

# NOSTALGIA DIGEST

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GUIDE



WOODY HERMAN

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# NOSTALGIA DIGEST

BOOK TWELVE

CHAPTER SIX

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER, 1986

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## HELLO, OUT THERE IN Radioland!!



We have two broadcast milestones to celebrate in November.

The National Broadcasting Company went on the air with its first program service on November 15, 1926, sixty years ago. When NBC celebrated that anniversary on television last May, most radio fans were disappointed to find that the company's early radio history was more than slightly neglected.

Well, we're going to make up for that with a two-part *Those Were The Days* salute to NBC's 60th birthday on November 1st and 8th. We'll have some rare broadcast material from the network's early years, including an all-star broadcast commemorating the opening of NBC's Hollywood studios in 1935 and a 40th Anniversary broadcast with Bergen and McCarthy from 1966.

There's another broadcast milestone to celebrate during November.

We'll be sending Happy Birthday wishes to Jim Jordan, radio's Fibber McGee who will be 90 years old on November 16th. You'll want to tune in November 1st to hear the rare, very first Fibber McGee and Molly broadcast from April 16, 1935.

On November 8th we'll present a special Fibber and Molly program to observe the beginning of their 15th year as the McGee's of Wistful Vista.

And perhaps you will want to send Jim Jordan a happy birthday card or message of your own. We've made arrangements with the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters to accept your greetings to him and present them to him during a 90th birthday celebration on his behalf at the Pioneers' meeting on November 19th.

You may write to Jim Jordan, c/o Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters, Box 4866, North Hollywood, California 91607.



# NOTES FROM THE BANDSTAND

## The Amazing Career of Woody Herman

By KARL PEARSON

Clarinetist Woody Herman recently celebrated his fiftieth year as a bandleader, probably surpassed in longevity only by Lawrence Welk. What's even more amazing is that Woody has been in show business for sixty-four years!

Woodrow Charles Herman (not Woodrow Wilson Herman as claimed by some other sources) was born in Milwaukee on May 16, 1913. Woody entered show business at the ripe old age of nine, not as a musician, but as a singer and dancer in an entertainment unit. At age ten he was singing, soft-

shoeing and playing saxophone in the Wisconsin area. A year later he picked up the clarinet and at about the same time discovered jazz, which Woody later recalled being "the most exciting music there ever was." And ever since then Woody, the clarinet and jazz have been inseparable.

Like fellow clarinetist Benny Goodman a few years earlier, Woody took to the road as a teenager, with an orchestra led by west coast bandleader Tom Gerun. It was with Gerun in 1932 that Woody made his first records. Gerun, whose real name was Gerunovich, also had a young sax player named Al Morris and a vocalist named Virginia Simms in his band. Morris later gave up his sax and became better known as singer Tony Martin and Virginia became Ginny Simms, vocalist with Kay Kyser.

In 1934 Woody moved over to the sax section of Isham Jones' band, one of the top dance bands of the day. Little did Woody know that this move would shape his entire career, for when Jones decided to give up bandleading two years later, Woody became the leader of a cooperative band that included five members from the Jones band. The band made its debut at Brooklyn's Roseland Ballroom in November, 1936 and was known as "The Band That Plays The Blues." The band took its title seriously by playing many blues- and swing-tinged numbers. Sometimes though, the band took the title a bit too seriously,

CRUCK SCHAMEN  
**NOSTALGIA DIGEST** AND **RADIO GUIDE**

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER, 1984



WOODY HERMAN



especially when several of its nightly broadcasts featured nothing but thirty minutes of blues. Featuring arrangements by the band's flugelhorn player Joe Bishop, Woody and the boys played such numbers as "Dupree Blues," "Calliope Blues," "Royal Garden Blues," "Laughing Boy Blues," "River Bed Blues," "Blues Upstairs" and "Blues Downstairs." It took awhile for the public to catch on to the Herman style, but in 1939 when the band recorded the blues-based "Woodchoppers Ball" for Decca Records, the public got the idea. The tune became one of the big record hits of the year and brought Woody many new fans.

After a while Woody grew tired of the blues format and made a few changes in the band's style. He dropped the blues approach and made the band a bit more commercial, alternating swinging instrumentals with smooth ballads. He even featured female trumpeter-singer Billie Rogers for awhile with his band.

There were a number of fine vocalists in the Herman band over the years, including Mary Ann McCall, Carolyn

Grey and Frances Wayne. But many of the critics agreed that the best vocalist in Woody's band was Herman himself. Woody was known as an excellent ballad singer, featuring a very warm, emotional and musical touch on such numbers as "Laura," "It's A Blue World," and "This Time The Dream's On Me." Woody also sang many of the jazzier vocals on tunes such as "Blues In The Night," "Amen," and "Ooch Ooch Agoonattach," which was the Herman version of Glenn Miller's hit song "Chattanooga Choo Choo" with one difference; Woody's train ran backward!

Herman continued to experiment as 1942 began. Some of the Duke Ellington style began to appear in the band's repertoire. In July of that year the band recorded a tune titled "Down Under" in a new style known as "bebop" (later it was just known as "bop") which was just starting to appear. "Down Under" was written and arranged by a trumpeter named Dizzy Gillespie, who would later lead the bop revolution.

By 1944 the Woody Herman band was very much into the new, modern style, with a brand new group of

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## NOTES FROM THE BANDSTAND

young, fresh musicians. Tagged "The First Herd" by Metronome writer George Simon, the band featured such men as saxist Flip Phillips, veteran drummer Davey Tough and trombonist Bill Harris, who each brought an individual style to the band. A powerhouse trumpet section including Ray Wetzel and Pete Candoli packed a punch, while pianist Ralph Burns wrote many of the new arrangements. It landed a summer radio series for Old Gold Cigarettes on CBS and waxed many fine V-Disc records for the armed forces. And in November of that year the band began making a string of fine recordings for Columbia. Titles such as "Blowin' Up A Storm," "Apple Honey," "Laura," "Happiness Is Just A Thing Called Joe," and "Ah, Your Father's Mustache" became big sellers. The rhythm section on all of these fine recordings was powered by a young energetic bassist named Chubby Jackson, whose equally energetic shouts could be heard on many of the band's

broadcasts and public appearances. And vibraphonist Red Norvo joined in 1946 to be heard with the big band and with Woody's small group known as the Woodchoppers.

At the front of this group of enthusiastic musicians was Woody, the perfect leader for such a group. Equally energetic, he made the men want to play. He was the boss, for sure; but he was also one of the boys. And he was always willing to listen to and try new music styles.

The new approach paid off when the band landed a full-time radio series for Wildroot Hair Tonic. It also won several orchestra polls and was featured as the Esquire Magazine Band of the Year. Composer Igor Stravinsky was impressed with the Herman band, particularly with the trumpet section; the unison trumpet passage on "Caldonia" was a particular favorite of his. Stravinsky wrote a special piece for the Herman orchestra titled "Ebony Concerto," which was premiered at Carnegie Hall.

The public dug the Herman sounds too, requesting "Woodchopper's Ball," "Caldonia" and the other favorites night after night after night. The strain of one-nighters started to show, and several key members began leaving at the end of 1946. Finally in December of that year, a tired Woody disbanded to take a well-deserved rest.

But Woody didn't rest long. In the fall of 1947 he was back with his Second Herd, another group of young musicians who made musical history with "Four Brothers," "Lemon Drop" and "Early Autumn." In 1951, a Third Herd followed the Second, and later a Fourth and a Fifth, until everyone (including Woody) lost count. Still surrounded by young and enthusiastic musicians, Woody to this day continues to play and to look for those new and exciting sounds.

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# 2 Wheels are Better Than 3

By Dan  
McGuire

(A Recycled Memory)

I REMEMBER IT WELL...

Is there anyone over 15 and not yet on Social Security who does not remember his or her first 2-wheeler? What a driver's license was to older teenagers, that first bicycle was to pre-teens and young adolescents of my generation.

The makers' names have a mystical quality. *Ranger. Monarch. J. C. Higgins.* And, for the lucky kid with a rich uncle, the ultimate: *Schwinn.*

There came a time when we roller skated only occasionally and had outgrown wagons, scooters, even the largest of tricycles. Though we yearned for the freedom and mobility of bicycle ownership, parents would say, "Um, maybe next year, when your legs grow a little." Unless an older sibling had a bike you could practice on, you walked everywhere and impatiently cursed your short legs through that limbo period.

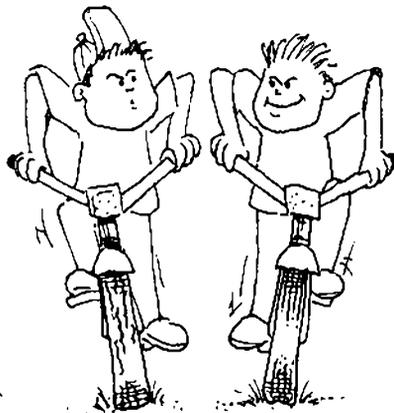
Wayne's older sister, Shirley, was the first on our block to move up to a 2-wheeler. Her popularity immediately increased, as every kid in our gang begged for rides—the guys just as eagerly as the gals. (Boys with short legs aren't proud about practicing on a girl's bike.)

Shirl's father recognized a potential problem and used some homespun psychology to head it off. He began running "time trials" every evening, giving each of us a turn to go around the block while he clocked us. Shirl cringed as she watched us gangly boys race

recklessly around corners on her beautiful new bike. But she endured it patiently and took her turn at being clocked, too. Eventually, our interest lagged, the races ended and we resumed the seemingly interminable wait for bikes of our own.

My first 2-wheeler was a Christmas present when I was 12. For months I had importuned my parents. I really *needed* a bike; not just for frivolous pleasure riding, but for business purposes—I planned to get a paper route. The folks took me seriously, I guess. The bike I found next to our tree was second-hand, but it was a 28-inch model with a large front basket.

Never before had Spring been so slow to arrive and melt the ice and snow. At last I was able to bring my new treasure outside. Riding it was another matter. Its size offered a real challenge.



## I REMEMBER IT WELL

Even with blocks on the pedals, I could barely reach them in the down position while seated on the saddle. Because I had to stretch so far that last inch going down, I took to reaching for the opposite pedal with my toe, pulling it up into position to be pedaled downward. Sometimes I misjudged, and when I stepped down the pedal turned backward—which applied the brake.

At best, this method made for leisurely travel. To get any speed, I had to forget about sitting and straddle the top bar, actually standing on first one pedal, then the other, for maximum thrust.

Just getting started required ingenuity. I wasn't tall enough to straddle the bar and push off from a standing position. My initial technique was to lean the bike against a fence or building, with one pedal at 12 o'clock high. After gingerly climbing aboard, I started up with a mighty stomp on the raised pedal.

Later I copied the style of a cowboy mounting his horse. With my foot on the left pedal (at about 10 o'clock), I pushed and leaped astride in one motion. The bike would take off and stay upright just long enough for my right foot to find the other pedal . . . usually.

### NOSTALGIA DIGEST

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My bike's handlebars were the wing type, very wide, with rubber grips that had finger indentations. They reminded me of motorcycle handles and I was proud of them. But they presented their own hazard—like bumping handles with pals who rode too close beside me.

In the gangway between our house and the neighbors' was a short section of fence and a gate. With the gate swung wide, I had about half an inch of clearance for the tip of each handle. Before I mastered that kind of precision steering, I regularly skinned one or more knuckles weekly. Sometimes I'd remember to grip the handlebars a little further in, but after a few safe passes I'd get careless again.

My bike and I took so many spills that the pedal arms became bent inward. One clanked against the chain guard on every rotation. The other actually began wearing a slot into the rear frame. I bent the arms out with a crowbar numerous times, but it was a losing battle.

Eventually, the S-shaped pedal crank arm assembly had to be replaced. That meant a trip to Alley's Hardware & Bike Repair. It also meant a 12-block walk home and a week without a bike.

Fortunately, I was growing and the bike wasn't. By Fall, when I got my paper route, my feet met the pedals even when I sat on the saddle. Steering with one hand while tossing rolled newspapers at porches probably improved my skill at handling the over-sized bike.

My 28-inch model was a novelty. Everyone else I knew had 26-inchers. We endured that limbo period between trikes and bikes because there were no smaller 2-wheelers such as kids break in on today. At least, they never appeared in our neighborhood. Training wheels were equally unknown. What

## CHUCK AND DAN



CHUCK THINKS HE'S SUCH A HOT SHOT JUST BECAUSE HE HAS A TWO WHEELER!



good would they have been on a 26-inch bike?

Many of my peers got their early practice on a girl's bike. Others had older brothers or pals who let them ride their bikes and ran beside holding on. We did not ask fathers to do this. After all, we were 12 or 13 when we started riding. It would have been humiliating to have Dad hold us up. (Rather, we would fall a dozen times and personalize our first bikes with a few scratches.)

In our hands, bikes took much abuse. The "balloon tire" type could take it. Chuck's first 2-wheeler was the "skinny-tire" style. I don't know why he asked for that, since skinny tires usually were chosen only by serious cross-country riders. Maybe he liked the little extra speed he could get when racing a balloon tire bike.

One day Chuck and I were racing along Cullom Avenue, a little-used sidestreet. He was in the street. I was on the cinder path that served as a pedestrian walkway. Chuck was half a length ahead of me when he shouted, "I'm going to cut you off at the alley."

"You'd better not," I called back. "I'm not going to stop!"

That was practically a dare. So, of course, Chuck had to follow through. I really did try to stop, but cinders pro-

Cartoon Illustrations by Brian Johnson

vide little traction. The collision sent us both sprawling. We picked ourselves up and compared cinder burns on hands, elbows and knees. Then we checked his front wheel. It had eight spokes out or loose. The next day, we balanced the wheel in my basket, Chuck sat on the crossbar and I rode him up to Alley's.

I'm not sure how Chuck explained that accident to his folks. But a week later I rode down our alley and overheard part of a conversation between his mother and a neighbor lady. Something about "Chuck's beautiful new bicycle" and "that wild McGuire boy."

One ungodly hot summer day Chuck's bike was parked in his yard and both tires simply exploded. Wayne and I had feuded with Chuck that week. He suggested to his father that we might have planted firecrackers under the tires. His dad considered the idea, but a few pointed questions revealed that Chuck had filled his tires with air at Sell's Gas Station that morning. Although the tires were meant to hold 35 PSI, he filled them to 60 because it gave such a smooth ride. Chuck received a short physics lecture

## I REMEMBER IT WELL

on the effect of air under pressure and heated by the sun.

While such blow-outs were rare, flat tires were a common occurrence. The puncture-proof tire was a couple of generations ahead on the bike trail. Almost any sharp object was capable of poking holes through both tires and inner tube as your wheel rolled over it.

All bikers were equipped with a standard repair kit. The container was shaped like a toilet tissue roll and made of similar paperboard, but sturdier and a tad larger. The bottom and the screw-on cap were metal. The cap was also a small grater. Inside, the kit contained rubber patching material and a squeeze tube of glue. There is nothing quite like the mingled aromas of rubber and glue when you opened the repair kit.

To repair a flat, you first had to locate the hole in the inner tube. Large holes could be found by pumping up the tube and running a hand over it or just listening. Small holes sometimes required submerging the tube in Mom's wash tub and watching for bubbles.

(Field repairs sometimes were accomplished with spit.)

Once the puncture was chalk-marked, the rest was relatively easy. Roughen the area with the grater for a good bond. Apply a thin layer of glue. Press on a patch about an inch square. Let dry. Remount tire, tube and wheel and reinflate.

The hazards to bikes — and their owners — were numerous. Pant legs caught in chains — even with chain guards, rolled up pants or rubber bands around cuffs. Chains slipped off sprockets. Chain links broke. Kick stands loosened and bikes fell over. Or the bolt fell off and the clamp was lost, making the stand useless. Handlebars loosened — not good for steering. Pedals became bent, stopped turning or broke off. Fenders were bent and rubbed on tires.

The clamp that secured my brake assembly to the rear frame fell off. When I pedaled backward to apply the brake, nothing happened. I resecured it with wire many times, but whenever I attempted an urgent stop the wire would snap. This resulted in several bumps and bruises and many near misses.

We accepted such minor inconveniences as the price of owning a 2-wheeler. As our riding skills improved, we suffered fewer accidental spills. To compensate, we increased our daredevil antics. ("Look, Ma, no hands. Look, Ma, no feet. Look, Ma, no teeth!")

Most of us survived to possess a second bike. It was more likely to be purchased new. Usually we had more of a hand in selecting it, and we adorned it with many extras: speedometer, mirror, headlight, taillight, foxtail, horn, saddlebags, etc.

Yet, however it may pale by comparison, we retained a special appreciation for that first 2-wheeler.

Chuck Schaden's



## SPEAKING OF RADIO

*Conversations with . . .*

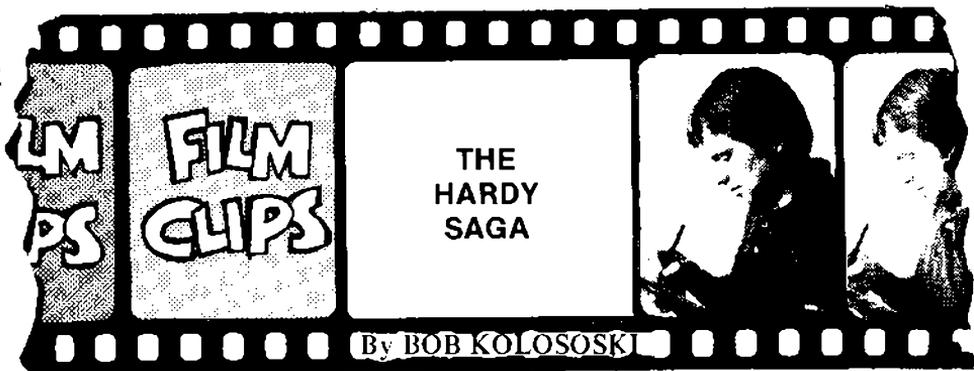
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**SPEAKING OF RADIO**

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By **BOB KOLOSOSKI**

The decade between 1935 and 1945 was the era of jive, World War II, swing and the Hardy family. By 1940 the movies had created and nurtured the movie "series". Dr. Kildare was curing everything from hiccups to mental illness. Dagwood and Blondie kept Mr. Dithers spinning and the "Dead End Kids" were skating between juvenile delinquency and model citizenship. However, the most popular movie series of the 1940's followed the adventures of a typical American family living in Carvel, Idaho.

The father was a judge with the highest moral values and his wife was a model of motherly understanding. The daughter was a fine example of young American womanhood and the son Andy was a teen-aged boy who had his share of teen-aged problems. The Hardy family appeared in fifteen films and, at their peak, they were among the highest earning films in the industry. The success of the "Hardy Family" features can be summed up in two words — Mickey Rooney.

Mickey had been in vaudeville and films all his life and was a seasoned trooper of six when he starred in a series of "Mickey McGuire" shorts. He eventually graduated to the MGM studios in the mid 1930's as one of many child performers at the studio. However, he was more than just a hopeful kid trying to make it big in the

movies. He had years of stage experience and was a triple threat: he could sing and dance as well as act.

He had acquired the sacred skill of scene stealing while touring with his dad Joe Yule on the burlesque circuit and he was ready and willing to mug his way through entire movies. He fought his way through supporting roles and gained the attention of Louis B. Mayer who was looking for a young studio player to appear in a low budget



**LIFE BEGINS FOR ANDY HARDY (1941)**  
Lewis Stone, Fay Holden, Mickey Rooney

## FILM CLIPS

feature about a typical American family. In 1937, MGM had a "B" unit headed by Lucien Hubbard that bought a play by Aurania Rouverol named "Skidding". The cost of the property was five thousand dollars and the total budget for the film was set at two hundred thousand dollars. The cast for "A Family Affair" was set with Lionel Barrymore as Judge Hardy, Spring Byington as his wife and Cecilia Parker as their daughter. The role of Andy was to be given to an MGM player named Frank Thomas Jr.; however he grew dramatically before initial filming and Mr. Mayer felt a shorter boy would be better. Mickey Rooney fit the bill to a "T".

The film was released as a filler feature and to the surprise of everyone involved it was a huge hit. Audiences refused to leave the theatre after one showing and demanded an encore. Letters poured into the studio from fans



**ANDY HARDY MEETS DEBUTANT (1940)**  
Fay Holden, Mickey Rooney

and theatre owners asking for more of the Hardy family. And, of course, the biggest surprise was the popularity of Mickey as Andy Hardy. Louis B. had a problem of major proportions and called a meeting with his top studio chiefs to decide if they should produce another Hardy family movie. Sequels were not standard procedure in 1937, however the execs decided to try another and "see what happens".

This decision created another problem because Lionel Barrymore felt he was too important an actor to be in another Hardy film. He was also very upset because young Mr. Rooney stole the show and was better at mugging than the crusty veteran. Undaunted, Louis Mayer cast his friend Lewis Stone as Judge Hardy and Fay Holden (a British actress) as Mrs. Hardy due to Spring Byington's unavailability at the time. Sara Holden was cast as Andy's spinster aunt Milly and Miss Parker returned. "You Only Live Once" was released in early 1938 and set box office records as Americans flocked to see their favorite family face another crisis.

In his spare time Mickey Rooney turned in a fine performance in "Boy's Town" with Spencer Tracey and went right into production in "Judge Hardy's Children". Ann Rutherford was now solidly cast as Andy's girlfriend Polly and the series had a complete cast of characters. Mickey had co-starred with Judy Garland in the 1937 film "Thoroughbreds Don't Cry". Audiences sensed a chemistry between them and in fact the two (to be) child superstars had been very good friends for years. This chemistry was noticed by the MGM executives and Judy was cast in the fourth Hardy movie "Love Finds Andy Hardy". Alas for poor Judy, the love Andy found was a young unknown actress named Lana Turner in her first MGM film. The suc-



**ANDY HARDY'S BLONDE TROUBLE (1944)** Mickey Rooney with Louis Stone, Wilde Twins, Herbert Marshall

cess of the series and this trial for Miss Turner gave MGM brass an idea to try out unknown starlets in the Hardy films. As the years and films rolled on Andy had the chance to smooch with Kathryn Grayson, Donna Reed, Esther Williams and Bonita Granville. Judy Garland would appear in three "Andy Hardy" films.

The year 1940 saw two Andy Hardy films released: "Andy Hardy Meets Debutante" and "Andy Hardy's Private Secretary." Mickey Rooney emerged as the number one box office star in the country. His success was spoiled only by the fact that his father and mother were divorced and he never related well to his dad. Lewis Stone as Judge Hardy became Mickey's surrogate father and Mickey so respected Stone that when he became engaged to Ava Gardner the first person he took her to see was Lewis Stone on an Andy

Hardy set. The public loved the quiet "man-to-man" talks between Judge Hardy and his son Andrew, probably because of the obvious respect the two actors had for each other.

The basic formula for the Hardy films was a "double crisis scenerio". There would be a main story involving the entire family — usually a crisis as in "Judge Hardy and Son" (1939) when Mrs. Hardy had a near fatal illness. Then there was Andy's crisis usually involving a new girl or his jalopy automobile. The audience knew, however, that by the closing credits Andy and family would have solved all their problems and live happily until the next installment.

Director George Seitz directed all but two of the Hardy movies (MGM workhorse W. S. Van Dyke directed "Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever" in 1939). The oddity of the series was that it never had an official producer, but

## FILM CLIPS

Louis B. Mayer was so involved with "his" all-American family he watched every detail of the series. Kay Von Riper co-scripted most of the series' films which kept her quite busy indeed.

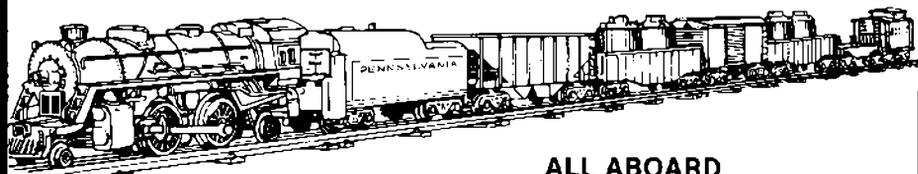
By December of 1941 twelve Hardy films had been made and there seemed to be no end in sight for the family America had taken to their hearts. World War II changed things in the film industry and America itself. In 1942 only one Andy Hardy movie was released "Andy Hardy's Double Life". Mickey was busy making teen-aged musicals with Judy Garland and his off screen escapades at night clubs and Hollywood parties were earning him some bad press. He lost interest in the Hardy films and the public was soon to follow suit. Louis B. Mayer

was now concerned about "war effort" movies and the Hardy series was shelved until 1944. Mickey and Company appeared in two more Andy Hardy films and he was off to the army for two years. The series was on the radio in the late forties with the original cast but the Hardy magic was gone. In 1958 MGM tried to re-ignite the flame with "Andy Hardy Comes Home" but to no avail.

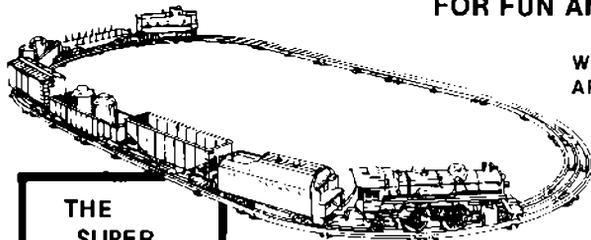
The Hardy family series was and is a part of Americana that probably will have a following as long as the films are shown. The talents of Mickey Rooney and all the others in the cast were ideally suited for that time and place in America when a teen-aged boy from a small town in Idaho could become a national idol. As Andy would say "Golly pop, isn't that swell".

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**ROLLING MEADOWS, IL** — Thanks for the many hours of fine old radio. When I first moved here in 1978, I found your show by accident. I listened to it while I unpacked, and then papered and painted my new house. Now I have the sad problem of repacking while I listen to your shows. I'm moving to Massachusetts and I'm going to miss you and your shows very much. I hope WBBM will let you expand. I won't be here to listen, but it would make me feel good any way. I'm keeping up the subscription to the *Nostalgia Digest*. I enjoy reading it for itself.

— **DOROTHY MAC FARLANE**

**LISLE, IL** — I had to write this letter. I have been a subscriber to the *Nostalgia Digest* for two years now and finally took advantage of one of the tape specials advertised on the back cover. I ordered the Phil Harris-Alice Faye tape on July 30 and could not believe I had it in my hands the morning of August 1. WOW!! I expected to wait two or three weeks since I know this is about the normal waiting time for any kind of mail order. I was looking forward to the arrival of my tape and knew I would enjoy it once I received it so a bit of a wait didn't bother me. THIS IS SERVICE! I also wanted to thank you for all the enjoyment I get by listening to *Those Were The Days* on Saturdays. Every Saturday afternoon (especially in the cooler months) I like to cook and bake. Well, I just have so much more fun doing this when I hear old commercials for baking powders, Jell-O, shortening, etc. It brings back wonderful memories when my mother was the one who did the baking. I also enjoy your weekday show. Jack Benny is Jack Benny with or without the commercials. I love the guy. Thanks again to you and your staff. Your listening audience really appreciates all the work you do.

— **ROSE MAGDZIARZ**

**(ED. NOTE** — Thanks for all your kind words. We try to be efficient in sending out the tapes by mail, but your tape must have caught a shooting star to get to you so fast!)

**HIGHLAND PARK, IL** — Please send me another copy of the Phil Harris-Alice Faye tape. I think some parking lot attendant is enjoying the one you sent a few days ago!

— **MARVIN J. DICKMAN**

**PRINCETON, IL** — I really appreciate your program of old time *Radio Classics*. They really bring back some memories. I also like the Money Watch program with Len Walters, just before you come on the air. Both good programs. I grew up around

here in the 1940s when the Lone Ranger, Sgt. Preston, etc. were playing on the radio and I really enjoyed them as a kid, so it is great to hear them again. How about Straight Arrow? Do you have any of his programs? Your program with Clayton Moore must have been a great time for you as well as those who were in the Chicago area. Sorry I could not be there (to see him in person at the Civic Center). At any rate, I am interested in getting one of his Lone Ranger photos and a silver bullet. Do you have any of those items or do you have Clayton Moore's address where I could write for them?

— **CLARK R. LARSON, JR.**

**(ED. NOTE** — The silver bullets distributed during Clayton Moore's appearance on behalf of the Museum of Broadcast Communications were provided by CBN, the cable television network and the four thousand silver bullet keychains they distributed were gone faster than you can say Hy Yo Silver! And there aren't any more around. Even the Museum didn't get an extra one! — and Clayton Moore, who has the REAL silver bullets, asked us not to give out his home address. Several photos of the Lone Ranger are available at the Metro Golden Memories Shop in Chicago.)

**CHICAGO** — I tried to say hello to you at the Civic Plaza with the Lone Ranger, but the press of the crowd was too much. I'm passing the Plaza during events pretty often and I must say I never saw a better turn out for anybody! The silver bullet line snaked around the corner! I never saw *that!* Good show!

**JOHN COLLURA**

**HINSDALE, IL** — Enjoyed your interview with the Lone Ranger, Clayton Moore. I grew up in his old neighborhood. My family lived in the apartment building at 1354 Rosemont (corner of Rosemont and Glenwood). When I was growing up in the 40s and 50s, the kids in the neighborhood were told that the Lone Ranger had lived in the house across the street on Glenwood. We all went along with the story thinking maybe they were pulling our legs. I realize now how true it was. I, too, went to Hayt School and Senn High and hearing Mr. Moore's voice and and reminiscences brings back a flood of memories to me! Have been listening to your show for years and love it today as much as Day 1!

— **MARIE HOMBURG COHEN**

**RACINE, WI** — Heard your interview with the Lone Ranger, Clayton Moore. I also attended Hayt School (1940) and Senn High School (1944-48). Even wanted to be a cowboy once. We used to ride

## WE GET LETTERS

horses for 75 cents an hour at the McCormack Stable. Rode along the canal. Used to watch western movies at the old Julian Theatre on Belmont Avenue.

I am one of those many people who has enjoyed listening to you and your program from back in your WLTD days in Evanston. I have followed you on and off since the beginning. I lived in Glenview, Illinois for 18 years prior to moving to Racine, Wisconsin in January, 1976. I lost track of you, but discovered your programs on WAIT, but had a difficult time picking you up here in Racine. Listen to you now almost every week on WNIB/WNIZ and catch you as often as possible on WBBM.

I was born in 1930 and grew up with radio. My dad had an interest in radios, so we had a variety of the old radios (new in their day) around when I was a boy. He also repaired radios for people so we ended up with a number of old radio cabinets as furniture. Wish I had some of those today but, alas, they are gone.

Living here in Racine brings to mind Fibber McGee and Molly as this is the home of Johnson's Wax. S.C. Johnson's home is just down the road from me on Lake Michigan. My home also backs up to Wingspread, the Frank Lloyd Wright home of the Johnson family that is now the Johnson Foundation. They are still a fine family and company and a great influence on Racine. — **JACK ERWIN**

**DILLON, S.C.** — Your magazine is getting better all the time. This is my first two year renewal. I enjoy reading the letters sent in by your fans. It's great to see the age range of those who are your fans. I was born in 1950, so I missed hearing the original radio programs. One of the reasons for the great quality of early television (50s-60s) was, I believe, the carry-over of many of radio's seasoned veterans. Thanks for the memories.

— **JOHN T. STEPHENS**

**ROUND LAKE HEIGHTS, IL** — I would like to compliment you on your new store. Both my son and I enjoyed it immensely. Double fun. Just great. I even got a famous autograph. As a brief comment to some of the letters in the August-September issue. To the few who may be somewhat upset with the evening format, there are many more of us who are greatly appreciative of the programming both you and WBBM are bringing to us. Many of us would like the time expanded, hopefully sometime to include the commercials again. But we understand and, again, appreciate your fine efforts. Thank you.

— **RONALDO O. YANKEE**

**BERWYN, IL** — I just cannot resist writing you a little note to say that I enjoy your *Digest* and the old time radio show. I only wish that your program

could be longer on weeknights. In spite of television, radio still is as entertaining as it was when I was a kid. And thanks to you I can enjoy it again.

— **SUZANNE B. HUGHES**

**KENOSHA, WI** — Just finished listening to the Black Museum and Harry Lime. I must compliment you on your WBBM shows. You really have them down pat now. The editing is excellent and sometimes you can chit chat a little like you do on the other shows. In fact I'm beginning to like the syndicated shows almost as much as the complete shows.

— **MAGNUS J. SORENSEN**

**CHICAGO** — What do I thank you for most? Well, off the top of the head, let's say 1) Orson Welles 2) Jack Benny 3) Gracie Allen 4) Ralph Richardson and John Gielgud in Sherlock Holmes. Especially memorable individual radio events have been: 1) the night the movie *The Third Man* ended at 7:30 p.m. at the Music Box Revival House and Harry Lime in *The Third Man* was on WBBM at 8:30 p.m. How about that for a radio and movie double feature? Orson Welles could read the telephone book and it would be fascinating to hear his voice. 2) July 26th, Saturday afternoon on WNIB, especially Jimmy Durante and the Bickersons. 3) Orson Welles as Professor Moriarty — that was a special treat. Thanks.

— **HARRY SCHAFFNER**

**GLEN ELLYN, IL** — I very much enjoyed your article "Meet The McGees" (in the August-September *Digest*). This was one of my favorite radio shows. When their show went into a commercial you could hardly tell! This made radio a great way to sell without being offensive like the commercials are today on TV. — **CHARLES WESTBERRY**

**CHICAGO** — I want to thank you for the gifts I received after being one of the winners in the Add-A-Caption contest. It was a real thrill to see my name in the *Nostalgia Digest*. Your new store is fantastic! I have been a loyal listener to your shows for many, many years. You are bringing a lot of enjoyment to so many of us.

— **MRS. BARBARA ZIMMER**

**ELGIN, IL** — I just had to write and tell you about your tribute to Benny Goodman program today. I can't help it, Mr. Schaden, enough is enough!!! I am 60 years old and remember Mr. Goodman and his music very well, and enjoyed it — still do. But, give us a break — four hours is a bit much of that. You do that so often — all that stuff about the big band era, too. Sure, it's great music, but PLEASE give us a little break in between with some dramatic programs or comedies, too. That "all the same theme" programming is just plain BORING!! I finally turned off your program today — had had

It! I can't understand it why you can't see that yourself.

Also on your WBBM program at night from 8 to 9, you've had several repeats. And, also, there, why must you have two similar programs like The Lone Ranger and then Sgt. Preston of the Yukon together? Or, two comedies? I don't understand your thinking. I, myself, enjoy Vic and Sade (of which you hardly have anything), Jack Benny, Dragnet, Gunsmoke, Sherlock Holmes, the Third Man (several of which have been repeated), Inner Sanctum or dramas. But most of all, please no more of those four hour themes of just music, or old music programs like Bing Crosby and others and nothing else.

— MISS B. L. PETERSON

(ED. NOTE — Thanks for writing. It's a tough job to be able to satisfy everyone all the time and since we know we cannot do it, we don't try to do it. We plan our programming to offer what we think is interesting, entertaining radio shows that will appeal to most of our listeners most of the time. And, from time to time, we present programs that we think are appropriate or that deserve to be broadcast again. We have received the most response from our tribute and theme shows and we like to offer them in balance to our other programming whenever possible.)

**WILLOW SPRINGS, IL** — Just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed the Kate Smith tribute. Frankly, I had just settled back to listen to Suspense as that is my favorite, but my disappointment quickly changed to a very lovely afternoon.

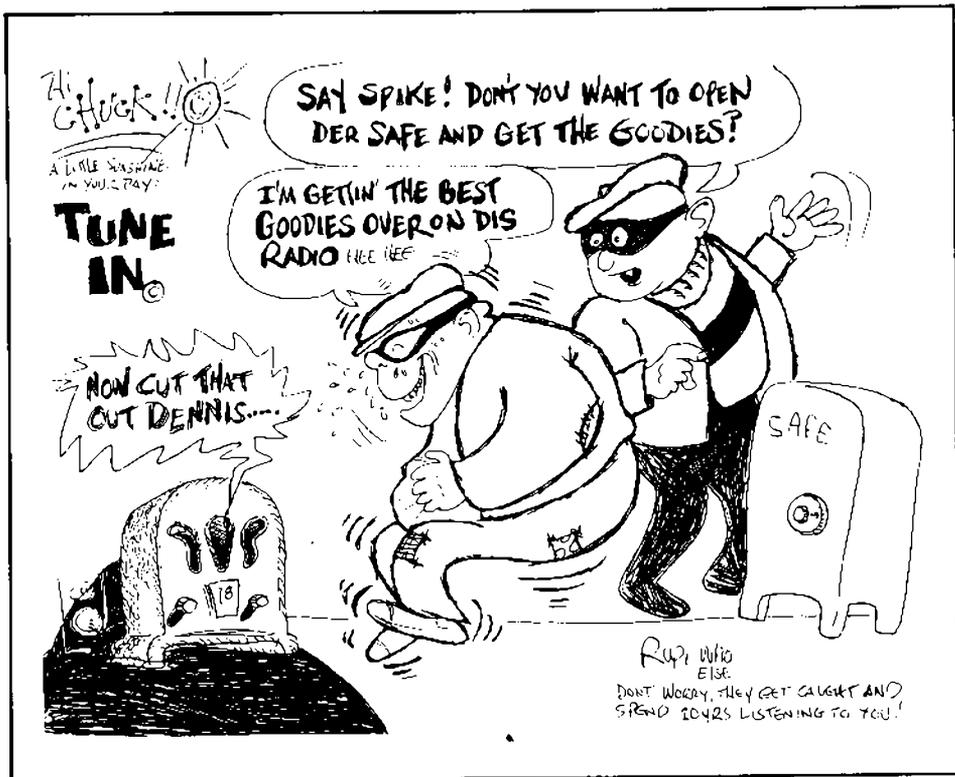
— MRS. JOSEPH A. PALMER

**ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, IL** — I am sure that your many listeners (along with our household) wonder how your programs can get any better — but they do continue to do just that! Of course, inasmuch as you are a Steinmetz High School graduate, we should have expected it! Anyhow, your Carlton E. Morse program set for September 6th may be equalled, but never surpassed! Keep bright the Silver and the Green!

— CHUCK ROEHL

**ELGIN, IL** — What a delight your show is! I grew up with Fibber McGee, Jack Benny, Gangbusters and the rest. It's a treat to be able to hear them again. I'm sending you a check to cover a subscription for my brother in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. He loves old time radio and can pick up WBBM at night. Your show will be a pleasant surprise for him. Thanks for the great entertainment week after week. You're appreciated by many of us out here!

— LARRY THOMAS



<b>OCTOBER</b>		<b>RADIO CLASSICS – WBBM-AM 78 MONDAY thru FRIDAY 8:00-9:00 P.M.</b>		
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Dum De Dum Dum Week</b> <b>October 13-17 Dragnet!</b>		<b>1</b> Lone Ranger This is Your FBI	<b>2</b> Green Hornet Gunsmoke	<b>3</b> Black Museum Burns and Allen
<b>6</b> Gangbusters Green Hornet	<b>7</b> Gunsmoke Black Museum	<b>8</b> Lone Ranger Jack Benny	<b>9</b> Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS	<b>10</b> Challenge of the Yukon Have Gun, Will Travel
<b>13</b> Dragnet Lone Ranger	<b>14</b> Have Gun, Will Travel Dragnet	<b>15</b> Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS	<b>16</b> Dragnet Green Hornet	<b>17</b> Gunsmoke Dragnet
<b>20</b> Burns and Allen Lone Ranger	<b>21</b> Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS	<b>22</b> Green Hornet Black Museum	<b>23</b> Challenge of the Yukon Have Gun, Will Travel	<b>24</b> This Is Your FBI Gangbusters
<b>27</b> Jack Benny Dragnet	<b>28</b> Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS	<b>29</b> Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS	<b>30</b> Challenge of the Yukon Have Gun, Will Travel	<b>31 HALLOWE'EN</b> Green Hornet Black Museum

<b>NOVEMBER</b>		<b>RADIO CLASSICS – WBBM-AM 78 MONDAY thru FRIDAY 8:00-9:00 P.M.</b>		
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>3</b> Black Museum Lone Ranger	<b>4</b> Jack Benny Have Gun, Will Travel	<b>5</b> Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS	<b>6</b> Gunsmoke This is Your FBI	<b>7</b> Burns and Allen Dragnet
<b>10</b> Green Hornet Sherlock Holmes	<b>11</b> This is Your FBI Green Hornet	<b>12</b> Blachhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS	<b>13</b> Green Hornet Burns and Allen	<b>14</b> Challenge of the Yukon Green Hornet
<b>17</b> Jack Benny Gunsmoke	<b>18</b> Black Museum Lone Ranger	<b>19</b> Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS	<b>20</b> Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS	<b>21</b> Dragnet Have Gun, Will Travel
<b>24</b> Lone Ranger This is Your FBI	<b>25</b> Challenge of the Yukon Gunsmoke	<b>26</b> Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS	<b>27</b> THANKSGIVING Burns and Allen Jack Benny	<b>28</b> Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS
<b>Don't Get Stung Week</b> <b>November 10 - 14</b> <b>Green Hornet!</b>		<b>PLEASE NOTE</b> — All of the programs we present on <i>Radio Classics</i> are syndicated rebroadcasts. We regret that we are not able to obtain advance information about the storylines of these shows so that we might include more details in our <i>Radio Guide</i> . However, each show we present is slightly less than 30 minutes in length and this new easy-to-read schedule lists the programs in the order we will broadcast them on WBBM-AM. The first show listed will play at approximately 8 p.m. and the second will be presented at about 8:30 p.m. Programs on <i>Radio Classics</i> are complete, but original commercials and network identification have been deleted. Thanks for listening.		

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

## WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 P.M.

### OCTOBER

**PLEASE NOTE:** The numerals following each program listing for Those Were The Days represents timing information for each particular show. (9:45; 11:20; 8:50) means that we will broadcast the show in three segments: 9 minutes and 45 seconds; 11 minutes and 20 seconds; 8 minutes and 50 seconds. If you add the times of these segments together, you'll have the total length of the show (29:55 for our example). This is of help to those who are taping the broadcasts for their own collection.

#### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4th GREAT RADIO DETECTIVES

**RICHARD DIAMOND, PRIVATE DETECTIVE** (1-12-51) Dick Powell stars as Diamond with Arthur Q. Brian as Lt. Levinson. The wife of a man sent to prison by Diamond comes to the detective for help. Camel Cigarettes. ABC. (14:00; 15:00)

**THE FAT MAN** (1940s) J. Scott Smart stars as Brad Rynyon who tips the scales at 239 pounds. A woman hires Rynyon to prevent a second murder in the same house. Sustaining, ABC. (12:10; 13:07)

**CALLING ALL DETECTIVES** (11-22-48) Paul Barnes stars as detective Jerry Browning and all the other characters in this adventure. Spilled salt sends a murderer to the chair. (8:00)

**ADVENTURES OF PHILLIP MARLOWE** (8-18-50) Gerald Mohr stars as Raymond Chandler's famous private eye in "The Dark Tunnel." Sustaining, CBS. (16:20; 14:25)

**YOURS TRULY, JOHNNY DOLLAR** (6-15-50) "The Arrowcraft Matter" stars Edmund O'Brien as "the man with the action-packed expense account, America's fabulous free-lance insurance investigator." High-priced cabin cruisers are sinking at Newport Beach, California. Wrigley's Gum, CBS. (14:55; 14:05)

**CALLING ALL DETECTIVES** (11-24-48) Paul Barnes is detective Jerry Browning, whose services are sought after by two rival stamp collectors. (7:49)

**ADVENTURES OF SAM SPADE** (12-15-50) Steven Dunn stars as Dashiell Hammett's private detective with Lurene Tuttle as Effie Perrine, Spade's secretary. Sam investigates "The 25/1235679 Caper" or "The Russian's Number is Up!" Sustaining, NBC. (14:20; 13:30)

#### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11th SALUTE TO THE KING!

**SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS** (12-4-44) "China Seas" starring Clark Gable, Lucille Ball, Douglas Dumbrille and Anna Lee in a radio version of the 1935 film. Gable recreates his original screen role in this story of a luxury ship involved in piracy. Lady Esther Cosmetics, CBS. (14:30; 15:00)

**LUX RADIO THEATRE** (3-20-39) "It Happened One Night" starring Clark Gable, Claudette Colbert, Walter Connolly and Roscoe Karns in their original screen roles from the 1934 Frank Capra film which won the Academy Award for Best Picture of the Year, Best Director, Best Actor and Best Actress. Cecil B. DeMille introduces the story of a runaway society girl and a reporter who helps her run. Cast includes Lou Merrill, Frank Nelson and Walter Tetley. Lux Soap, CBS.

**COMMAND PERFORMANCE #144** (1940s) Clark Gable is host for this broadcast for military audiences. Guests include Ginny Simms, Peter Lind Hayes and Don Wilson. AFPS. (11:15; 9:25; 10:45)

**OUR SPECIAL GUEST** will be film historian and *Nostalgia Digest* columnist **BOB KOLOSOSKI** who will talk about Clark Gable's film career and present sound clips from some of "The King's" best remembered films.

#### CUSTOM CASSETTE SERVICE

A custom cassette tape recording of any of the old time radio programs broadcast on THOSE WERE THE DAYS currently or anytime in the past - is available for a recording fee of \$650 per half hour.

You will get a custom recording prepared just for you on top quality Radio-Tape, copied directly from our broadcast master. Simply provide the original broadcast date, the date of our rebroadcast, and any other specific information that will help us find the show you want.

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**HALL CLOSET CUSTOM TAPES**  
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If you have any questions,  
please call: (312) 965-7763



**CLARK GABLE AND GINNY SIMMS** co-star on an Armed Forces Radio Service Command performance program from the 1940s on *Those Were The Days* October 11th.

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18th

**EDGAR BERGEN AND CHARLIE MCCARTHY SHOW** (11-8-53) Guests June Allyson and Dick Powell join Ray Noble and his orchestra, Gloria Gordon, Jack Kirkwood and announcer Bill Baldwin. Charlie is busy selling subscriptions as Edgar tries to teach him a lesson. Lanolin Plus, CBS. (12:56; 15:21)

**ADVENTURES OF FRANK MERRIWELL** (9-11-48) "The Live Ghost" stars Lawson Zerbe as Frank with Hal Studer as Bart Hodge and Elaine Rost as Inza Burrage. After his home is destroyed by fire, a former football coach decides to stay in a "haunted" house. Sustaining, NBC. (13:16; 15:41)

**WOODY HERMAN SHOW** (12-21-45) Woody and the Woodchoppers with Frances Wayne, Flip Phillips, Chubby Jackson and Red Norvo. Tunes include "Tico, Tico," "No Can Do," "1-2-3-4 Jump," "The Man I Love," and "Ah, Your Father's Moustache." AFRS rebroadcast. (7:45; 10:50; 10:30)

**THE LINE-UP** (2-15-51) "The Cigar Box Bandits" terrorize and rob local stores. Bill Johnstone and Wally Maher star as Lt. Ben Guthrie and Sgt. Matt Grebb. Sustaining, CBS. (12:15; 17:00)

**ALL-STAR WESTERN THEATRE** (10-13-46) Guest Star Tex Ritter joins Foy Willing and the Riders of the Purple Sage for a program of music and drama. Tex appears as "a tough guy in a tough town, back in the days when a quick draw was law." Weber's Bread, KNX. (16:14; 12:10)

**WITCH'S TALE** (1930s) "The Suicide" is the story told by old Nancy and Satin, her wise, black cat. Before a woman kills herself, she asks God to make her the instrument of pain to teach her cheating husband a lesson from the grave. Sustaining, MBS. (12:10; 12:38)

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25th ANNUAL HALLOWE'EN SHOW

**INNER SANCTUM** (1949) "Flame of Death" featuring Les Tremayne and Charlotte Holland. A woman blames herself for not saving her husband from a fiery death, and now her husband returns from the grave to haunt her. AFRS rebroadcast. (15:49; 8:38)

**BABY SNOOKS** (11-1-46) Fanny Brice stars as Snooks with Hanley Stafford as Daddy. Annoyed with Halloween, Daddy vows to teach Snooks and her friend Phoebe a lesson as they go Trick or Treating. Cast includes Arlene Harris as Mommy, plus Ben Alexander, Frank Nelson, Sara Berner, Carmen Dragon and the orchestra, Harlow Wilcox. Jell-O, CBS. (11:35; 10:45; 8:05)

**SUSPENSE** (2-15-51) "The Death Parade" starring Agnes Moorehead with Joe Kearns, Byron Kane, Lou Merrill, Jack Krushen. A woman finds a letter warning of death and has only three hours to deliver it. Autolite, CBS. (10:50; 17:14)

**FIBBER MCGEE AND MOLLY** (10-30-53) Jim and Marion Jordan star. Fibber offers to take Teeny Trick or Treating so she can experience some good, old fashioned fun. Sustaining, NBC. (14:50)

**THE DARK** (1940s) Arch Oboler's fantastic "Lights Out" story about people being turned inside out. A classic! (8:35)

**GREAT GILDERSLEEVE** (10-29-47) Gildy, smitten with Mrs. Dowruple, a new customer of the Water Department, plans a cozy Halloween party for two. Harold Peary stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve with Walter Tetley as Leroy, Lillian Randolph as Birdie and Mary Lee Robb as Marjorie. Kraft Foods, NBC. (14:50; 16:10)

**THE SHADOW** (10-31-37) "The Three Ghosts" stars Orson Welles as Lamont Cranston and Agnes Moorehead as the lovely Margo Lane. A newlywed couple take a home in the country in a house inhabited by ghosts. Blue Coal, MBS. (13:29; 15:00)

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

## WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 P.M.

# NOVEMBER

### SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1st SALUTE TO NBC's 80th ANNIVERSARY

**NBC'S HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS OPENING** (12-7:35) Al Jolson hosts this rare, all-star broadcast commemorating the opening of the west coast studios of the National Broadcasting Company. Sustaining, NBC. (Total time: 2 hours 19 minutes)

**Part 1** — Ken Carpenter presents Meredith Willson and the orchestra who play "Dardanella"; Al Jolson describes the new studios; Bing Crosby sings "Treasure Island" accompanied by Victor Young. Don Wilson introduces Edgar Guest who speaks of the miracle of radio. (17:10)

**Part 2** — Nathaniel Shilkret and the orchestra play "Syncopated Love Song." Marion Tally sings "The Wren"; Bill "Bojangles" Robinson offers a tap number; Jolson sings a Hebrew song. (16:40)

**Part 3** — Richard Patterson, NBC executive vice president speaks; Jimmy Wallington presents Johnny Green and the orchestra with "Body and Soul." James Melton, from Baltimore, offers "Carry Me Back to the Lone Prairie." (14:40)

**Part 4** — NBC president Merlin H. Aylesworth and Hollywood movie czar Will Hayes. (12:00)

**Part 5** — Metropolitan Opera Star Gladys Swarthout; Rudy Vallee, from Pittsburgh, sings "Take Me Back to My Boots and Saddles"; Jolson presents a medley of popular songs. (13:40)

**Part 6** — Ben Bernie and all the Lads from the Paradise Restaurant in New York; Irene Rich introduces Ruth Etting from Honolulu, accompanied by Harry Owens and the Royal Hawaiians. (14:50)

**Part 7** — John Charles Thomas sings from Chicago; Actress Mae Robson joins Al Jolson for a sentimental look back at movie stars who are gone. (12:15)

**Part 8** — Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone join the broadcast from their dressing room in Los Angeles. Jack talks about the miracle of radio and Mary reads a poem. Jolson introduces sportswriter Grantland Rice; Phil Regan sings "It Was So Beautiful!"; Harry Jackson and the orchestra offer "No Other One." (15:40)

**Part 9** — Don Wilson introduces Jimmy Durante and Paul Whiteman and the orchestra from the St. George Hotel in Brooklyn. Whiteman plays "Rhapsody in Blue" and Jimmy presents "You Gotta Laugh, Laugh, Laugh." Back in Hollywood we hear

from reporter Jimmy Fidler, sportscaster Sam Hayes and Victor Young and the orchestra with a medley of his song hits accompanied by the Paul Taylor Chorus. (22:00)

**FIBBER MCGEE AND MOLLY** (4-16-35) Premiere show in the series starring Jim and Marion Jordan with Harlow Wilcox, Rico Marcelli and the orchestra. Ronnie and Van the two Harmaniacs, singer Kathleen Wells. A rare broadcast, from New York, with Fibber and Molly driving their automobile on route 42, meeting up with a motorcycle cop and a judge. The McGees sing "Flossie Farmer the Snake Charmer." Johnson's Auto Cleaner and Wax, NBC. (10:50; 11:10; 9:25)

### SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8th SALUTE TO NBC'S 60th ANNIVERSARY

**CHASE AND SANBORN 102nd ANNIVERSARY SHOW** (11-13-66) Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy present a program in honor of the 40th Anniversary of NBC Radio with many sound clips from forty years of NBC broadcasts. Chase and Sanborn Coffee, NBC. (Total time: 1 hour 16 minutes)

**Part 1** — Ed Wynn, Rudy Vallee and Joe Penner; Eddie Cantor; Ben Bernie and Walter Winchell; Charles Lindbergh; H. V. Kaltenhorn; President Franklin D. Roosevelt; Edward R. Murrow; Bob Hope. (21:30)

**Part 2** — Groucho Marx; Herb Morrison and the Hindenberg crash; One Man's Family, King Edward VIII abdication speech; Winston Churchill; Will Rogers; Baron Munchausen; Mike Nichols and Elaine May; Monitor; Tallulah Bankhead and Margaret Truman. (21:50)

**Part 3** — Kate Smith; Bergen and McCarthy with Fred Allen; Amos 'n' Andy; Burns and Allen; Fibber McGee and Molly; Jack Benny; Graham McNamee at Baer-Canera fight; Ralph Edwards; Al Jolson. (22:40)

**Part 4** — Easy Aces; Bing Crosby and Bob Burns; Senator Claghorn. (10:15)

**FIBBER MCGEE AND MOLLY** (9-13-49) Jim and Marion Jordan begin their 15th year on the air as Fibber McGee and Molly with a special hour-long program featuring many of NBC's stars: Dinah Shore, Robert Young, Phil Harris and Alice Faye, Perry Como, Irene Dunne, Dennis Day, William Bendix, Bob Hope, plus all the McGee regulars. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (11:20; 6:35; 11:00; 9:20; 10:35; 9:25)

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15th**  
**RADIO FOR KIDS**  
**STARRING**  
**THE CINNAMON BEAR**

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 1. Judy and Jimmy Barton discover that the silver star for the top of their Christmas tree is missing. Searching for the star in the attic, they meet Paddy O'Cinnamon, the Cinnamon Bear. Syndicated. (13:00)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 2. Judy and Jimmy degrow and take an airplane to Maybe Land. (13:00)

**BUSTER BROWN GANG** (1-15-49) Smilin' Ed McConnell presents Little Kulah, the Persian Prince and the Genie in the Jug and the story of "The Enchanted King." Plus Squeaky the Mouse, Midnight the Cat, Froggie the Gremlin ("Plunk your magic twanger") and Alkali Pete, the Cowboy. Buster Brown Shoes, NBC. (9:50; 9:45; 8:00)

**JACK ARMSTRONG, THE ALL-AMERICAN BOY** (8-16-44) An isolated episode from the "Stolen Schooner" sequence of shows. Uncle Jim is shot by Mutineers. Charles Flynn is Jack, Jim Goss is Uncle Jim. Franklyn MacCormack announces. Wheaties, NBC BLUE. (14:00)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapters 3 and 4. Weary Willie and the Looking Glass Valley; The Inkaboos! (13:00; 13:00)

**TAILSPIN TOMMY** (9-5-41) It's Tommy Tompkins, daring hero of the skies, with his flying friends Skeeter and Betty Lou. This is the first show in the series, a story about the tungsten mine theft. Sustaining, CBS. (14:05; 14:15)

**TERRY AND THE PIRATES** (9-27-44) An isolated episode from the series, based upon Milton Caniff's comic strip. Looking for Abner Kane, the chief Nazi agent in India. Quaker Puffed Wheat, NBC BLUE. (14:00)

**LET'S PRETEND** (1950s) "Cinderella" is the story told by the Pretenders. After being treated brutally by her cruel sisters and stepmother, Cinderella meets her fairy godmother who sends her to the Ball to meet the Royal Prince. AFRS rebroadcast. (8:45; 9:00)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapters 5 and 6. The Crazy Quilt Dragon is rescued; Wesley the Walling Whale, Samuel the Seal, Penelope the Pelican. (13:00; 13:00)

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22nd**  
**ANNUAL THANKSGIVING SHOW**

**GREAT GILDERSLEEVE** (11-16-41) Gildy and his family decide to invite some servicemen to share Thanksgiving dinner. Harold Peary as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve, Earl Ross as Judge Hooker, Shirley Mitchell as Mrs. Shapiro. Kraft Foods, NBC. (16:45, 13:50)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapters 7 and 8. Mr. Presto the Magician; the Candy Pirates. (13:00; 13:00)

**GOOD NEWS OF 1940** (11-23-39) In this Thanksgiving broadcast host Edward Arnold introduces guests Raymond Walburn and Walter Huston plus regulars Fanny Brice and Hanley Stafford as Baby Snooks and Daddy, Connie Boswell, Meredith Willson and the orchestra. Huston reads the Gettysburgh Address. Comedy sketch: Here Come the Pilgrims. Maxwell House Coffee, CBS. (9:13; 16:30; 18:01; 11:19)

**FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT** (11-26-42) The President of the United States reads his Thanksgiving Day proclamation on this first Thanksgiving Day of World War II. CBS. (6:30)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapters 9 and 10. The Roly Poly Policeman; Professor Whiz, the Educated Owl and Fraidy Cat. (13:00; 13:00)

**ALDRICH FAMILY** (11-25-48) A Thanksgiving Day broadcast starring Ezra Stone and Jackie Kell as Henry Aldrich and Homer Brown. While Central High students are planning activities for the annual Thanksgiving dance, Henry suggests a "turkey run." Dan Seymour announces. Jell-O, NBC. (15:30; 12:45)

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29th**  
**RADIO TO GET INTO**  
**THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT BY**

**BLONDIE** (12-15-48) Penny Singleton and Arthur Lake star as Blondie and Dagwood Bumstead of Shady Lane Avenue. Dagwood wants to find out what the children want for Christmas so he asks his boss, Mr. Dithers, to play Santa and call Alexander and Cookie to find out what they want. Hanley Stafford is Mr. Dithers, Frank Nelson is neighbor Herb Woodley. Colgate, Super Suds, NBC. (12:20; 13:35)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapters 11 and 12. Fee Foo, the friendly giant; the Rhyming Rabbit and the Bumble Bee. (13:00; 13:00)

**PAUL WHITEMAN'S ABC CHRISTMAS PARTY** (12-24-46) An all-star radio extravaganza starring the "King of Jazz" himself, Paul Whiteman and his orchestra and a host of ABC radio stars including Walter Winchell, J. Scott Smart ("The Fat Man"), Bing Crosby, Henry Morgan, Basil Rathbone, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Kenny Baker, Don McNell, Tom Brenneman, Don Wilson, Lum and Abner, Patrice Munsel, Arnold Stang. A big, beautiful ninety minute holiday gift from the American Broadcasting Company. Sustaining, ABC. (13:24; 17:05; 9:58; 17:37; 10:38; 10:15; 10:45)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapters 13 and 14. Through the picture frame to see the Wintergreen Witch; Queen Melissa offers help. (13:00; 13:00)



# SPEAKING OF RADIO



Chuck Schaden's Conversation with

**FRANK NELSON**

*Frank Nelson was perhaps the most famous "ye-e-ess" man on radio and television, appearing with Jack Benny for most of both of their careers. Some time ago, we had the opportunity to visit with Frank in his home in Hollywood, California. We asked him about the first time he ever worked with Jack Benny.*

I worked with Jack—the first broadcast I ever did with him was in June of 1934. At that time he was doing a five minute insert for an eastern show, and they had a little sketch where he was coming to California and he meets this fellow on the train, and Jack's telling him what a big shot he is and how he's going to California and he's really going to do great things out there. And Jack says, "You know, you're a very personable young man. Possibly I can do something for you. My name's Jack Benny. What's yours?" And I said, "Clark Gable!" And that was the opening sketch that we did.

*And you were a regular with him all along?*

Well, I started out, I guess, in the first year or two, just doing casual things with him here and there. And then, finally, it grew into a regular character. I was with him for many years under contract.

*What was your first professional radio appearance?*

The first thing that I did on radio was in 1926 in Denver, Colorado. There was a bank there that was going to do a thirteen week series and so they

held auditions at KOA. I was just a kid in high school at the time and I went out to KOA and this man looked at me and said, "Oh, you're much too young. This part is of a thirty year old man." I said, "Oh, well, they told me to come out." And he said, "Well, have you ever read on a microphone?" And I said, "No, I haven't. I've done theatre." And he said, "Well, as long as you made the long trip out here, maybe you'd at least like to read?" So, I had a deep voice then and so I read. And there were thirty of us. When we got through, the next day they called back twelve, and the following day they called back four, and the following day they called me and told me I had it. Now, I never understood the part, but I played it!

That was my beginning and then I worked with KOA on various shows and then I announced for KFEL, which was a smaller station in Denver. And then I decided I was going to make my fortune and come out to Hollywood, so I came out here the end of 1929 and started with Georgia Fifield—the "Georgia Fifield KNX Players." I had a letter of introduction to this lady and I went over to KNX.

*And you've been here ever since?*



That's right.

*You've done occasional work on the East Coast, I assume?*

No, actually I have not. The only thing I ever did in New York was the Jack Benny show.

*When he went to New York.*

That's the only show that I ever failed to complete in my radio career. I've gone on in a stretcher, and I'm not kidding. I actually did that in Denver, in that early series. I got pneumonia and they took me out on a stretcher to play it one week. But the only show that I ever actually missed through illness or anything else, was the second broadcast of the Jack Benny Show in New York City. So, that's my Eastern career!

*When you were first in Hollywood, after working with the KNX Players, where did you go from there?*

We did so many things in those early days. We did a show called "Makers of

History" down at KFI. It was written by Jerry Cady who went on to write for 20th Century Fox. We did "Tapestries of Life," which was about the statuary at Forest Lawn, and that's really the way I started back into free-lance radio.

I was doing announcing at KMTR and I got a call to go down and do a very highly dramatic thing called "Father Forgets," which is a father talking to his son, by his crib while he's asleep and apologizing for all the bad things he's done, as we all do to our children—how he yelled at him and so on. It was very dramatic, a tearjerker, and I did it in the middle of a comedy show and they got a tremendous response from it. And at that time, the fellow who was doing "Tapestries of Life" was having a lot of trouble. He was getting his tongue wrapped around his teeth a lot and he was fluffing a lot, and so Jerry Cady called and said, "Look, would you be interested in doing the 'Tapestries of Life'?" At that time they paid a lot of money for local radio. They paid ten dollars a piece, which was a big, big fee, because you were working for two-fifty, three dollars, five dollars, which was fairly normal. A few at seven-fifty, but ten dollars was big money, so I said, "Gee, I'd love to." So, that started me back. And then he gave me "Makers of History" and so I was making \$25 a week down at KFI, and I got out of the other job.

And I did various things around town here. One that was very popular, a local show, was "The Witch's Tale" and Paula Winslowe, who was another gal from out here, and I did the leads in those for about two years. That was the most envied show in town at that time. Now this was before there was any trans-continental shows out of here.

And then, finally, I had worked for

## SPEAKING OF RADIO

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John Swallow at KFAC-KFBD as an announcer and John became the first head of NBC out here. NBC, at that time, was just an office on the RKO lot, on the back lot, and we worked on sound stages initially. And then they built some sound stages strictly for radio right at the end of the RKO lot. But that was the beginning. They had a show out here called the "Hollywood On The Air" show, which was an RKO show, the first unsponsored show out of Hollywood that was transcontinental. I was the announcer, I filled in as a bit actor, and then if somebody didn't show up, I played that part too. I did that for about a year and a half, and then the first sponsored transcontinental show out of here was an original Marx Brothers show with Groucho and Chico, just the two of them; and I did that.

Georgia Fifiield cast the show and she was their secretary and I was a regular on the show. As a matter of fact, I could have been in movies if I could have sung because one day Groucho walked over and he said, "Look Frank, can you sing?" And I laughed and said, "Sing? I can't even carry a tune." And he said, "Oh, that's too bad." Because what they had in mind for me was—you remember the "Donkey Serenade?" You remember the gentleman who did it?

*Sure. Allan Jones.*

That's right. That's exactly what they had me in mind for in that picture and if I'd been able to sing, I'd at least had a crack at it, you know.

*And you would have killed Allan Jones' career!*

Well, I doubt that! He was much too fine a performer to have his career killed. But I was working with them at the time and they thought it would be a

good idea to have me in the picture, I guess.

Those are the very early days and I used to have a running gag with John Swallow. I thought that eventually the big movie stars were going to bring radio out here. That is, transcontinental radio. And John never believed it, never believed it! And I said, "You know, John, someday, really, we're going to have a lot of big-time radio out here." He said, "Not a chance in the world." And so, we had a running gag between us. When they finally had the studios at Sunset and Vine, the big NBC studios, and I'd walk down the hall and see John coming up the hall, I'd say, "John, ever think big time radio will come to Hollywood?" "Nope, don't think so, Frank." We never changed it, never changed it in all the years we knew each other.

*It was a great running gag!*

Yeah, just kept it going. But they were fun days, those early days. They were great days! I think radio offered so much more to an actor than television does because you can do anything that your voice would allow you to do. You weren't trapped by what you looked like, how tall you were, how old you were or how fat you were, or anything else. You could just do anything that your voice would allow. And that let us play a great deal of varied type characters.

*And you didn't need any time for makeup or costumes.*

No! That was nice. And you read it, too. Although that wasn't as easy as we make it sound now. Lots of times we look back and we say, oh boy, what a soft touch that was, how easy it was. But it wasn't easy. It truly wasn't. You had to come into a studio and you had to create a character in a very brief period of time. And it had to be believable at least, and all those characters



**MR. AND MRS. FRANK NELSON (she's Veola Vonn) check out the "Jack Benny Special" sponsored by the 20th Century Railroad Club before departing on the trip to Jack Benny Junior High School, Waukegan, in February, 1985.**

weren't the greatest in the world. But it kept you on your toes and it kept you working hard.

And we did things—funny things. I remember I had a show at NBC, which was really one long block from CBS, and I had it at the last studio in the hall. That is, the closest studio to the CBS studio. I would conclude that show, sign that show off, and then run out the side door and have a page there—he'd have the door open. And I'd run out the side door, tear across the Palladium Ballroom lot, and slide through Studio A. They had big double doors there, and they'd have that open for me, and I'd slide through to the middle of the stage and take one deep breath and say, "Ladies and gentlemen, from Hollywood—" and open

the next show. Boy, I'll tell you some days I thought I'd never get the words out. I wouldn't want to try it now! But I was a lot younger then!

*Everybody really had to run around! You didn't have any long-range contracts; you did what you could.*

That's right. Oh, yes, there were contracts, but not too many, you know. An awful lot of it was freelance. And I did shows where I'd say, "Well, I can't make any of the rehearsals. What's the part?" They'd say, "Well, it's so and so . . ." I'd say, "Well, if you want to mark the script, I'll come in and do it." And then I'd actually go in and do it, on the air, for the first time. But it was a comedy show and, you know, the gags and things that you at least were easy with and

## SPEAKING OF RADIO

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familiar with. But, it wasn't quite as easy as sometimes we make it sound in retrospect.

*We're so familiar with the character you played and, I'm sure, created on the Jack Benny series. Yet, he wasn't always the man behind the railroad counter or the floorwalker.*

Jack always referred to him as his "Nemesis." Well, the Nemesis character, because I played a variety of things, were all the same fella. And he never had a name, like Mr. Kitzel. But if Jack ever referred to him by name, he just called me my name, Mr. Nelson.

I'd meet people on the street and they'd say, "Hey, you're—you're that fellow on the Jack Benny Show!" I'd say, "Yeah." They'd say, "What's your name?" because they really didn't know.

*Now you also worked on some of the biggest network comedy shows, doing other things, too.*

Oh sure, sure. I was in the Blondie show. I was the next door neighbor, Herb Woodley. I was regular on that. And I worked with Eddie Cantor . . . I worked with just about anybody you want to name in the comedy field. I wasn't a regular on all those shows, but I worked them all.

*Whenever they needed a good comedy foil!*

Well, they used to have a standard thing. You'd go in and the writer would say, "Now, be as funny on this show as you are on the Jack Benny Show." And, I'd always say, "You write it as funny and I'll be as funny, 'cause I'm just as funny as the material. That's as funny as I am."

*You were with Parkyakarkus, too, weren't you?*



Yes, yes. I was a regular with Parkie. I did a running character, I can't even remember the name of it now. It was not a long series, it didn't last long. And Parkie, of course, unfortunately, had an operation that wasn't successful and he ended up in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. He had a back problem.

*Well, how did you land these shows? You get a job with Jack Benny, for example. Do they just come to you or did you have to go out and hunt for them?*

In the later days, you just got the calls. Now, I'm not saying all actors did that, but I never went out after jobs. I didn't call directors just to say, "Why don't you use me on your show?" or anything like that. But in the very early days, back in those earlier days that I was talking about when I was doing the five dollar shows and the three dollar shows, and that type of show—then, then you kept a little book, boy, and you knew exactly when that director cast and you'd call him up. You knew whether to tell him

a joke and hang up or whether to ask him for a job or what to do. And, oh, I was famous for my little black book at that time, because I knew them all and I knew how to approach them. And you had to do that then because you were fighting for very little money. And if you didn't go around and see them and remind them that you were alive, you just didn't get the calls. But, as the business got bigger, and there were more people listening to the shows, more people would catch that show and say, "Hey, why don't we use him next week?" and so on. So, I think that's the way our calls came, mainly, in the later days.

*I'd like to find out what it took to put on a Jack Benny Show.*

The Jack Benny Show was really quite easy to do. I'm talking now from the actors' standpoint. Obviously, the writing was meticulous. Jack had honed a lot of that writing. He sat with the writers a great deal. If it came down to a rock bottom decision as to a joke—in or out—it would be very often Jack's decision that made that happen. But for an actor, it was a very simple show to do. You'd go in, say on Saturday. You'd read through once. Just sit down, read the script straight through, get up and leave. And you'd come back in on Sunday. You'd read once, around the table, go and read it once on the "mike," and that's all until show time. And it was just that easy to do.

*The whole thing was really right in there with the writing!*

Well, it was that and also that Jack knew his people, and they wrote for those people. And, Jack had a great, great thing that I don't think any other comic in the business had. If you were to pick up a Jack Benny script and read it, you'd say, "Well, wait a minute. Where are Mr. Benny's jokes?" Because Jack didn't do jokes. He did

looks, he did takes, he fed, really the actors around him. That's the way he conducted his show. The big jokes were in the hands of the people who surrounded him, which was most unusual. And it shows that he had tremendous confidence in himself.

There were a lot of—I could name one, and I won't—but there was one man who was very famous as a comedian and when you would do the dress rehearsal, if you had a big joke that got a big laugh, when you came back to do the show, you didn't have that joke. *He* had the joke. And very often he couldn't understand why the joke didn't play on the show like it had in the rehearsal. And the reason was, it was built for you and it wasn't built for him. But he never learned that lesson. But Jack, on the other hand, had no such insecurity, and so he gave those jokes to his people. He surrounded himself with characters that people expected to hear. As soon as he said, "Oh Mister—" people said, "Oh, boy here it comes. He's gonna get it!" And if he said, "Excuse me—" and the fellow said, "Si," and you'd say, "Oh boy, here it comes. Now they're gonna do that routine!" The people were in on it and I think they enjoyed being in on it. And I guess that fact that the show stayed on top all the years that it did proved that.

*How long were you with Jack on radio? Through the whole radio time?*

Through the entire radio time, yes. That, of course, as I said, was just an insert on an eastern show, but from the time he started his own show out here, I worked with him. I did not work regularly right at the beginning. I worked just spasmodically. But after about two years, I guess, I was pretty steady. We'd do 39 shows in the season and I'd do, oh, anywhere between 25 and 30 of those shows.

*That's pretty regular! You made a*  
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## SPEAKING OF RADIO

*nice, easy move into television with him, then.*

Yes. Well, television came along, you know, and you had to go with it. I kind of wish this business were still here, and I kind of think it would have been if we hadn't the same people in charge who were going to be in charge of television. I'm talking about the networks. I'm talking about the ad agencies. Because I think then you'd have seen a big fight between the two. I think they would have each fought for their share of the audience. And I believe, today, there is a very definite place in this country for good radio. But I guess the networks aren't much concerned about that, 'cause they're making more money this way.

*Radio in itself is an art form, if you want to get real heavy about it. But it should be able to provide the public with comedy and mystery and drama.*

That's right. There should be a great deal more variety than there is today. Today we have talk shows, we have news, but where are the kinds of things that we did in radio before? They're gone.

*Well, you've been part of so much of the great radio days and there's a lot of people out there who want me to say thank you for all the fine performances you've turned in over the years.*

Well, that's very kind of you, Chuck. It's been a gratifying business to be in, and it's given me a lot of pleasure and I'm glad it's given other people pleasure, too.

*If you were to be offered a job on another kind of Jack Benny radio program, and you were asked if you could spare some time to work in it, what would you say?*

Oooohhhhhh, can I!!!!!!

# GUESS WHO

## READERS SAY IT'S FRANK NELSON

And they were right, too! Our Guess Who from the August-September issue of the *Nostalgia Digest* was, indeed, Frank Nelson, Jack Benny's famous "Yeesss-man!"

The rules of the contest call for a drawing from all the correct entries to choose a winner. And we did:

### ROBERT J. MAIER MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Our winner gets a \$25 Gift Certificate from Metro Golden Memories in Chicago and a half-dozen old time radio cassette tapes from the Hall Closet.

And we send our thanks to everyone who entered.

Now, try your luck in our Add-A-Caption contest on page 32 of this issue.

Can I tell you who that is in the picture? Oohhhh, can I!! That's Frank Nelson, whom I know primarily from the Jack Benny radio programs as Jack's nemesis. I've also seen him on I Love Lucy a few times (Lucy loved him) as well as on the Jack Benny television program.

— MARY ELLEN LITTLE, Chicago

I'd like to take a shot at your Guess Who. I don't recognize the face, but his "Yes" may be familiar. Is it Frank Nelson?

— KEN DUMROSE, Chicago

My Guess is Dennis Day who was on the Jack Benny Show.

— PRISCILLA SANICKI,  
Round Lake Beach, IL



Guess who? George Fenneman, Grouch Marx' "yes man." I'm almost 100 per cent sure he is the one.  
— **ALPHONSE ARMIN, Hobart, IN**

It's Frank Nelson. You don't ask for a caption on the photo, but a good one would be "What do you think I'm doing laying on this fur? Posing for a Marilyn Monroe calendar?"  
— **HAL MENKE, Orland Park, IL**

This is strictly a hunch. I see no resemblance at all, but could it possibly be Jack Webb? "Yes, ma'am." P.S. I really enjoy your magazine and I'm sorry I can no longer enjoy your radio broadcasts we used to receive when we lived in Chicago.  
— **RON VASTOLO, Hanover, PA**

My guess is Gale Gordon. Enjoyed talking to you at Metro Golden Memories. I am sending all my friends to visit there.  
— **GEORGE MELCHIORRE, Chicago**

Yeeesss, I think your "Mystery Picture" is Frank Nelson . . . ooooooh, do I!" I listen to you weeknights and Saturdays and enjoy every minute of it.  
— **ROY FREDRICKSON, Joliet, IL**

My wife and I would like to make a guess on the baby picture in the August-September book. We said it is Mel Allen.  
— **MR. & MRS. GEORGE KRAUSS, Buffalo Grove, IL**

My guess is Mory Amsterdam.

— **MRS. BARBARA L. MURSCHEI., Morton Grove, IL**

I made my first visit to Metro Golden Memories while in Chicago over July 4th. Fan-

tastic! I spent \$60 on books, records and tapes because I figured I wouldn't be able to get back soon! In an effort to spend yet another \$25 there, I'll say that the Guess Who in the August-September *Nostalgia Digest* is Mr. Frank Nelson.

— **STEVEN THOMPSON, Covington, KY**

My guess for your "beefcake baby" is Dennis Day.  
— **JOYCE ROTHMAN, Morton Grove, IL**

It's that famous floorwalker and thorn in Jack Benny's side, Frank Nelson.

— **MICHAEL O'CONNELL, Wauconda, IL**

I must admit  
You gave me a fit  
But your mystery picture  
Was really a hit.  
At first it seemed  
Really a killer.  
But I knew in the end  
It was Marvin Miller.

— **DICK CRANE, Chicago**

Could that embarrassingly cute picture in the *Nostalgia Digest* be Jim Backus?

— **JOAN V. GROVES, Evanston, IL**

Could it be Art Carney?

— **SYLVIA COATES, Waukegan, IL**

Imagine . . . Hubert the Harris Lion on a bearskin rug! If that isn't Frank Nelson then I don't know a clue when I read one. Nobody who ever followed Jack Benny can forget the most famous Yes Man on our radio . . . and how many times have all of us tried to imitate (never that well) his "yeeeeeeeeesssss?"

— **FRED BONDY, Wilmette, IL**

# The Home Front

## RADIO AND THE WAR

By Todd Nebel



If you didn't read magazines and books—and even if you did—you had to listen to the radio during the war. Everyone did, if not for fun and enjoyment, then to get the news “every hour on the hour”. On any summer's day, and when windows were open, you could walk around a block and not miss a line when an important program was being broadcast. Perhaps prematurely, radio entered this “golden age” by the middle-thirties when, institutionally speaking, it was still in knee pants. By 1943, however, it had become a billion dollar industry that was vital to the war front and home front alike; an instant resource and main supplier of news and entertainment to the millions. (Television, you will recall, was still in its earliest stages

of infancy at the hands of RCA and other developers.)

During the war, the commercial broadcasting scheme was controlled by the major networks — CBS, NBC Red and Blue, and MUTUAL, as well as some 900 standard broadcasting stations. Their combined output could be heard coast-to-coast over some 60 million home and automobile radio receivers. In addition, the Armed Forces Radio Service transmitted many of the regular network programs to just about every part of the world thanks to the use of transcription recordings sent to the troops overseas. In fact, many of the popular network radio programs of the day were heard by troops at hospitals, rear echelon areas and even on the fighting fronts.

Except for the news programs, what you heard on the radio in a typical war year like 1943 was pretty much what you were accustomed to in the years before the war. The show scripts were war-angled and the comic gags had a GI twist, but beyond that nothing much had changed. Night after night in their regular time slots, there turned up such old favorites and rating leaders as “Fibber McGee and Molly”, “The Jack Benny Program”, “The Chase and Sanborn Hour” with Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, “The Bob Hope Show”, “The Aldrich Family” with Ezra Stone, “Lux Radio Theatre” produced by Cecil B.



**BILL THOMPSON**

DeMille, and Walter Winchell (Good Evening, Mr. and Mrs. North America and all-the-ships-at-sea-lets-go-to-press”).

For some of radios make-believe characters, however, wartime induction was the real thing. When Uncle Sam called, Ezra Stone, (who played Henry Aldrich on “The Aldrich Family”), went from radio teenager to real life Army Sargeant. The characters of The Old Timer, Wallace Wimple, and Horatio K. Boomer on the “Fibber McGee and Molly Show” all left for the Navy in the person of Bill Thompson. Daytime radio stars also were included. Arthur Peterson, who played Ruthledge “The Good Samaritan of Five Points” on “Guiding Light” left for war in 1944, as did Billy Idelson who played Rush on “Vic and Sade” and John Raby who played Harry Davis, the young husband to Joan Field, on “When A Girl Marries.”

Some real-life stars who more or less played themselves on radio and left to join the service were Rudy Vallee, Dennis Day, Glenn Miller and Red Skelton. But, just as important, many of the top stars of the day made their own contributions to the war effort by combining their talents in a production that was described by Time as “the best wartime program in radio”. The production was called “Command Performance” and it was distributed by the Armed Forces Radio Service for the troops overseas. With the emceeing of Bob Hope and others, over 1000 of these variety programs were produced. A galaxy of stars then donated their time and talent in hopes that they could bring a little laughter, a tear and maybe a recollection of home to the young soldiers away at war.

Radio on the home front, however, never let you forget that there was a war going on. In one way or another, in jest or somberness, this fact was driven into practically every program.



**EZRA STONE**

The big variety shows, for example, were from time to time, broadcast directly from any army camp with wolf whistles and cheers of the GI audience heard loudly in the background. War themes and slogans, diligently promoted by the OWI (Office of War Information) found a way into nearly every major program, if not internally or as part of a script, then as the “curtain speech” with the leading comic or singer stepping out of character to solemnly urge you to visit your local Red Cross Blood Bank, army recruiting station or to just refrain from travel.

To get you to do your share to win the war, the comedy shows, dramas, soaps and even the quiz shows never forgot to remind you how precious your freedom really was. The stars of the programs also were willing to give up a little time from their shows each week to talk about the urgent need for you to “Buy More Bonds!” and “Save Used Fats!” Incidentally, there was no arm twisting and nobody needed to be paid extra to give a special message on the government’s behalf. America was one unified whole in World War II, thanks to the part radio played in keeping the home front alive and well.



# TRIVIUS ◦ NOSTALGIUS ◦ TRIVIUS



Here's a scene from an old movie ("Outrage," 1950) that looks like it could use a caption. If you can come up with a good one, you might win a prize.

Any reader of the *Nostalgia Digest and Radio Guide* is eligible to submit an entry.

Just add your caption to the photo below and send this page or a reasonable facsimile to Add-A-Caption, *Nostalgia Digest*, Box 421, Morton Grove, Illinois 60053.

An extinguished panel of judges will select the five best entries. Winners will be selected on the basis of originality, creativity, neatness and aptness of thought and each will receive a \$10 gift certificate from Metro Golden Memories in Chicago. Decision of the judges is final and in case of a tie, duplicate prizes will be awarded.

Entries must be received by *Nostalgia Digest* no later than October 15, 1986 so we can print the winning entries in the next issue.

Have fun!



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## Personality Profile

**JACK WEBB** was born on April 2, 1920. He began his radio career in the middle 1940s in San Francisco on the ABC station. He announced, narrated and acted in many shows locally and on the network's west coast system.

His appearance as a "tough good guy" was in Pat Novak For Hire, set on San Francisco's waterfront. It was 1946 and Webb was just getting ready to seek his fortune in Hollywood. The next year he did move to Tinsel Town and left the Novak show. But his tough-guy character was "reincarnated" in a summer show for the Mutual network, where Webb perfected his clipped, monotone-style as Johnny Madero, Pier 13. It was a well-received summer series.

West Coast listeners of Pat Novak, however, were not thrilled with the actor who had replaced Webb in that series, so ABC asked him to reprise the Novak character, this time on the full network,

coast-to-coast, from Hollywood.

By the summer of 1948, Webb became Jeff Regan, Investigator for CBS and stayed with that series until 1949 when he hit the big time with the characterization that made him famous: Joe Friday, the hard-boiled, no-nonsense detective sergeant of the Los Angeles Police Department on *Dragnet*.

*Dragnet* premiered as a summer series on July 7, 1949 and was an immediate hit. The documentary-style police show was original and well-written and Webb stayed with it on radio thru the 1956 season.

But *Dragnet* made a highly successful transition to television in December of 1951, again with Jack Webb in the starring role of Detective Joe Friday. It ran until September 6, 1959, then went into re-runs in syndication. But another first-run network series—this time in color—began on January 12, 1967 and continued until September 10, 1970. Jack Webb died in 1982.

