

Boss debunks ex-FBI writers

THE TWO FORMER FBI agents peddling sensational tales about Paul Castellano narrowly escaped a grilling that would have exposed their flights of fiction nationally, live on the Larry King cable television show.

Hawking their book, "Boss of Bosses," in which they detail how they supposedly bugged the late don's Staten Island home, Joseph O'Brien and Andris Kurins took a turn at the microphone's on King's CNN call-in show Friday night.

What they didn't know is that their audience included plenty of hostile FBI agents, including New York FBI boss James Fox, who says there "are some major inaccuracies in their description of the break in."

Chief among them is that O'Brien and Kurins were not the agents who broke into the house and planted the listening device in Castellano's kitchen — one of the key premises of the book.

"I wanted to call and ask them about their roles in the bugging, but I missed the phone number at the beginning of the show," Fox told Gang Land yesterday.

The very thought of such a call is wonderful because it could have finally debunked the dramatic duo's account of how in a lightning strike they broke into Castellano's home and deactivated a sophisticated alarm system.

Dressed all in black and armed with a small automatic and a dart gun, the former agents describe themselves in the book as making their way to the kitchen area, dismantling a European lamp, planting a bug, putting the lamp back together and making their escape — all within 12½ minutes.

In truth, as Gang Land reported two weeks ago, the agents were nowhere near the scene, and may not even have been on Staten Island.

"It's a big lie," said one FBI supervisor of the agents' claim to have bugged Castellano's house.

"They made it up out of whole cloth," said a second high-ranking FBI agent.

The two agents — who purport to be on the trail of pulling in a million dollars from the book — resigned from the FBI under pressure last week in exchange for being able to keep their royalties, however large or small they prove to be.

King discussed that issue with the pair on his show, then took a call from a viewer who had the same question the FBI's Fox had in mind:

"Did you actually go into his house, or is that just something you wrote in the book?"

Responded O'Brien: "I understand that a reporter by the name of Jerry Capeci claims in an article that Andy and I did not break into Castellano's house and bug it. Jerry Capeci is a gossip columnist."

Now, it's not that I mind being placed in the august company of Richard Johnson and Liz Smith, but that doesn't seem like much of an answer. To his credit, King pressed O'Brien.

"You did break into the house and bug it? How'd you get in?"

O'Brien huffed, and Kurins puffed, and they both punted, saying they couldn't give away "bureau techniques," or "methods of operations."

But the book describes the technique, doesn't it? asked King.

"That's right, so people can read the book and see the whole thing," said O'Brien.

Terrific. The book's publisher, Simon and Schuster, has not responded to numerous requests for comment.

In a statement given to Gang Land by his lawyer, O'Brien said: "By and large, the book is totally true and factual. Naturally, in some part of the



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book, we had to take some literary license. The deviations we made — we had to make, we were required to make — are insignificant and don't detract from the story at all."

The key words there are "by and large," and "literary license."

★★★

THINGS HAVE gone from bad to worse for Gerald Guterman, the former real estate tycoon who was indicted on tax fraud charges on the testimony of yuppie mobster-turned-informer Michael Franzese.

Last year, Guterman was charged with buying labor peace and mob protection from Franzese when Guterman was renovating some 2,500 apartments and converting them into condos and co-ops.

Now, Raphael (Red) Celli, Guterman's former construction manager, has pleaded guilty to misdemeanor tax charges before Judge Reena Raggi and agreed to testify against Guterman.

And, according to court papers filed by assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Considine, the feds learned that Guterman filed a "significantly altered" copy of his company's 1987 tax return in a Denver bankruptcy fraud proceeding involving him and his estranged wife.

Sources said the allegedly "fraudulent" filing will now be added as a new charge carrying an additional five years in prison.

Guterman's lawyer, Gerald Shargel, declined comment.

★★★

WILLIAM (The Wild Guy) GRASSO, slain underboss of New England's Patriarca crime family, really earned his nickname.

Last week, federal informant Jack Johns testified in Hartford that once, when Johns neglected to cut Grasso in on a deal, Grasso told him, "You ever take a score again without telling me, I got a hole I'm gonna throw you in."

Johns added that Grasso promised to bury him with one arm sticking out of the ground so he could walk by and kick it every day.

Nasty.

3-story fall for toddler

An 18-month-old baby was critically injured yesterday after falling from a third-floor window of a Queens house and landing head-first on concrete pavement, police said. The boy, Islam Bin Faij, was taken to City Hospital at Elmhurst with severe head injuries.

Police were questioning the baby's father, Shaikul, 37, who said he was holding his son near an open window of his 46th St. Astoria apartment about 2:50 p.m. when the child somehow slipped out of his arms.

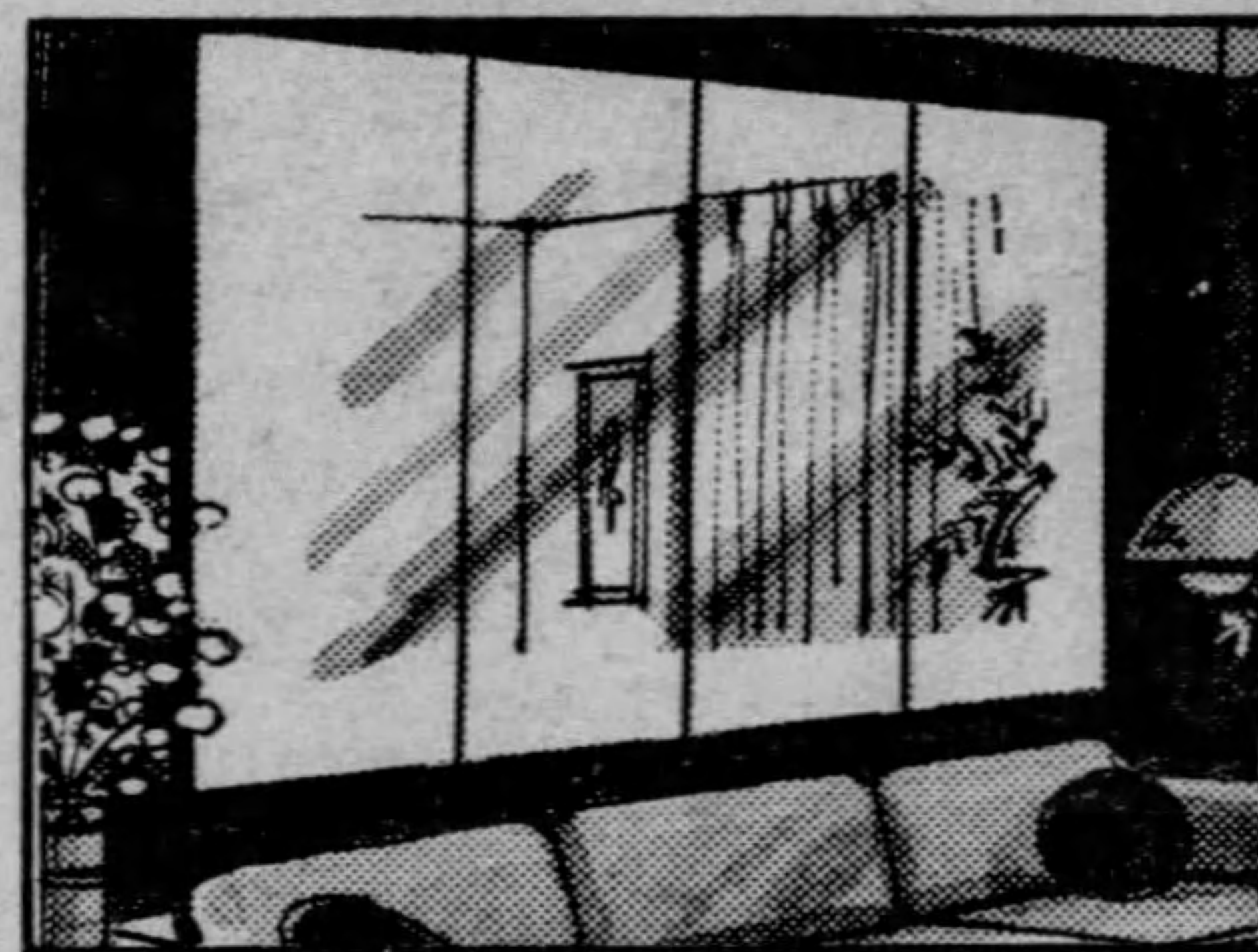
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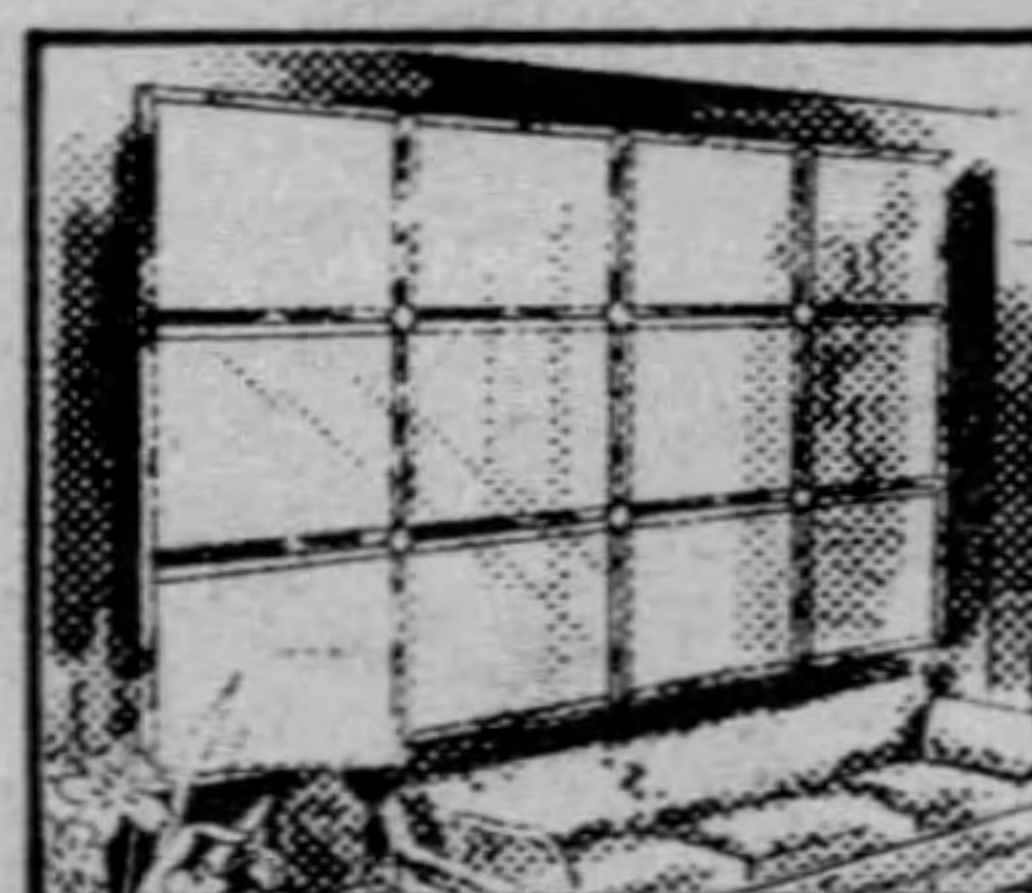
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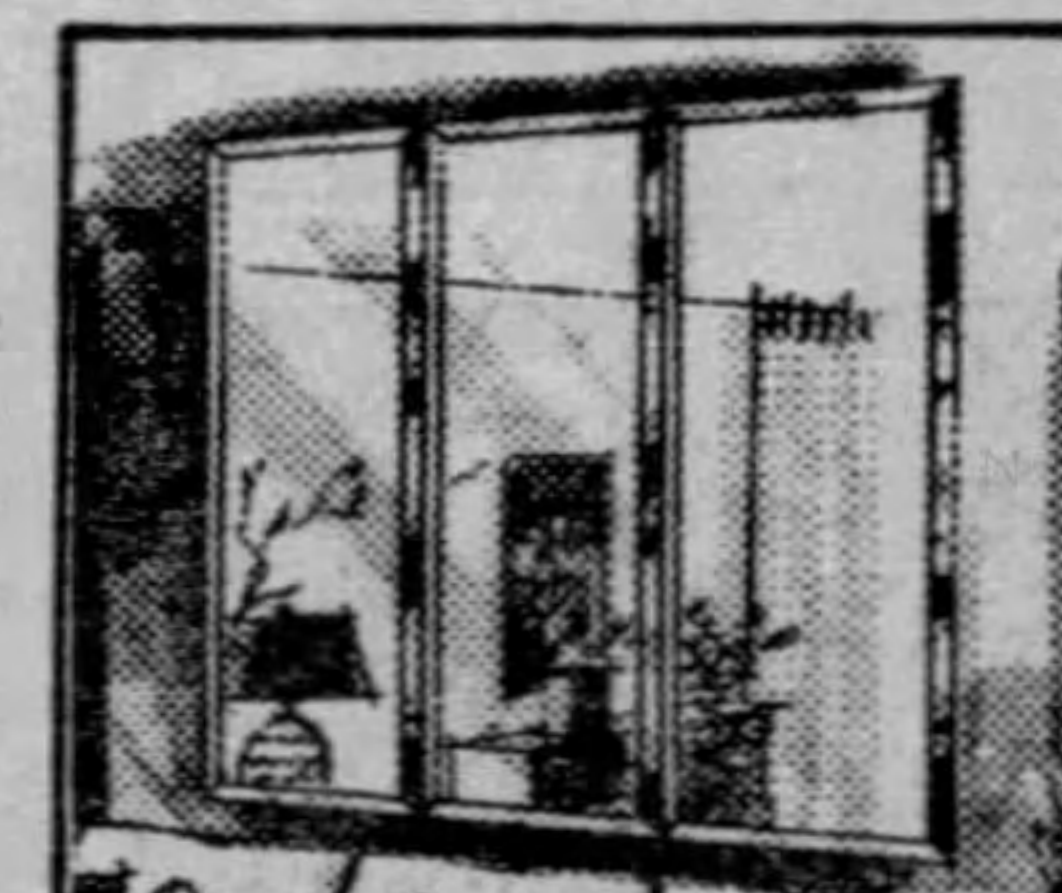
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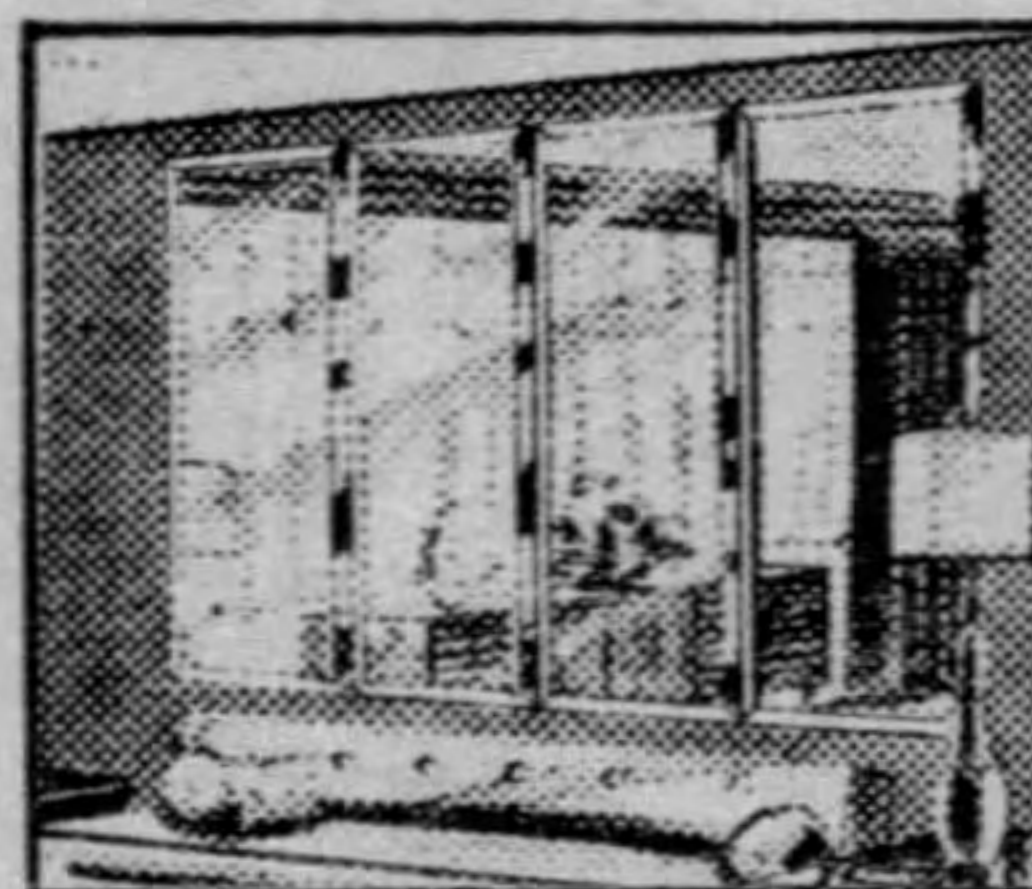
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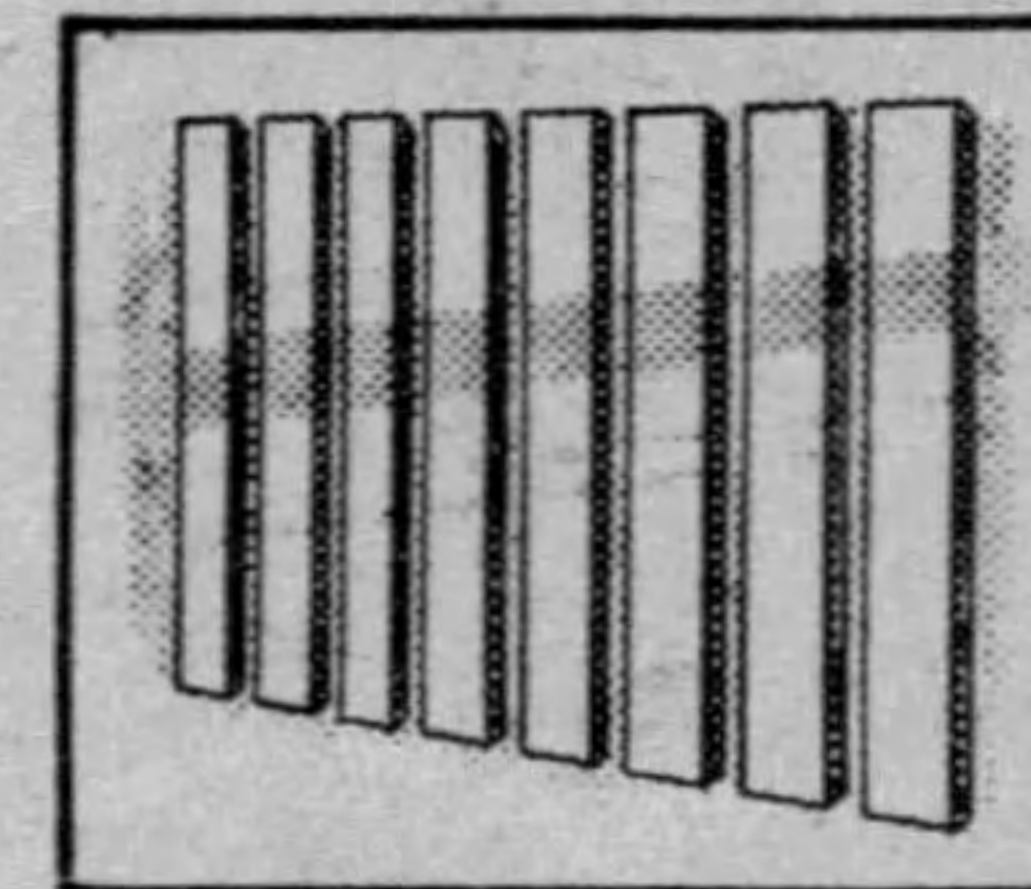
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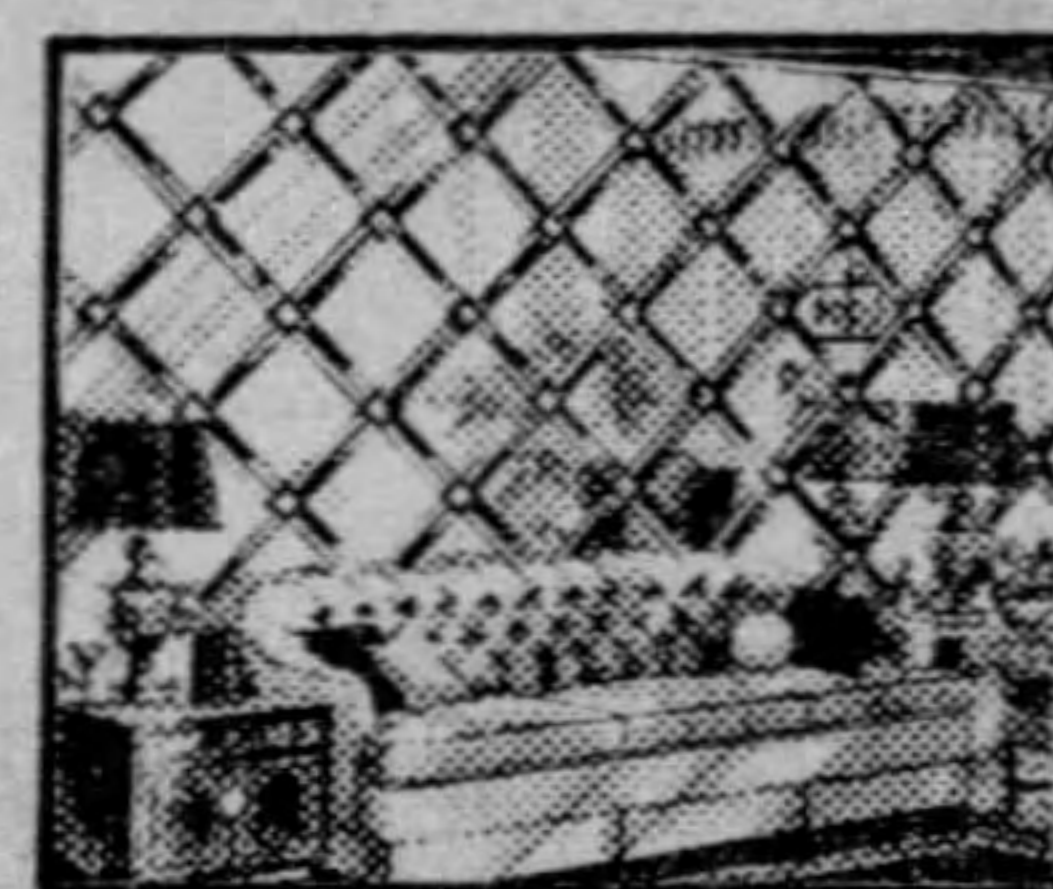
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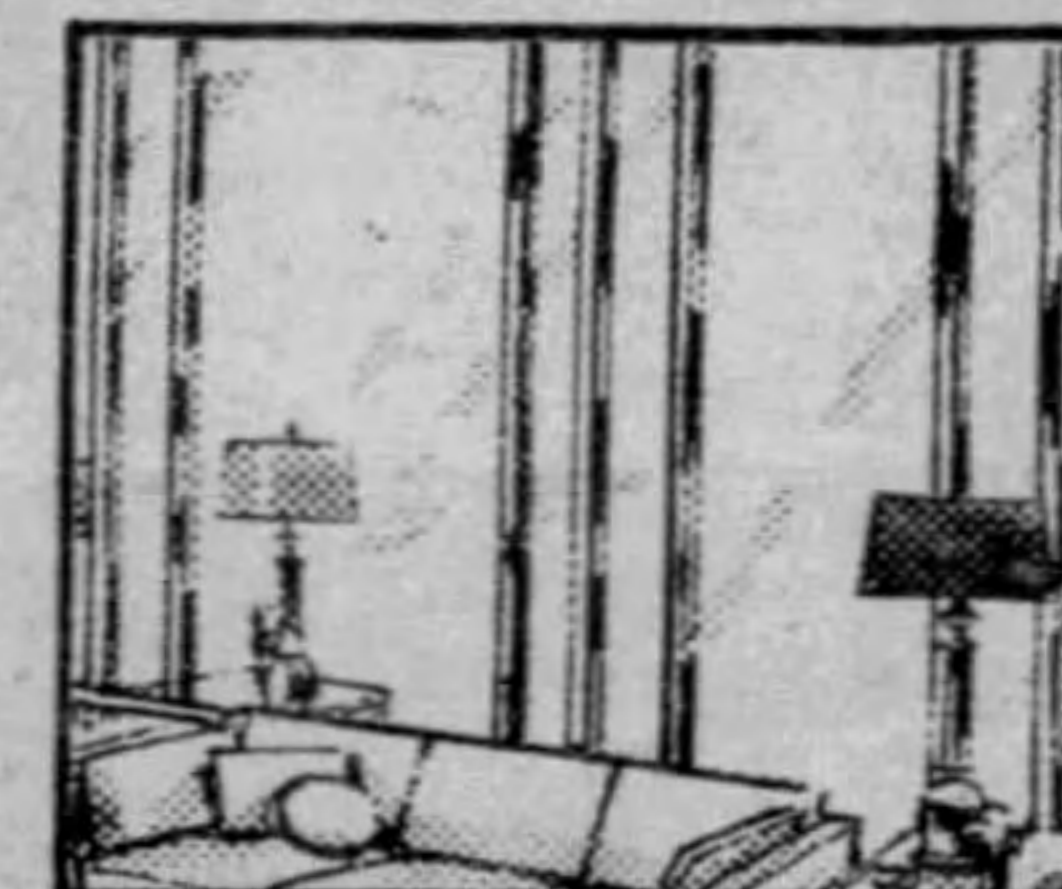
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