

1941 Veronica Lake Portrait

Photographer – Bob Landry (Life Magazine)

Negative

A 4 x 5 “Interneg” for this print was purchased from an estate sale through an Ebay vender. An Internege is a contact print of the original negative and was the accepted way to print high quality color photographs for many years. The Kodak notch code on the top left was used for Kodachrome Type B (tungsten) manufactured from 1939 to 1949 (Fig 1). The top right notch code corresponds to Kadok Vericolor Internegative Film. The Internegative for this photograph possessed incredible resolution and clarity maintaining true to life skin texture and ultra-fine detail in the hair and eyes.

The Photographer

While the photographer of this print may never be definitively identified there are significant clues available to unveil who actually released the shutter. Life Magazine published an article on Veronica Lake in its November 24th, 1941 edition (Fig 2). An uncropped version is shown in Fig 3. The dress, makeup, and room décor in the Life spread are identical to those used for this print. The credit for the Life Magazine photo of Veronica Lake went to Bob Landry (Fig 4). Kodachrome Type B film would have also been the preferred medium for a magazine layout in 1941.

Bob Landry (1913-1960) was on a cruiser in the Pacific when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and from then on Landry was in one important place after another during that long war. Like Capa, he went in with the first wave at D-Day, but all of Landry’s film was lost, and his shoes to boot. Despite braving combat scenes, it was a peacetime picture he took before all that, in the summer of 1941, that he will be remembered for. There are countless versions of the story, but regardless of where it was shot or where that negligee came from, what it boils down to is that photo he took of Rita Hayworth- one of the sexiest, most beguiling pieces of film of all time, one that didn’t need to be on the cover to win the hearts and minds of American soldiers at home and abroad. One civilian above all others was amply impressed; Orson Welles eyed Rita in LIFE and resolved to marry the starlet.

The Print

The internegative was digitized using an advanced, high-resolution drum scanner. Dust marks were painstakingly removed from the digital negative in CC Photoshop. Color and lighting were brought back to their original luster. The blue curtain was added to highlight the eyes and to cover over a small portion of the original background that distracted from the primary image. Lastly, a few loose hairs were removed from the background and a very small segment of eyebrow (that had been pushed down) was pushed back in place. A small blemish was removed from Veronica but no other changes were made to skin texture. The blemish can be seen in the Fig 3 but not in the touched up version as seen in Life providing more evidence that Tom Landry took the photograph. This print is possibly the best color photograph of Veronica Lake in existence!

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Figure 1



Figure 3



VERONICA LAKE'S HAIR

IT IS A CINEMA PROPERTY OF WORLD INFLUENCE

The 49th minute of the movie *I Wanted Wings* is already marked as one of the historic moments of the cinema. It was the moment when an unknown young actress named Veronica Lake walked into camera range and waggled a head of long blonde hair at a suddenly enchanted public. Not since the late Jean Harlow launched the platinum-blond fad in 1930 had the movies produced such a trichological sensation. Veronica Lake's hair has been acclaimed by men, copied by girls, cursed by their mothers and viewed with alarm by moralists. It is called the "strip-tease style," the "sheep-dog style" and the "bad-girl style" (though few except nice girls wear it), but to most moviegoers it is simply "the Veronica Lake style."

Miss Lake thus finds herself, seven months later, the owner and custodian of a personal property comparable in value, fame and world influence to Deanna Durbin's voice, Fred Astaire's feet or Marlene Dietrich's legs.

FACTS AND FIGURES

In a cold, scientific light, Miss Lake has some 150,000 hairs on her head, each measuring about .0024 inches in cross-section. The hair varies in length from 17 inches in front to 24 inches in back and falls about 8 inches below shoulders. For several inches it falls straight from the scalp and then begins to wave gently.

All her life Miss Lake has worn her hair long, except for one brief period in grade school when she had it cut in a windblown bob. Before that, as a little girl, she let it fall in curls almost down to her waist and since the bob era she has always had it more than shoulder length. "If I had my way," she says now, "I'd let it grow until I tripped over it." Since she stands only 5 ft. 11½ in. tall and her hair grows an inch a month, that would, as a matter of fact, take only a little more than three years.

CARE AND TRAINING

Miss Lake's head of hair is, in most respects, a delight to its possessor. It waves naturally. It practically never snarls. It has just enough natural oil to keep it bright without ointments. And it does not need to be done up in curlers at night.

It takes a lot of time, though. Because of her hair, Miss Lake must get up even earlier than other movie actresses. On a working day she rises at 6 a.m., and gets to the studio about 6:30. To wash, set and dry her hair takes an hour and 45 minutes. It is washed twice in Nulava shampoo, once in Maro oil and then, because of Hollywood's hard water, rinsed in vinegar. She uses no lotions, brilliants or setting ointments. The only fixing the hairdresser does is to put one wave, just above the point where the natural waves begin. This is done by flipping the hair once around a finger and then inserting a bobby pin to hold it.

In the evening Miss Lake gives her hair a good brushing at home and either braids it or puts it in a net. She never uses curlers, partly because she considers them bad for the hair and partly because she feels sorry for any man whose wife does her hair up at night.

PERILS AND PROBLEMS

The owner of such a head of hair inevitably faces certain problems. One is the problem of boys on street corners who hoot rudely at it. For this reason Miss Lake finds it convenient to ride in a closed car when her hair is down and to have it up when she is walking.

Much more serious is its natural tendency to get caught in things. By dint of constant watchfulness, Miss Lake manages to keep it from being caught in cardboards, elevators and electric fans, but it has a bad habit of snagging on men's buttons. If Miss Lake were in fact the kind of girl she portrays on the screen, this might lead to all kinds of fascinating complications, but as it is, the button interludes are merely a bother. It also catches frequently on bracelets and necklaces and once got so badly snarled on her wrist watch that it broke the winding stem.

When she goes anywhere except to the studio Miss Lake always wears a net or a turban or braids her hair. This prevents it from falling into her food at dinner and keeps her from having to fuss with it constantly. If she does have to fix it while dining in a restaurant, she retires to the ladies' room. "I get very disgusted," she says, "when I see other women combing their hair into their soup."

The only major accident that has ever befallen Miss Lake's hair occurred some years ago when she bent down too close to an oven she was lighting and the flames leaped up, singeing off her eyebrows and forehead. Nowadays she keeps away from stoves but her hair catches fire fairly often when she is smoking. This, though a constant concern, is not a serious peril. When it happens the hair of the screen's most inflammable blonde merely sizzles a little and goes out.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

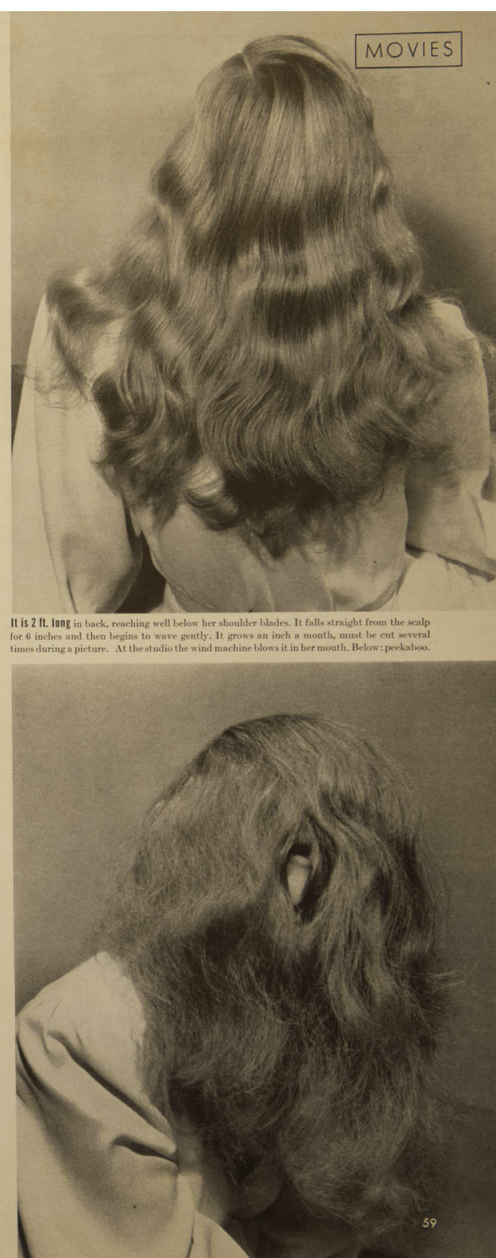


Figure 2

CONTENTS

THE WEEK'S EVENTS

Portland, Me., Base for Atlantic Fleet, is a City Close to War 31
 LIFE on the Newsfronts of the World 36
 Long Distance Wedding Unites Nazi Soldier at Front with Faraway Bride 37
 U. S. Army and Navy Have World's Biggest Planes 38
 North Carolina Co-eds Kiss Shy Boys on Sadie Hawkins Day 40
 Hitler and Mussolini Meet on Russian Front 42
 Brave Photographer Gets Close to Java Volcano 44
 Defense Specials Roll Across Country to Help Little Businessman 47

ARTICLE

Roosevelt: Devil or Demigod? by Gerald W. Johnson 75

PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Little Market Towns Make China Unconquerable 84

CLOSE-UP

Admiral King of the Atlantic, by Joseph J. Thorndike Jr.

THEATER

"Clash By Night"

MOVIES

Veronica Lake's Hair Is Cinema Property of World Influence

SPORTS

John Borican Is Greatest All-Round Track Athlete

MODERN LIVING

U. S. Is World's Best-fed Country

U. S. Women Learn to Knit

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Letters to the Editors
 Speaking of Pictures: "V for Victory" Contest
 LIFE's Reports: Invisible War in Yugoslavia
 LIFE Goes Hunting At Sun Valley
 Pictures to the Editors

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LIFE'S PICTURES

Gjon Mili, who took the repetitive and high-speed pictures of Pentathlon Champion John Borican on pages 62-64, is shown here a second after clicking his shutter as he ends a sprint in Mili's studio. Borican had to stop fast, he finished running up a mattress propped against the wall. Borican's discus made a hole in the wall. Photographer Mili took the cover picture and most of the knitting series beginning on page 84.

The following list, page by page, shows the source from which each picture in this issue was gathered. Where a single page is indebted to several sources credit is recorded picture by picture (left to right, top to bottom), and line by line (lines separated by dashes) unless otherwise specified.

- | | |
|---|--|
| COVER—GJON MILI | FRITZ GORO |
| 2—EISENSTAEDT-PIX | 62, 63—GJON MILI |
| 6—From "THE ARCTIC MARINE" | 64—WILLIAM PERLITCH—GJON MILI |
| 10, 11—W. STROSAHL, ROBERT S. TROWBRIDGE, A. JOHANNES, FERDINAND VOGEL—SAL M. ROSSELLI, THURMAN ROTAN—SOUTHEAST AIR CORPS TRAINING CENTER, NAT. FEIN, ISADORE SIMON | 66—Map by FRANK STOCKMAN & ANTHONY SODARO after DR. MERRILL K. BENNETT in GEOGRAPHICAL REVIEW—HANSEL MIETH |
| 13—LOTTE JACOBI—JOHN G. PRENDERGAST—N. FIELD | 67—HERBERT GEHR |
| 14—EUR. | 68, 69, 70—DMITRI KESSEL |
| 16—W. W. | 71—HANSEL MIETH |
| 20—BARON | 72—FRITZ GORO |
| 23—EUR. | 75—A. P., OTTO HAGEL |
| 29—GJON MILI | 76—ACME |
| 31 through 35—RALPH MORSE | 78, 81—INT. |
| 36—ACME—POPPER from MONKEMEYER—THOS. D. MCAVOY—H. & E. | 82—T. KEY. |
| 37—PK. BÖHMER (WELTBILD) | 84 through 91—CARL MYDANS |
| 38—DOUGLAS AIRCRAFT PHOTO by LAWRENCE KRONQUIST | 92 through 96—GEORGE STROCK |
| 39—THOS. D. MCAVOY | 99—P. I. |
| 40, 41—W. EUGENE SMITH from P. S. | 106—GEORGE STROCK |
| 42, 43—INT. | 108—A. P. |
| 44—© BESSEL D. VAN 'T WOUDET | 110—GJON MILI |
| 47, 48, 50—DMITRI KESSEL | 111—GJON MILI—HERBERT GEHR—HERBERT GEHR |
| 53, 54—KARGER-PIX | 112, 113—GJON MILI |
| 58, 59—BOB LANDRY | 114, 115—HERBERT GEHR |
| 60, 61—BOB LANDRY—BOB LANDRY— | 116, 117, 118, 119—ROBERT CAPA |
| | 120—T. PETER STACKPOLE (15) |
| | 122—T. GRANT WIGHT PHOTO—con. |
| | EASTERN OREGON OBSERVER |
| | 123—EISENSTAEDT-PIX |

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