. “It benefits all of us to put jokers like those behind bars. I can still see the look on the face of the fellow holding the paint gun when you threw open the doors. You might say we caught him red-handed!”

Jerry, who hated puns, groaned aloud.

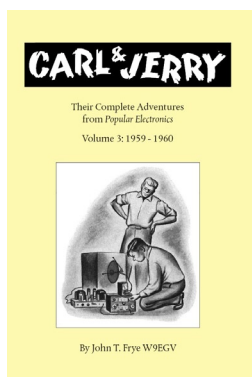
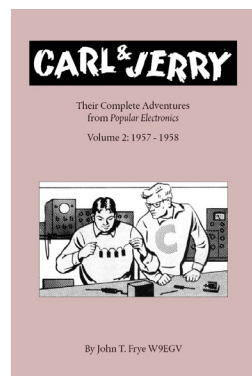
“Yes,” Chief Morton said with a twinkle in his eye, “considering the fact that we ran them down by taking bearings on them, you might say that we really had them in a ‘fix.’”

CARL & JERRY BOOKS FROM COPPERWOOD PRESS



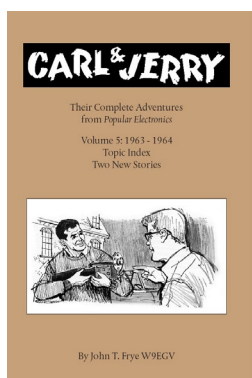
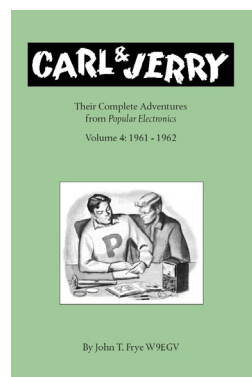
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