

Lords of the Stratosphere



Arthur J. Burks was born on September 13, 1898 in Waterville, Washington into a family of farmers. Little is recorded about his early life save that he served in the United States Marine Corp during World War I. On March 23rd, 1918 happier times were unveiled when he married Blanche Fidelia Lane in Sacramento, California. The union would produce four children: Phillip Charles, Wase Carmen, Arline Mary and Gladys Lura. He continued to serve in Marine Corps in World War I, and after being stationed in the Caribbean, where he witnessed and was inspired by the native voodoo rituals, he began writing in 1920. These lurid tales of the supernatural found a welcoming home in the publishing houses of the wildly popular pulp magazines. His first sale was to the magazine *Weird Tales*. In 1928 he resigned from the Marine Corps in order to be able to write full-time. It was an excellent decision. He rapidly became one of the million-word-a-year men, a key contributor to the pulp magazines. Over his career he wrote in the order of 800 stories for the pulps. His forte was to be able to take any household object and instantly generate a clever, plausible and entertaining plot based around it. His byline was never far from the pulp covers. Burks wrote primarily in the genres of aviation, detective, adventure, sports (specializing in boxing) and weird menace. With such a prolific output he developed several series for the pulps, including the Kid Friel boxing stories in *Gangster Stories*, and the Dorus Noel undercover-detective stories for *All Detective Magazine*, set in Manhattans Chinatown. After almost two decades of high speed delivery the pressure of producing so much fiction caused him to rein his output back in from the late-1930s. With war once again menacing the country, both in Europe and the Pacific, Burks returned to active duty as the U.S.

entered World War II. When he retired after the war it was with the rank of lieutenant colonel. Burks moved to Paradise in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in 1948. During the 60s, he expanded the subjects he wrote about to include works on metaphysics and the paranormal. In his later years, he developed this into lectures on paranormal activities and gave readings. He continued to live and write in Paradise until his death there on May 13th, 1974.

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