



# The Great Impostor: The Amazing Career of Ferdinand Waldo Demara, who Posed as a Surgeon, a Prison Warden, a Doctor of Philosophy, A Trappist Monk and Many, Many Others

By Robert Crichton

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The fantastic lives and careers of Ferdinand Waldo Demara make a fantastic irony of the platitude that truth is stranger than fiction. For with Ferdinand Demara, truth *is* fiction.

Demara wanted to be a hero, to lead an epic life dedicated to the benefit of others, and to gain adulation for himself, and he did all those things by lying to others about who he was. During his storied career, Ferdinand Demara managed to “become” a Trappist monk; a doctor of psychology and Dean of the School of Philosophy at a small college in Pennsylvania; a law student, zoology graduate, cancer researcher and teacher at a junior college in Maine; a surgeon-lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Navy (as medical officer on the destroyed *Cayuga*, he successfully performed major surgery); a brilliant assistant warden of a Texas prison; and a teacher and beloved idol of the children on a Maine island village.

In this forthright account of a remarkable fraud, Robert Crichton presents the man, his reasons, and his methods. A *New York Times* bestseller when it was originally published in 1959, and serving as the inspiration for the Tony Curtis film of the same name, this is the fascinating and disturbing story of America’s Great Impostor.

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