

NOSTALGIA DIGEST ^{AND} RADIO GUIDE



GRACIE ALLEN

Come In and Browse!

HOLLYWOOD IN CHICAGO

YOU CAN SPEND A COUPLE OF DECADES GOING THROUGH ALL THE GOODIES YOU'LL FIND AT OUR STORE, LOTS OF GREAT GIFT IDEAS, LOTS OF COLLECTORS' ITEMS.



Metro Golden Memories



5425 W. ADDISON STREET, CHICAGO

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NOSTALGIA DIGEST ©

HELLO, OUT THERE IN RADIOLAND!!

BOOK SIXTEEN CHAPTER ONE
DECEMBER-JANUARY, 1989-1990

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

NOSTALGIA DIGEST MARKS 15 YEARS!	2
NOSTALGIA NEWSLETTER.....	3
Our First Issue, Reprint from 1974	
THE HOME FRONT	10
Radio and the War, from 1986	
THE FINE ART OF D-Xing	12
Reprint from 1985	
I REMEMBER IT WELL.....	14
A Tale of Two Fathers, from 1985	
NOTES FROM THE BANDSTAND	17
Reprint from 1975	
SO YOU WANT TO START COLLECTING RADIO'S?	18
Reprint from 1985	
CHRISTMAS WITH FIBBER MC GEE ...	20
Original radio script, from 1976	
DISContinued	26
Reprint from 1979	
SPORTS REFLECTIONS	27
Year the Cubs Won the Pennant, from 1983	
CROSSWORD PUZZLE	29
Reprint from 1977	
TIMES THEATRE TRIPLE FEATURES ..	30
Reprint from 1977	
OLD TIME RADIO CLASSICS	32
December-January Calendar	
THOSE WERE THE DAYS	34
December-January Listings	
THE GRACIE ALLEN STORY	39
Say Goodnight, Gracie By Terry Baker	
I REMEMBER IT WELL.....	48
Burma Shave Signs By Dan McGuire	
FILM CLIPS	53
The Christmas Carol Legend By Bob Kolososki	
THOSE GOLDEN YEARS OF RADIO	56
By Russ Rennaker	
WE GET LETTERS	58
Our Readers Write	

Thank you very much!

This is the 15th Anniversary Issue of the *Nostalgia Digest and Radio Guide*. We hope you'll enjoy reading our very first issue, which is reprinted from December, 1974 when we were the *Nostalgia Newsletter*. We've also included an editorial recap and some reprints of other interesting articles from past issues.

And as we begin our 16th year of publication, we want to express our thanks to all the contributors who have helped make this a very special publication. In particular, we send thanks to **Dan McGuire**, **Bob Kolososki** and **Karl Pearson** for their regular columns, to **Terry Baker** who, once again, writes our December-January cover story, and to artist **Brian Johnson**.

Special thanks, too, to **Holly and Bob Wilke** and the staff at **Accurate Typesetting** in Chicago and to **Joe and Andy Olcott** and the gang at **Booklet Publishing Company** in Elk Grove.

We have some other milestones to note as 1989 ends and the new year begins:

We complete four years of *Radio Classics* broadcasts on WBBM, Newsradio 78, on December 15, 1989.

Saturday, January 6th marks our *Those Were The Days* broadcast Number 1,000. It all began on WNMP, a 1,000 watt daytime radio station in Evanston and we'll repeat our first broadcast so you can hear how we have — and haven't — changed!

Saturday, January 13th marks our 750th *Those Were The Days* program on station WNIB, Chicago.

As the decade draws to a close, we'd also like to thank you for your loyalty in listening and subscribing. We hope you and your family have a happy holiday season. Best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year filled with good old memories.

Chuck Schader

NOSTALGIA DIGEST MARKS 15 YEARS!

Fifteen years ago we started a regular publication that has become the *Nostalgia Digest and Radio Guide*.

Our first issue was called the *Nostalgia Newsletter* and was a six-page multi-fold sheet that really was a newsletter.

It came as a result of listener interest in our *Those Were The Days* broadcasts on WLTD, Evanston.

More accurately, our newsletter was the ultimate result of what we at first perceived as *non-interest* on the part of listeners!

When we first went on the air in May, 1970, we asked listeners to let us know what they would like to hear us present on the air by calling or writing to us at the station. Nothing happened. We heard from one or two people but we didn't get any significant response.

We began to feel not too many folks out there in Radioland cared about our replays of the vintage broadcasts.

Then we decided to print a program guide which would be mailed free to anyone who wanted a copy. Our first sponsor, North West Federal Savings, agreed to underwrite the cost of mailing the little guide at no charge to listeners.

One Saturday in early summer, we offered to add listeners' names to a *TWTD Guide* mailing list for no charge, if they would only "send a boxtop, any boxtop at all" to us at WNMP, Evanston.

Within a week we had over 300 boxtops! We were off and running. Our *TWTD Radio Guide* was sent about every six weeks to a mailing list that finally climbed to more than 5,000!

By September, 1972, our sponsor had suggested that instead of mailing the free guide, our listings be incorporated in a monthly publication sent free to *customers* of the savings and loan.

TUNE IN TO
'THOSE WERE THE DAYS'

Every
Saturday
From 1 to 4 p.m.

PRESENTED WITH FUND MEMBERS BY
**NORTH WEST
FEDERAL SAVINGS**

WNMP
DIAL 1590-AM
REMINISCE WITH HOST
CHUCK SCHADEN
Executive Editor of the
PRESS-REPORTER JOURNAL
Community Newspaper Group

1970
T.W.T.D.
PROGRAM
GUIDE

After we announced this on the air, lines began forming in North West Federal's new accounts departments, with customers making deposits and specifically requesting the publication to get our weekly listings. (Naturally, this did not hurt our standing with the sponsor.)

By the fall of 1974 we had decided to begin our own publication and in December we started the *Nostalgia Newsletter and Radio Guide*, sent to some

CHUCK SCHADEN'S

NOSTALGIA NEWSLETTER

AND
RADIO
GUIDE

FROM THE HALL CLOSET • BOX 421 • MORTON GROVE, IL 60053



BOOK ONE • CHAPTER ONE • DECEMBER 1974

Hello, out there in Radioland!

THOSE WERE THE DAYS -- The Friday, June 12, 1942 issue of the Skokie News (serving Skokie, Morton Grove, Lincolnwood, Niles & Golf) reminded Skokie housewives that they could get extra sugar for canning purposes if they made application to the Skokie Rationing Board. The gals could get a certificate enabling them to purchase an extra pound of sugar for each four quarts of fruit they intend to can, with a limit of one pound per person in the family. (Today it's the price that rations sugar!)

ALSO IN THAT ISSUE was a (LINCOLNWOOD IGA (Touhy & Crawford) ad that offered shoppers a Leg of Lamb for 33¢ a pound, a pound of Maxwell House coffee for 32¢ and two packages of Kellogg's Rice Krispies for 23¢. If you were listening to Captain Midnight and wanted to send in for a 1942 Secret Decoder, you had to get the inner seal ring from a jar of Ovaltine and the IGA had that on special, too: 35 cents for a small "can." (Just add a dime for "postage and handling" and soon the decoder arrived.)

VARIETY recently reported that the World Entertainment Corporation is about to distribute -- to theatres for kiddie matinees -- many of those good old Republic movies and serials. There'll be some 44 John Wayne features, 87 with Roy Rogers and others starring Laurel and Hardy, Olson and Johnson, W.C. Fields and Bergen and McCarthy. The serials will include Captain America, Zorro and The Masked Marvel. A whole new generation will get to have some good old Saturday-afternoon-at-the-movies fun. (Might even give us some competition!)

DOES ANYONE HAVE ONE OF THE SILVER STARS shown at the left? Listeners to the Cinnamon Bear series in the 1940s sent in for them. You qualify for an invisible facsimile if you let us know that you have one. And how about a Cinnamon Bear Coloring Book?

HOPE YOU LIKE THIS FIRST ISSUE of our new Newsletter. We know one thing already: not enough room for everything! We'll solve that problem next month with smaller type! Thanks for turning us on!

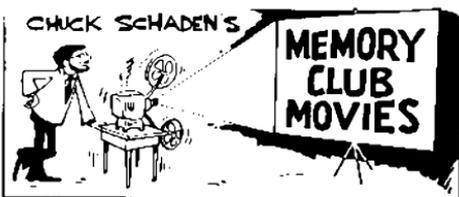


CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA NEWSLETTER AND RADIO GUIDE (© 1974) IS A PUBLICATION OF THE HALL CLOSET, BOX 421, MORTON GROVE, ILLINOIS 60053. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATE FOR 12 MONTHLY ISSUES IS \$6.

1,150 listeners who subscribed in advance, sight-unseen.

We retained the aforementioned six-page, multi-fold format for ten months,

until October, 1975 when we revised our format to a 16-page "tiny-tabloid" size. We continued to publish the Newsletter in that shape, sometimes with as many as 32



Our Memory Club is on a brief winter vacation, but it will resume on Saturday evening, January 18th with a 1975 season of good old movies from the 1930's and 1940's. The Club meets in the Community Room at North West Federal Savings, 4901 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago. There's ample free parking at the rear of the office and there's CTA transportation to the door. Memory Club movies begin at 8 p.m. and next year, the doors will open at 7:30 p.m. "Dues" are \$1 per meeting and everyone who reads this is a member of the Memory Club

We'll have complete details in the next issue of the Nostalgia Newsletter, but as of now, here's the tentative list of Memory Club movies for the first part of next year.

- SATURDAY, January 18th**
GO INTO YOUR DANCE (1935) Al Johnson, Ruby Keeler
- SATURDAY, January 25th**
SUNNY SIDE UP (1929) Janet Gaynor, Charles Farrell
- SATURDAY, February 1st**
SHALL WE DANCE (1937) Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers
- SATURDAY, February 8th**
A NIGHT AT THE OPERA (1935) The Marx Brothers
- SATURDAY, February 15th**
NO MAN OF HER OWN (1932) Carole Lombard, Clark Gable
- SATURDAY, February 22nd**
NOW AND FOREVER (1934) Carole Lombard, Gary Cooper, Shirley Temple
- SATURDAY, March 1st**
SING YOU SINNERS (1938) Bing Crosby, Fred MacMurray
- SATURDAY, March 8th**
WHITE WOMAN (1933) Carole Lombard, Charles Laughton
- SATURDAY, March 15th**
BROADWAY GONDOLIER (1935) Dick Powell, Joan Blondell
- SATURDAY, March 22nd**
ARGENTINE NIGHTS (1940) Andrews Sisters, Ritz Brothers
- SATURDAY, March 29th**
YOU'RE A SWEETHEART (1937) Alice Faye, George Murphy, Ken Murray
- SATURDAY, April 5th**
RIUMBA (1935) George Raft

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

SATURDAY - 1 to 4:15 PM • WLTD • 1590AM

- SATURDAY, December 7th**
RADIO TO ADDRESS CHRISTMAS CARDS, BY:
1. FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (Dec. 9, 1941)
 2. COMMAND PERFORMANCE (Christmas, 1943) Bob Hope, Kay Kyser, Jimmy Durante, Nelson Eddy, Spike Jones, Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Dinah Shore
 3. CASFY, CRIME PHOTOGRAPHER (Dec. 19, 1946) Christmas shopping

- SATURDAY, December 14th**
RADIO TO WRAP CHRISTMAS GIFTS BY-
1. COMMAND PERFORMANCE (Christmas, 1944) Bob Hope, Xavier Cugat, Jerry Colonna, Jimmy Durante, Dinah Shore, Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Spike Jones, Kay Kyser, Dorothy Lamour, Danny Kaye, W.C. Fields, Judy Garland, Spencer Tracy, Lee J. Cobb.
 2. LIFE WITH LUIGI - Christmas program

- SATURDAY, December 21st**
RADIO TO TRIM THE TREE BY
1. THE WHISTLER (Dec. 24, 1950) Three Wise Guys
 2. COMMAND PERFORMANCE (Christmas, 1945) Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Dinah Shore, Harry James, Herbert Marshall, Jimmy Durante, Ginny Simms, Johnny Mercer, Judy Garland, Ed "Archie" Gardner, Frances Langford, Kay Kyser, Frank Sinatra.
 3. SUSPENSE (Dec. 21, 1958) Out For Christmas starring Raymond Burr

- SATURDAY, December 28th**
SEASON'S GREETINGS!
1. THEATRE GUILD ON THE AIR (Dec. 24, 1977) David Copperfield starring Boris Karloff, Richard Burton, Cyril Ritchard
 2. JACK BENNY PROGRAM (Dec. 28, 1941) Annual New Year's Play
 3. LUX RADIO THEATRE (March 10, 1947) It's A Wonderful Life starring James Stewart

HALL CLOSET SPECIAL

MONDAY-8 to 10:30PM • WTAQ • 1300AM

Southwest suburban vintage radio fans will enjoy tuning in to our new series of HALL CLOSET SPECIALS, heard every Monday evening from 8 to 10:30 p.m. on LaGrange station WTAQ (1300-AM). The first program in the series will be presented on:

- MONDAY, DECEMBER 2nd - Salute to Jimmy Durante
MONDAY, DECEMBER 9th - Salute to the Mystery Makers
MONDAY, DECEMBER 16th - Salute to Bing Crosby
MONDAY, DECEMBER 23rd - Salute to Christmas
MONDAY, DECEMBER 30th - Salute to Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland

pages, until October, 1983 when it became the *Nostalgia Digest and Radio Guide*. (The first issue of the *Digest* called itself "The New and Improved Nostalgia -4- Nostalgia Digest

Newsletter.")

By this time, color had been added to our cover, we were publishing a magazine with more pages, photos and articles and we



THE HALL CLOSET

MONDAY THRU FRIDAY • WLTD • 1590AM
"DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL!"

MONDAY, December 2
MAIL CALL (1940's) Olsen & Johnson, Frank Parker
GREAT GILDERSLEEVE Hal Peary
PEPPER YOUNG'S FAMILY—Chapter 62
BIG SISTER - Chapter 62

TUESDAY, December 3
LIMIT BATH CLUB REVUE (1933) Fred Allen
BILL STERN'S SPORTS NEWSREEL (1945)
JACK ARMSTRONG, THE ALL-AMERICAN BOY (1947)
DANGER WITH GRANGER—Christmas drama

WEDNESDAY, December 4
BOB HOPE SHOW (1946) Tyrone Power
NATIONAL BARN DANCE—Bob Aicher, Arkie Red Blanchard
ONE MAN'S FAMILY (1949) Book 72, Chapter 11

THURSDAY, December 5
JACKIE GLEASON TV SHOW (Dec. 20, 1952)
Soundtrack from the TV show - Art Carney, Audrey Meadows, Joyce Randolph.

FRIDAY, December 6
LIFE OF RILEY (1945) William Bendix
CHANDU THE MAGICIAN—Chapter 64
THE FAT MAN—*Murder Sends A Christmas Card*

MONDAY, December 9
AMOS 'N' ANDY (1949)
CARNATION HOUR (1948) Buddy Clark, Ken Darby Singers
PEPPER YOUNG'S FAMILY—Chapter 63
BIG SISTER - Chapter 63

TUESDAY, December 10
KRAFT MUSIC HALL (1943) Bing Crosby, Phil Silvers
JACK ARMSTRONG (1941)
DAMON RUNYON THEATRE, *Dancing Dan's Christmas*

WEDNESDAY, December 11
CONTINENTAL CELEBRITY CLUB (1946)
Jackie Kulk, Hildegard
JACK BENNY SHOW (1957)
ONE MAN'S FAMILY (1949) Book 72, Chapter 12

THURSDAY, December 12
PHIL HARRIS-ALICE FAYE SHOW (1949)
GUEST STAR—*Meaning of Christmas*—Red Skelton
BILL STERN'S SPORTS NEWSREEL (1945)
CHRISTMAS DRAMA *Miracle of Christmas*
Thomas Mitchell

FRIDAY, December 13
GRAND OLE OPRY—Christmas show
CHANDU THE MAGICIAN—Chapter 65
SUSPENSU (1959) *Korean Christmas Carol*

MONDAY, December 16
JILL'S ALL TIME JUKE BOX (1944)
Christmas show
BOB HOPE SHOW (1940's) Bing Crosby, Jack Kirkwood
PEPPER YOUNG'S FAMILY—Chapter 64
BIG SISTER—Chapter 64

TUESDAY, December 17
EDDIE CANTOR SHOW (1944)
GUEST STAR, *Stand In for Santa*—MacDonald Carey
JACK ARMSTRONG (1941)
THIS IS YOUR F.B.I. (1948) *Return of St Nick*

WEDNESDAY, December 18
JACK BENNY PROGRAM (1944)
AMOS 'N' ANDY MUSIC HALL (1950's)
ONE MAN'S FAMILY (1949) Book 72, Chapter 13

THURSDAY, December 19
CHRISTMAS JUBILEE—Ernie Whitman, Court Basie, Lena Horne, Bing Crosby, Delta Rhythm Boys
MILTON BERLE SHOW (1947) Salute to Christmas
RADIO CITY PLAYHOUSE (1949) *'Twas The Night Before . . .*

FRIDAY, December 20
KRAFT MUSIC HALL (1934) Paul Whiteman, Jack Teagarden
CHANDU THE MAGICIAN - Chapter 66
HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (1948) *The Desert Shall Rejoice*—John Hodiak

HELLO OUT THERE
IN
ADVERTISING LAND!
THIS SPACE AVAILABLE!!

were distributing by mail six times a year, an issue every other month. We were more than a newsletter. We were, in fact, a little magazine.

Now we've reached an important milestone . . . our 15th anniversary.

We take this occasion to share with you a complete copy of our first issue so you

MONDAY, December 23

BOB HOPE SHOW (1953) Frank Sinatra
PHIL HARRIS-ALICE FAYE SHOW (1949)
Jack Benny
FIRST NIGHTER *Little Town of Bethlehem*—
traditional First Nighter Christmas drama
starring Barbara Luddy and Olan Soule.
PEPPER YOUNG'S FAMILY Chapter 65
BIG SISTER Chapter 65

TUESDAY, December 24

CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE HALL CLOSET

Special All-Day Show from 6 a.m. until 4
p.m., host Chuck Schaden presents:
6 a.m. THE RAILROAD HOUR (12-25-50)
Gordon MacRae
7 a.m. CHARLIE MCCARTHY SHOW (12-
24-??) Edgar Bergen
8 a.m. FIBBER MC GEE & MOLLY (12-23-47)
9 a.m. SUSPENSE (12-17-61) Yoelide
Miracle
10 a.m. OUR MISS BROOKS—Eve Arden
stars in Christmas bit
11 a.m. DRAGNET Jack Webb in The Christmas
Show
Noon THE CINNAMON BEAR—The final
chapter
AMOS 'N' ANDY (12-24-41)
1 p.m. A CHRISTMAS SING WITH BING
(12-24-58)
2 p.m. HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (12-23-
48) Silent Night
3 p.m. BURNS AND ALLEN—Christmas Day
broadcast, 1940's
THE CINNAMON BEAR repeat of
final chapter

WEDNESDAY, December 25

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM WLTD—no regular
programming on WLTD on this Christmas Day.
Christmas music and special features from sunrise
to sunset.

THURSDAY, December 26

MEL BLANC SHOW (12-31-46)
BOB SWEENEY & HAL MARCH SHOW (12-31-47)
SUSPENSE (12-31-61) The Old Man

FRIDAY, December 27

JIMMY DURANTE SHOW (12-31-47) Garry
Moore & Red Skelton
CHANDU THE MAGICIAN Chapter 67
SUSPENSE (12-28-58) *The 32nd of December*—
Frank Lovejoy

MONDAY, December 30

MILTON BERLF SHOW (12-30-47)
JIMMY DORSEY REMOTE (12-31-56)
PEPPER YOUNG'S FAMILY Chapter 66
BIG SISTER—Chapter 66

TUESDAY, December 31

THE BIGGEST BIG BAND REMOTE OF THEM
ALL! All regular programming, including the
Hall Closet, is pre-empted today for a New
Year's Eve special featuring Mike Schwinner
and Karl Pearson. They'll have 10 hours of
radio band remote broadcasts.

WHEN RADIO WAS RADIO

THUR. AND SAT. 8 TO 9PM • WBEZ • 91.5 FM

Vintage radio broadcasts from Chuck Schaden's
Hall Closet collection may be heard every Thursday
evening at 8 p.m. on the Chicago Board of Education
station WBEZ (91.5 FM). The weekly hour of old
time programs for National Public Radio is repeated
the following Saturday evening at 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, December 5th
OZZIE AND HARRIET (1944)
MR. & MRS. NORTH The Filled Skate

THURSDAY, December 12th
LIX RADIO THEATRE (1951) Sunset
Boulevard starring William Holden and
Gloria Swanson

THURSDAY, December 19th
ALL-STAR CHRISTMAS PROGRAM fea-
turing Armed Forces Radio re-broadcasts of
the Charlie McCarthy Show (12-24-44)
and the Kraft Music Hall (12-25-49) with Al
Jolson and Boris Karloff.

THURSDAY, December 26th
NEW YEAR'S EVE DANCE PARTY from
Armed Forces Radio on Dec. 31, 1945.
Across the country on New Year's Eve with
remotes featuring Count Basie, Freddy
Martin, Woody Herman, Gene Krupa, Henry
King, Louis Armstrong, Jimmy Dorsey, Les
Brown, Stan Kenton, Tommy Dorsey

RADIO FOR KIDS

SATURDAY - 10 TO 11 AM • WLTD • 1590AM

Listen for the continuing adventures of BLACKSTONE,
the MAGIC DETECTIVE and to SMILED GIBSON of
the INTERNATIONAL SECRET POLICE. And set
your Do-It-Yourself Secret Decoder to A EQUALS 16
to find out what our special weekly story will be.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7th
26-9-24-19-18-22 26-13-23-9-22-4-8

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14th
19-12-11-26-15-12-13-20 24-26-8-8-18-23-2

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21st
7-19-22 8-14-26-15-16 12-13-22

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28th
13-22-22-7 7-19-22 14-22-22-16-8

The continuing adventures of the CINNAMON
BEAR are being heard Monday thru Friday afternoons
on WLTD (1590-AM) at 12:05 p.m. and again at
3:30 p.m. The final chapter of the 26-
chapter story will be presented on Christmas Eve
during the 10-hour *Hall Closet* Christmas special on
WLTD.

(Note to FM listeners: WBEZ (91.5 FM) is pre-
sented the Cinnamon Bear every day at 10 a.m. and
again at 3:40 p.m.)

can see how we've grown.

And, in the pages that follow, you'll find
some articles from our 15-year past. We
hope you'll enjoy them — again, if you're
-6- *Nostalgia Digest*

a long-time subscriber, or for the first time
if you've joined us along the way.

We had a difficult time selecting reprint
articles for this anniversary issue. A lot of



IF YOU LIKE old movies, then be sure to catch Channel 9 on Monday evenings for WHEN MOVIES WERE MOVIES ...on Channel 44 at various times... and if EARLY TV SHOWS from the 1950s and 1960s is your thing, than catch 44 for LEAVE IT TO BEAVER, MR. LUCKY, PETER GUNN and SUPERMAN. Each series is on throughout the week. Check 32 for THE UNTOUCHABLES and 9 offers DICK VAN DYKE, FATHER KNOWS BEST and I LOVE LUCY. GROUCHO's on 32 at 7&10. SHERLOCK HOLMES is on radio at 10:30 p.m. Fridays, WFMT (96.7) and of course, there's the CBS RADIO MYSTERY THEATRE, 7 nights a week at 10:30 on WBBM (760-AM).

WGN (720-AM) usually plays an old-time radio program during Floyd Brown's show, Sunday night at 8:30.

WE HAVE TRIED to get regular advance listings from the stations mentioned here, but we have a clash of deadlines. We're working on it!

SCHADEN IN PERSON at North Shore Kiwanis, Dec. 3; Rogers Park Kiwanis Dec. 19; and at NWF Senior Savers Club, Dec. 15.

HAPPY DECEMBER BIRTHDAY to Deanna Durbin, celebrating on the 4th.

Judy Garland gets a scare as cops unearth a kidnap plot!

HARDLY was Judy Garland over the thrill of being named the year's best juvenile and winning an Academy Award, than three carloads of police skidded to a stop in front of the Garland Canyon home, announced a threat had been made to kidnap Judy—and that they were there to see the plot wasn't carried out. Police radios crackled with instructions, cars were stopped, strangers questioned. The neighborhood was in an uproar in a jiffy.

Soon Robert Wilson, a 19-year-old Buffalo, N. Y. transient, was in custody. His plot to abduct the young singing star, drive her into the mountains and hold her for \$50,000 ransom resulted in his being booked on a charge of suspicion of kidnaping and

being held for a mental examination. He had become panicky, "tipped off" the police to his plan via telephone. It was this "tip off" on his own contemplated crime that proved his undoing.

TO THE public, the news of the kidnap plot was very exciting. Judy herself can be excused for feeling a bit nervous about it. But to Hollywood, the threat was simply another in the never-ending real and imaginary plots against the stars.

Judy's studio (Methu-Goldwyn-Mayer) wasn't any too pleased over all the hue and cry. Officials branded all the excitement as a "super-colossal production by the police department."

Behind that attitude is to be found

the real story of the manner in which kidnaping threats are handled in Hollywood. Threats of one kind and another constantly are being intercepted by the studios, at the rate of about 1,500 per year. Few of these threats ever reach the public prints, and only in rare instances is the Federal Bureau of Investigation called in.

Usually these plots are handled almost entirely by studio police, who quietly and efficiently investigate each threat and take whatever measures are necessary to protect their stars. A lot is done, but little said. The public usually never hears about it—and the stars, themselves, except in rare instances, never know their safety has been threatened!

(from Movie and Radio Guide Magazine, March 23, 1940)



FIBBER MC GEE'S RADIO STAFF PHOTO was offered as a premium to those who visited a Johnson's Wax dealer in 1941. Thanks to Mrs. Norma Stack of Brookfield for sending this picture to our Newsletter. Last year Johnson's Wax offered a record of several McGee shows!

good material has been written by our columnists and contributors over the years.

We hope you enjoy browsing through our past with these reprint pages from

earlier issues of the *Nostalgia Newsletter* and the *Nostalgia Digest*.

It's been a wonderful 15 years. Every single issue has been fun for us and, we

PRESENTING THE HALL CLOSET'S

CASSETTE TAPE OF THE MONTH

DECEMBER

SEND TO:
THE HALL CLOSET • BOX 421 • MORTON GROVE, IL 60053

OR...
GET YOUR CASSETTE IN PERSON AT



**CHICAGO ON IRVING PARK ROAD
DES PLAINES ON DEMPSTER ST.
NORRIDGE AT HARLEM-IRVING PLAZA**

\$4.95

FREE LIST

OF PREVIOUS CASSETTES STILL AVAILABLE!
SEND A SELF-ADDRESSED, STAMPED ENVELOPE TO...**THE HALL CLOSET • BOX 421 • MORTON GROVE, IL 60053**

RADIO MILESTONES

AMOS 'N' ANDY

10,000th Broadcast

A nostalgic program narrated by longtime announcer Bill Hay from the November 16, 1952, Revell sponsored show. Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll reminisce about their radio career, how they met Kingfish, started the Fresh Air Taxi Company, and about Andy's famous romance with Madeline Queen. Funny!!

CHARLEY MCCARTHY

Last Program for Chase & Sanborn
Highlights of edgar Bergen and Charley McCarthy's 11 years with their sponsor. They talk about their first appearance on the Rudy Valley Show, about Charley's coming to the west with W.C. Fields, and the time Charley left Bergen to team up with Fred Allen. So come together to work with Mortimer Snerd, Learning Ken Carpenter, Ray Noble and The Inkspawns. From December 26, 1948.

**CHUCK SCHADEN'S
NOSTALGIA NEWSLETTER
BOX 421
MORTON GROVE, IL 60053**

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Here Are Some Good Radio Programs We Think You'll Enjoy!

MONDAY THRU FRIDAY

- 10 a.m. - Noon
MONTAGE with BRUCE DU MONT
Telephone talk, guests, music, listener participation
- 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.
TWO WAY STREFF with Bill Nigur
Narratives, stories, comedy, music
- 1:30 - 1:15 p.m.
IN YOUR TOWN with Ted Weber
Music, news, features, celebrity interviews

SATURDAY

- 8 - 10 a.m.
OPEN A NEW WINDOW with Steve Hart
Steve and his puppet friends with a program for youngsters of all ages. Lots of audience participation.



SUNDAY

- 8 - 9:15 a.m.
NATURE'S WAY with Bob Hoffman
Educational and entertaining stories for youngsters.
- 1 - 4 p.m.
THE YESTERDAY SHOP with Don Lucki
Music from the Big Band Era, Ragtime, Dixieland, Jazz

hope, for you, too.
Thanks for your support and encouragement.

They mean a lot to us.

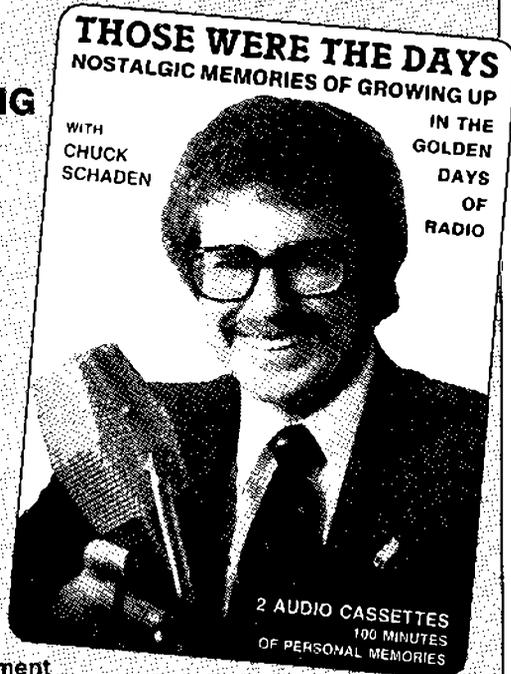
**Chuck Schaden
Editor & Publisher**

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The Home Front

RADIO AND THE WAR

Continued from
Nostalgia Digest
July, 1986

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



BILL THOMPSON

Nostalgia Digest

By Todd Nebel



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.

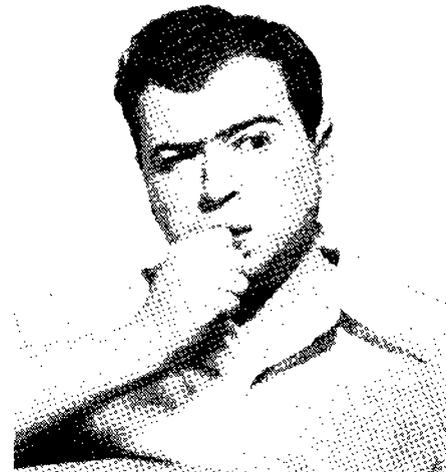
Except for the news programs, what you heard on the radio in a typical war year like 1943 was pretty much what you were accustomed to in the years before the war. The show scripts were war-angled and the comic gags had a GI twist, but beyond that nothing much had changed. Night after night in their regular 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.

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 Sergeant. 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.

Nostalgia Digest -11-

The Fine Art of D-Xing!

By JIM MELKA

D-Xing - listening to long distance or hard to pick up radio signals.

Now that winter is upon us many friends of the Radio Theatre have commented about crossover or interference on their AM radios. So, with this article, we hope to help you D-X the Radio Theatre.

Problems in reception are easier to solve when broken down into smaller parts, so that's what we'll do with this one, starting with

ENVIRONMENT

Environment is the world around your radio. Now if the lady in the apartment next to yours vacuums constantly, or the guy next door has a 2000 watt CB base station, there is not too much we can do about that. But there are several ways that you can improve the reception of your present radio. All of these are fairly simple, and you've probably thought of most of them.

Any appliance that has an electric motor in it can cause interference if your radio is close enough to the motor. (This is why clock radios are always suspect of being bad receivers) Is your radio on top of the old frigidaire or by the heater fan? If so, move it to some more convenient spot and see if reception improves. Moving the radio to a spot that's in a direct line with a window is a very good idea.

Building walls are filled with metal pipes and supports that cut down on your reception. Indeed, moving your radio (preferably a small portable) around your listening room, tuning it and at the same time "fine tuning" it should show you the perfect spot. Remember, AM radio signals are easier to pick up the higher your radio is, so you might want to re-

serve the top book shelf for your special "Radio Theatre Radio." And last, but not least, light dimmers, whether in walls, or on a lamp cord put out LARGE amounts of noise. They should not be used, or if absolutely necessary, they should be turned on full. OK, so you've tried all that, and reception still is not as clear as you would like. The next angle is easy. Or is it? Let's look at

YOUR RADIO

Many modern AM Radios have fallen prey to a thing that's creeping into almost all phases of our lives and that is "shortcuts" in construction. Manufacturers of radios have for many years now regarded the AM band as just a place where people turn for news and weather reports. This is unfortunate because many of the improvements in station selectivity and isolation that were developed in the 30's, 40's and 50's are not incorporated in these radios. This includes many modern stereos and component systems.

There is hope, however. This hope comes in the form of the highly selective long range radio. These portables, called "sports radios" by some manufacturers, are primarily designed so that the avid sports fan can pick up his favorite "play-by-play" even when vacationing in the out back. These well built beauties are just the thing for clean, clear reception because they have all the sophisticated circuitry built in. However remember when choosing a new radio, what requirements and features you will want for ease in D-Xing.

The radio should have:

1. A large, easy to read station grid
2. A large, sensitive tuning knob
3. Separate controls for bass and treble
4. A connection for an external AM antenna

5. An ear phone output jack (for tape-worms

A nice extra is AC-DC operation, as this allows radio to be your companion at home and away.

"Sounds expensive" you say? Well, it need not be too expensive. Many of the larger radio manufacturers make this type of set and since they are portables the price is kept reasonable. Also stereo is not needed because all of the vintage shows are monaural.

Talk to several reputable businesses that sell and repair radios. They can give you the straight information and make sure that the store understands that the radio will be returned for a full refund if your reception is not clean. Also remember, AM radio signals are very directional, so be sure to try all of the tricks that we told you earlier.

"What's that I hear? Ya say ya want more? Ya say yer not satisfied? Tell ya what I'm gonna do! (Go away son, ya bother me) I'm gonna tell ya all bout . . ."

AM ANTENNAS

The strange thing about AM antennas is that even the experts can't seem to agree on what the best length is. A good rule of thumb is that they should be at least 50 feet long and made of copper. Getting confused? Well just hold on there.

An AM antenna is simply a long exposed length of copper wire, set off by insulators from what ever it's held up by. This arrangement looks a lot like a clothes line in the back yard. An insulated (not exposed) wire is hooked to one end of the copper antenna wire to "lead into" your radio. Hooking the lead into a high capacitance discharge coupler is advised. This is a big name for an inexpensive little box kept outside your house that protects you and your radio from lightning. The antenna side of the coupler connects to the lead in and your radio. The grounded side connects a

steel or copper rod that's driven into the earth to a depth of over three feet. A solid round curtain rod works well for this. With the coupler in place, if lightning should strike the antenna, it's dispatched into the ground.

You can pick up everything that's needed at a good electronics shop or use a "short wave antenna kit" from places like Radio Shack.

ANTENNA TIPS

The higher your antenna the better. An attic or rooftop is the perfect spot for an AM antenna. If your antenna is in an attic, it's not exposed to the elements, and the high capacitance discharge coupler is not needed. If the antenna is outside, remember to have both ends mounted to something secure. If the antenna is mounted to a tree that moves in the wind, it may be broken in the next wind storm. Be sure in all cases that the radio itself is grounded. The ground screw on most radios equipped for external AM antennas is near the antenna connection itself. A wire should be connected from this ground screw to a water pipe, radiator, or some other good ground.

For even better reception slanting the antenna may be advantageous. This means crossing the radius of the signal. Taking a map and drawing a straight line from the radio station's tower to your antenna's location is the easiest way to find what angle the antenna will work best. Just cross the line from the radio station with antenna, like you would cross the top of the letter "T".

Well, I guess that's it. Sure do hope this helps and that you can continue to enjoy the Radio Theatre, by D-X!

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Thanks to faithful listener Jim Melka who contributed this article and who D-X'es us every night in his Forest Park, Illinois, home.)



I REMEMBER IT WELL

A TALE OF TWO FATHERS

BY DAN MC GUIRE

REPRINT from *Nostalgia Digest*, JUNE-JULY, 1985

Each June we have an opportunity to honor the male parent we may have neglected or failed to appreciate most of the year. I shall gratefully pay tribute to my father, still healthy and independent at 76. In this column, though, I would do homage to two other fathers, now gone, who were key figures in my "formative years."

Their names were Toby and Lafe. I knew that only from hearing their wives address them thus. To me they were Mr. S. and Mr. C. All grown-ups were Mr. or Mrs. to kids in that era.

Mr. S. was a banker (in the Wrigley Building, no less) and wore suits and ties. He and Mrs. S. attended the mysterious Catholic church. Mr. C. did interior work on house trailers (the kind owners towed with their own cars) and wore overalls to his job. He occasionally donned a suit and accompanied Mrs. C. to our Presbyterian church. At Christmas, Pastor Thurston would smile and say, "Happy holidays, Lafe. I'll look forward to seeing you again come Easter."

From my youthful perspective, they appeared as different as Mut and Jeff. Yet they shared one important trait. They were the fathers of my two best friends.

We all lived on the same block of Ottawa avenue. (Our favorite bus driver announced it as: "Otto-wawa, best street in town!") I spent almost as much time in their homes as in my own, and was looked upon, I suspect, as a pseudo-stepson.

It was Mr. C. who introduced me to the joy of fishing. One summer afternoon, he handed cane poles to his son, Wayne, and me and drove us to the Des Plaines River. We spent several hours pulling in bullheads, which he freed from the hooks. As he tossed each one back, he'd observe, "Nice fish, but not a keeper." By day's end, two 10-year-olds were hooked on fishing.

When I was 12, I drained my savings for a bicycle speedometer. I was trying it out on a back road when Mr. C. drove up and inquired what I was up to. I pointed out my new possession with pride. He grinned and said, "Grab onto the door handle and let's see how accurate it is."



The speedometer was fairly accurate up to 30 MPH. When it hit top speed of 50, Mr. C. said we were only going about 42. Without being told, I sensed that this test run was something not to be widely discussed. Had my mother or Mrs. C. heard of it, Mr. C. would probably have caught an earful.

Wayne's home had a front porch that was seven or eight steps high and extended the width of the house. It was completely closed in below, but Chuck and I had discovered a loose board that allowed us to squeeze into the area beneath the porch. The dank, gloomy space there was littered with rusty nails, broken glass and other debris left by the builders, but it was a wonderful "hideout."

Mrs. C. worried that we'd get hurt there, but her scoldings deterred us only for short periods. One day Mr. C. spotted us sneaking in. Feigning ignorance, he came and wiggled the loose board. In a stage shout, he called, "Hon, bring me my hammer and some nails. I'm gonna fix this dang slat."

There followed a terrible pounding. Chuck and I stood in frozen silence. To reveal our presence was to invite the wrath of two sets of parents. For the moment, entombment seemed the lesser evil.

We waited several minutes to be sure the coast was clear after Mr. C. finished his "repairs." Surprisingly, he had not done a very professional job. A little pushing from inside loosened the board again. Like thieves in the night, we crept out. Next day, we began searching for a new hideout.

One of my earliest recollections of Mr. S. is the World War II period when he and my father (both classified 4F) were volunteer air raid wardens. Slightly paunchy and wearing metal rimmed glasses, he looked somehow miscast in a tin pot helmet, lugging a large fire extinguisher



Illustrations by Brian Johnson

to training sessions.

He was a civic minded man. He served as Water Commissioner for several years and was active in promoting the growth and improvement of our unincorporated village. Though more reserved than Mr. C., he had a mischievous sense of humor.

Chuck was absent one day when I came calling, "Yo-oh, Chuck!" His father stood atop a ladder, painting gutters, so I lingered, watching, occasionally dis-

I REMEMBER IT WELL

tracting him with questions. (Perhaps he also worried about dripping paint on this young rubberneck.)

Pausing in his work, he said, "You know, I could paint faster if I used both hands. Does your dad have a left handed brush I could borrow?"

"I'll go see," I replied, and dashed home to inquire. Unfortunately, my father had worn out his only such tool.

Mr. S. wasn't unduly disappointed. After awhile he paused again and mused, "I'll bet this trim would look great with a two-tone paint job, like a barber pole. Think your dad has any striped paint?"

"I'll bet he does." I ran to check, but reported back, "No striped paint, but he's got a can of black and white checkered."

Mr. S. considered this possibility, but shook his head. "Nope. Won't go with this color."

More painting. More gawking. Then: "This brush is going to need a steam cleaning when I'm done. S'pose your dad could loan me a bucket of steam?"

I ran home and back again, a little less swiftly this time. "Sorry. My dad's bucket has a hole in it."

He nodded understandingly and was about to say something else when Chuck

appeared and called, "C'm'on, Danny, we're gonna play Peggie Move Up."

I waved goodbye to Mr. S. He sighed—regretful at losing his messenger, no doubt—and waved his brush. A giant glob of paint splattered on the sidewalk below. I'm not certain, but I think I overheard an uncharacteristic expletive.

Coming home from the store one day with an armload of groceries, I spotted Mr. S.'s car at the curb, slightly tilted. He got out to check. I stopped to help him gaze at a deflated rear tire.

"Pretty flat, huh?" he asked.

I nodded. "Want me to help you change it?"

His eyebrows did a Groucho imitation, but he replied matter-of-factly. "Sure, stick around. I may need some help."

I stood just out of the way, watching as he jacked up the car's rear and removed the hub cap. Our street was unpaved then, just dirt and gravel. When he had the first lug nut off, Mr. S. stopped, looking concerned.

"Now we have a problem," he said. "If I put these nuts down in the stones, we're likely to lose them."

I was about to offer to hold them when I noticed the dish-shaped hub cap lying between us. "How about puttin' 'em in there?" I suggested.

His expression brightened. "Good idea," he agreed. "By golly, I'm glad you hung around!"

When the spare tire was in place, he rewarded me with a ride the remaining three blocks to home. He even tuned the car radio to one of my favorite adventure series. That night, at dinner, I regaled my family with the report of how I had assisted Mr. S. with his flat tire.

Years from now, will any of my son's pals remember me as fondly as I recall Mr. C. and Mr. S.? I hope so. On Father's Day this year, let's remember all the fathers, our own and other people's, who enriched those glorious years of our childhood. ☐

NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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The NOSTALGIA DIGEST is published six times a year by THE HALL CLOSET, Box 421, Morton Grove, Illinois 60053. (312/965-7763).

Annual subscription rate is \$12 for six issues. A two-year subscription (12 issues) is \$20. Your subscription expires with the issue date noted on the mailing label. A renewal reminder is sent with the last issue of your subscription.

ADDRESS CHANGES should be sent to Nostalgia Digest, Box 421, Morton Grove, IL 60053 **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**. The Post Office **does NOT** automatically forward the Digest which is sent by bulk mail.

NOTES FROM THE BANDSTAND

by **KARL PEARSON**

REPRINT from Nostalgia Newsletter. OCT. 1975

AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II, GLENN MILLER'S MUSIC was still very popular and very much in demand, although Major Miller had disappeared over the English Channel almost one year earlier. Reissued recordings and broadcasts by civilian and AEF Band alumni on the reactivated NBC "I Sustain The Wings" series helped to meet part of the demand. But the fans also demanded personal appearances, so for this reason the Glenn Miller estate decided to carry on with Glenn's postwar plans: to continue the band on a permanent basis.

In January, 1946, the band made its debut with **Tex Beneke** as leader. Beneke was a logical choice, since he was Glenn's star sideman from civilian band days. The band, as the civilian band, had a high caliber of musicianship, which can be attributed to the high caliber of musicians, several who had previously played with Glenn. The band also had many good arrangements from arrangers such as **Jerry Gray**, **Bill Finegan**, **Norm Leyden** and a young **Henry Mancini**.

The band stayed together for four years, but ties between Tex and the Miller estate were severed for the main reason that Tex and several of the arrangers wanted to update the Miller style, something they believed that Glenn would have done.

In 1956, due to the success of the movie *The Glenn Miller Story* the band was reorganized once again, although **Ray McKinley** was the new leader. Ray had played with Glenn as early as 1932, when they were both sidemen with **Smith Ballew**, and had also been in the AEF band. This band, too, was a swinging outfit, featuring good musicians and McKinley's imaginative drumming.

December, 1966, saw Ray leaving the band and clarinetist **Buddy DeFranco** taking over. Buddy played with the **Tommy Dorsey** and **Charlie Barnet** bands of the 1940's. It was at this point that DeFranco tried to modernize the band, an experiment that didn't work too well.

At the beginning of 1974, DeFranco left, turning the band over to "**Peanuts**" **Hucko** who, after a few months, turned the band over to trombonist **Buddy Morrow** famous for his recording of "Night Train."

This was not the latest change in leadership. In March of this year, Morrow left for personal reasons and turned the leadership over to another trombonist, **Jimmy Henderson**. Jimmy has played with the **Hal McIntyre** and **Dorsey Brothers** bands and has led his own band for 20 years in the Los Angeles area.

*

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36 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH: **Harry James** was at Chicago's now-defunct Hotel Sherman in The Panther Room; **Benny Goodman** in New York's Waldorf Astoria; **Glenn Miller** on a road tour; and **Artie Shaw** at the Cafe Rouge of New York's Hotel Pennsylvania (the next October Shaw was on the west coast with his "Frenesi" band and Miller was at the Cafe Rouge).

October, 1939, also found **Charlie Barnet** at the Los Angeles Palomar Ballroom. On October 3, he broadcast over CBS from the Palomar, and the next night, while the band was playing, the ballroom burned to the ground, destroying the band's musical instruments and a good part of the arrangements. (Just a few days after this incident, Charlie and the band recorded "Are We Burnt Up" to commemorate the incident!)

So You Want to Start

A Collector Tells How to Get Started

BY BARRY JANOV

How does someone get started collecting old radios? Ask a dozen collectors and each will have his own special story. It may be because they grew up in the era when radio started. They may just find it intriguing or a friend may have introduced them to collecting.

A collector is anyone with two or more of a vintage item. Many people want one old radio as an accent piece in their home or because it was the same type of radio as the radio they grew up with. The true collector usually starts that way and then contracts the "disease," wanting to acquire more and more sets. The affliction usually branches off to old microphones, radio magazines, radio advertising pieces, tubes and anything even remotely related.

A collector usually meets other collectors and may even join a radio club. This opens more doors to buying, trading and selling.

Collecting wireless radio and early TV is everybody's ball game. The name of the game is to prevent these historical pieces from being thrown out and turn them into collectors' items instead.

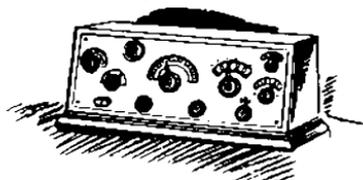


The radio broadcast era began with the first commercial broadcast by Dr. Frank Konrad over KDKA in Pittsburgh, PA. Although there was experimental and wireless equipment from about 1900, most of the commercially made sets were manufactured after 1920. Anything from 1900 until 1950 may be considered collectible. The hardcore historians have salvaged many of the pre-1920 artifacts. There's been quite a bit of activity in collecting 1920's battery sets, but lately the sets from the "Golden Days of Radio" (1930-1950), the early electric sets, have become quite popular.

Some people like to have their sets working while others are happy to have display sets and aren't concerned if they work.

The most desirable sets to collectors are the early wireless gear which looks like experimental equipment, battery radios with lots of dials used in conjunction with horn speakers, curve top (cathedral) models, and classic radios with chrome plated chassis.

Antique Radios can be a good investment. There are no standard prices, but I can give you some general figures. It



13 YEARS AGO

you had to be ambidexterous to
tune this radio

Illustrations from 1937
Haynes Radio Log

Collecting Radios?

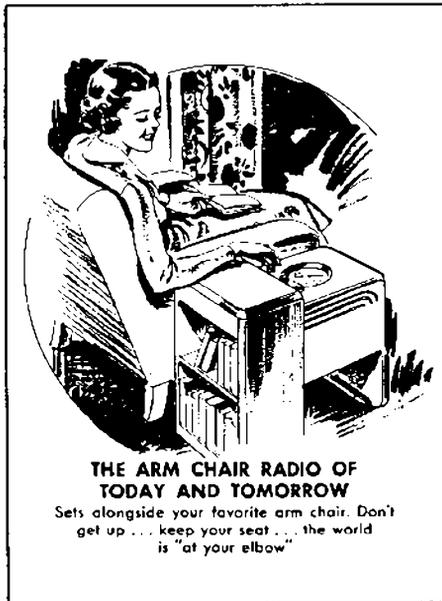
REPRINT from Nostalgia Digest, AUG-SEPT, 1985

really comes down to what someone is willing to sell for and what you are willing to pay. Values of radios vary in different parts of the country, primarily due to supply and demand.

A typical battery radio could cost \$25-\$75 with some models going much higher. Home made sets have little or no value to a collector. Electric sets range from \$5 up to several hundred dollars depending on rarity, desirability and condition. Floor model consoles have value to some collectors, but are not as desirable as many other types because most people lack storage space. A typical console might be worth \$35 to \$50, while one with a chrome-plated chassis, such as a Scott or McMurdo Silver, might be worth two or three times as much.

A cathedral radio in working condition might bring \$25-\$50 at a garage sale and the same set may be \$100 or more at an antique shop. Novelty and bakelite sets are gaining in popularity and selling for \$25 and up with some mirrored radios selling for several hundred dollars.

There are many local and national radio clubs and these organizations are

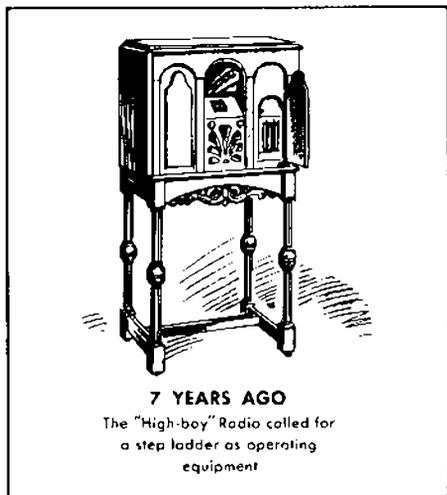


increasing rapidly as the number of collectors grow. The Antique Radio Club of Illinois was started with a handful of members five years ago and now approaches 200 members. Membership includes swap meets, lectures, bulletins and a good forum for radio collectors to congregate.

RADIOFEST, the major annual meet of the Antique Radio Club of Illinois will be held on August 9-10 at the Clock Tower Inn, Rockford, Illinois. It will include a swap meet, several technical sessions, an old radio contest and will be concluded with a banquet featuring Joe Slattery, veteran radio announcer.

For information regarding club membership and Radiofest write to me at: Suite 112, 2434 Dempster, Des Plaines, IL 60016, or call 299-1400.

Dr. Barry A. Janov is Vice President of the Antique Radio Club of Illinois and is a dentist who has filled the cavities of his home and office with vintage radio sets.



CHRISTMAS WITH FIBBER MC GEE!



By Phil Leslie



AN ORIGINAL RADIO SCRIPT
BY THE MAN WHO WROTE
FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY
DURING RADIO'S GOLDEN AGE

REPRINT from Nostalgia
Newsletter, DEC., 1976

ANNCR: Have you ever wondered how the department stores tie those beautiful bows of ribbon on your Christmas packages? Well, you won't find out by watching the man at 79 Wistful Vista — because here he is now, with a half-wrapped package, a mess of red ribbon, and a look of frustration, as we join —

FIBBER MCGEE!!

SFX: *SMALL WRAPPING SOUNDS . . . RUSTLING PAPER, ETC. UNDER:*

FIB: (CONCENTRATING) Now, I bring this loop around this way . . . cross this loop over it. . . . bring this end around it and give it yank! (GRUNTS) AW, DADRATTED THE DADRATTED THING! Slipped again!! (CRUMPLES WRAPPING PAPER AND THROWS IT DOWN) (SORE) What makes it so tough to tie a bowknot? Dog-gone it — I can tie my bow tie I learned to tie my shoelaces when I was only 9 years old!! Why can't I tie a simple—

SFX: *DOOR CHIME*

FIB: Awww — COME IN!

SFX: *DOOR OPENS AND CLOSSES*

CHUCK: Hi, Mr. McGee!

FIB: Well, if it ain't Chuck Schaden! Come in, boy! Sit down.

CHUCK: Thanks, I was —

FIB: I haven't seen you since the last time I saw you.

CHUCK: That's right. We were listening to some terrific old shows on that great old radio there —

FIB: My 1934 10-tube, super-heterodyne — yep.

CHUCK: And I was wondering — can the old set still do it, Mr. McGee? Does that theory of yours still work?

FIB: You mean the McGee Theory which states that "old radio shows never die — they're just in a holdin' pattern — bouncin' around in this old set, waitin' for me to tune 'em in"? You betcha it still works!

CHUCK: Ohh swell!! There were some wonderful Christmas shows back in those old days, and —

FIB: But I haven't got time to listen to radio today, Chuck. I been busier than a flea at a Fat Farm. Trimmin' the Christmas tree. Workin' on my Christmas gifts. Gotta get Wally Wimple's present wrapped here. Take this ribbon and tie a big red bow on it for me, willya?

CHUCK: Sure — be glad to. (*SMALL WRAPPING NOISES UNDER*) This is a fancy package you've got for him.

FIB: Yeah — it's just what poor Wimp needs. A football helmet.

CHUCK: Does Wimple play football?

FIB: No, but his wife does — with Wimp. (CHUCKLES) She kicks him around like gossip at a cocktail party. That poor guy's got more welts on him than a careless beekeeper.



CHUCK: There you are — how's that look?

FIB: Swell, thanks.

CHUCK: Say — you've got quite a few packages here. You must have been shopping every day.

FIB: Some of these presents I already had, Chuck. I'm gonna give Ole at the Elks Club this plastic bicycle pump Mort Toops gimme two years ago — the year I gave Mort the abalone lamp Fred Nitney had give me the year before -- which was the year I gave Fred the bowlin' ball without any holes in it, which Ole had gimme from the Elks Club for Christmas.

CHUCK: Your presents for each other get around like Musical Chairs, don't they?

FIB: Yep. I always put a lot of thought into my Christmas

givin', Chuck—

CHUCK: {DRILY} I can see that.

FIB: I found a terrific present for Old Gildersleeve yesterday! {HAPPILY} He won't guess in a million years what he's gettin' from me. It's on the floor over there — I haven't wrapped it yet.

CHUCK: This one? It's a big box.

FIB: Read what it says on the side there.

CHUCK: {READS} "The Handy Home-maker {INCREDULOUS} Horshoeing Kit"??

FIB: Yep.

CHUCK: For Mr. Gildersleeve??

FIB: Betcha. I don't just go out and buy any old thing for my friends, Chuck. I like to give a guy the kind of a luxury gift, that he'd never think of buyin' for hisself.

Continued . . .

- CHUCK:** You've got it there, all right. For sure!
- FIB:** I got a couple more presents to wrap here. . . . Here — get a load of this necktie I bought for the Old Timer. Ain't that a dilly?
- CHUCK:** Wow! What happened — the ketchup bottle explode on it?
- FIB:** (CHUCKLES) That's exactly what I ast the salesman at the Bon Ton, Chuck. He didn't think it was funny.
- CHUCK:** (AMUSED) Well, actually, I didn't either, but it was the best I —
- FIB:** He gimme kind of a high-nosed look and he says "This necktie, sir, is hand-painted" . . . "Whom by" I says, "One of Salvador's Dollies, usin' a barbecued spare-rib for a paintbrush?"
- CHUCK:** That was a shrewd guess. What'd he say?
- FIB:** Well, I gotta admit he gimme a very intelligent answer, Chuck. He says, "You want it or not, Mister? It's 89 cents." That clinched the sale.
- CHUCK:** Well, everything costs more than it's worth these days.
- FIB:** You can say that again! Migosh, take a look at that Christmas tree over there.
- CHUCK:** (TRYING TO BE NICE) Hmm. Well, it's nice.
- FIB:** Boy, I've saw some awful crummy Christmas trees in my day — but this is the saddest-lookin' saplin' I ever shelled out six bucks for! Maybe if I hang enough tinsel and stuff on it, it won't look quite so —
- CHUCK:** Good idea. Can I help?
- FIB:** Thanks. While I'm stringin' lights around the top here, you can be hangin' ornaments along the sides there.
- CHUCK:** Okay.
- SFX:** *CLINK OF ORNAMENTS, TINKLE OF LIGHTS, AS NEEDED THRUOUT*
- FIB:** How's it look so far?
- CHUCK:** (TRYING TO BE NICE) Oh, it looks — fine. I LIKE a tree that's not too straight and even. Some trees are so perfect they look artificial.
- FIB:** Not this one.
- CHUCK:** No sir. Like that curve in the trunk there — and this part here, where the limbs all grow on one side. That makes the tree look real.
- FIB:** Yeah — real lousy!
- CHUCK:** (GIVES UP — CHUCKLES) It is pretty lopsided, all right. But it'll look great when we're through with it.
- FIB:** I dunno. They just don't make trees like they used to, Chuck.
- CHUCK:** Mmmm. . . .No, I guess they don't.
- FIB:** When I was a kid we useta go out in the woods and tramp through the snow, and cut our own Christmas tree. And pull it home on our sled.
- CHUCK:** Ahhh, those are great memories, aren't they?
- FIB:** Yes sir, I useta get the prettiest trees, the wettest feet, and the worst colds of any kid in Peoria.
- CHUCK:** (CHUCKLES) I'll bet you did . . . Gee, it must have really been fun being a kid in the country in those days.
- FIB:** Yes, it was. I had a wonderful childhood, Chuck. (PAUSE) Boy! I wouldn't go through that again for a million bucks! Hand me another string of lights there. (JINGLE OF LIGHTS) Thanks.
- CHUCK:** When I was a little kid — the Santa Claus age — we didn't do this bit with the tree at our house.



FIB: Whattaya mean??

CHUCK: We just hung up our stockings Christmas Eve and went to bed. Santa Claus brought the tree — set it up, trimmed it, everything.

FIB: No kidding.

CHUCK: Christmas morning, there it was, with all our presents under it! . . . After all these years, I can still remember the excitement of our first look at that dazzling tree!

FIB: Sure. (CHUCKLES) Poor Old Santa musta been busy half the night at your house, boy!

CHUCK: I guess. (LAUGHS) I know my father and mother looked awful sleepy every Christmas morning.

FIB: Santa Claus didn't stop long enough to trim a tree at our house.

CHUCK: He didn't?

FIB: No sir. He just popped in — left a Flexible Flyer for one kid, a Daisy air riffle for another, and dolls for my sisters — then he put an orange and two English walnuts in everybody's stockin' — grabbed his cigar and zoomed back up the chimney. That was it.

CHUCK: His cigar?? No kidding, did YOU always leave a cigar for the old gent Christmas Eve — like we did?

FIB: Well, natch. (CHUCKLES) More bad cigars have been smoked by more fathers that was left for Santa Claus by more kids than — (PAUSE . . . CHANGE OF THOUGHT) Hey, how do these lights look, Chuck? I got four strings of 'em up so far. How do they look from down there?

CHUCK: (FADES SLIGHTLY) Mmm. . . well, you've covered most of the bare spots.

FIB: We can tell better with 'em turned on. Plug 'em in to that extension there — let's see how they look lit.

CHUCK: (SLIGHTLY OFF) Okay. Give me the plug and I'll . . . there!

SFX: *SHORT CIRCUIT CRACKLE. . . LIGHT BULBS BLOW OUT LIKE A STRING OF CHINESE FIRECRACKERS.*

CHUCK: Oh boy!

FIB: Aw for the — them dadratted lights did the same thing last year! Blew out everyone of 'em!

CHUCK: (ON) It's good to know they're consistent.

FIB: You know what I think? I think there's a short circuit in one of these strings someplace. We can hang some more ornaments on the tree now. (SLIGHT FADE) These are the prize ones, here on the table.

CHUCK: Ohh, yeah! You've got some real pretty ornaments there — some of these look quite old, too.

FIB: Yeah, these doodads have been in the family longer than I have, Chuck. My Grandmother brought these with her when she came to Peoria from the Old Country.

CHUCK: Ireland, huh?

FIB: No — Massachusetts.

CHUCK: Massachusetts? Continued . . .

- FIB:** Sure, there's some mighty old country around Massachusetts, boy. That's where this whole country began. Plymouth Rock.
- CHUCK:** Uh... yes. I never thought of it that way.
- SFX:** *RATTLE AND TINKLE OF ORNAMENTS, BEHIND:*
- FIB:** This little thing here, shaped like a church — that was to remember my Grandma and Grandpa's wedding day.
- CHUCK:** Isn't that sentimental! A copy of the church they were married in, huh?
- FIB:** No, they were married at City Hall, but you can't buy an ornament that looks like a city hall.
- CHUCK:** Probably just as well.
- SFX:** *RATTLE OF ORNAMENTS, AS*
- FIB:** This one here is from — Ohh! I wondered where this old Kewpie Doll was. I always put this on the tip top of the tree, Chuck — it's the most expensive decoration we got.
- CHUCK:** Expensive? A little celluloid Kewpie?
- FIB:** Yep. You see, when I and Molly had our first date, I took her to a carnival, and she wanted a Kewpie Doll.
- CHUCK:** Oh?
- FIB:** So naturally, Old Bigshot Me, I told her I'd throw baseballs at them little wooden milk bottles they had lined up on a shelf — which it was 3 balls for a quarter — till I won her a Kewpie Doll.
- CHUCK:** Oh — and this is it, huh?
- FIB:** Yep — that's the only 27 dollars and fifty cents Kewpie Doll I ever saw.
- CHUCK:** {LAUGHS} Well, the tree turned out fine, Mr. McGee. But it doesn't look quite as bushy as it did a while ago.
- FIB:** That's on account of it's been molting while we've been trimming. Dadratted thing drops more needles than a nervous tailor.
- CHUCK:** Still looks good, though. {FADING SLIGHTLY} You've sure got some fancy-looking packages here. I LOVE this one — wrapped with gauze and fastened with a bandaid. {CHUCKLES} I can guess who this is for.
- FIB:** {CHUCKLES} Yeah, Old Doc'll appreciate that. What it is, it's a box of El Felfa Corona cigars. The good ones — three for a quarter.
- CHUCK:** {BACK ON} Doctor Gamble smokes cigars, does he?
- FIB:** No — but he's got friends that drop in a lot.
- CHUCK:** Oh.
- FIB:** I'm over there three or four times a week myself. The poor guy's been out of cigars for a month.
- CHUCK:** Well, that's a mighty thoughtful gift. He'll certainly appreciate and — {PAUSE} Oh hey! Here on your mantel. Something new's been added, hasn't it?
- FIB:** That? Yeah, Wally Wimple came by this afternoon —
- CHUCK:** Ohh, Wallace Wimple — the world's greatest bird watcher!
- FIB:** Yeah. Old Wimp picked up his present from me — and gimme THAT.
- CHUCK:** What did you give Mr. Wimple?
- FIB:** Somethin' that every bird watcher who likes to work as close to the birds as Wimp does, needs, Chuck. A plastic umbrella.
- CHUCK:** Good thinking! And this was his Christmas gift for you.

FIB: Yep. . . You know, I coulda sat down and wrote out a list of the top seven hundred things I most wanted out of life — and a stuffed barn owl, mounted on a dead limb, holdin' a rubber snake in one claw, woulda never made the list!

CHUCK: (LAUGHS) Well, it came with good wishes — and it's Christmas time —

FIB: Yeah. Oh, hey, I almost forgot YOUR Christmas present, Chuck. (SLIGHT FADE) I was havin' trouble figurin' out what to getcha.

CHUCK: Yes, and I've been —

FIB: (FADES IN) But last night I found just the thing. Here you are. (RUSTLE OF PACKAGE)

CHUCK: Gosh, I haven't even bought yours yet. I've got a couple of ideas, but --

FIB: (EAGERLY) That's okay. Go ahead -- open it!

CHUCK: It's a pretty little box. (TEARING OPEN PACKAGE) It feels kind of heavy — (TAKES LID OFF BOX) Let's see here —

FIB: Read the card first.

CHUCK: Says "Merry Christmas to Chuck — from Mr. McGee."

FIB: Yep.

CHUCK: It looks like — (AMAZED) Ohhh, Mr. McGee! This is — it's a 10 dollar gold piece! Isn't it?

FIB: Yep. It was our weddin' present from Molly's rich Aunt Sarah.

CHUCK: A wedding present?

FIB: I was so disgusted with old skinflint only spendin' 10 bucks on her favorite niece's weddin' that I threw it in a shoebox in the attic, and forgot about it. Till I ran across it yesterday.

CHUCK: Well, it was 10 dollars then — but this thing is worth a LOT of money now! Gold has gone

way up!

FIB: You're not kiddin', boy!

CHUCK: I — I can't keep this, Mr. McGee. I appreciate it, but I couldn't let you give me an expensive gift like this, because —

FIB: Of course you couldn't, Chuck. You'd be embarrassed —

CHUCK: Yes, I —

FIB: — unless you could give me something just as expensive. And I wouldn't wantcha to be embarrassed. Turn the card over.

CHUCK: The card? Oh.

FIB: Read the other side there.

CHUCK: Says "Dear Mr. McGee — please accept this 10-dollar gold-piece as my Christmas present to you. Merry Christmas, Chuck Schaden."

FIB: (GRABS BOX QUICKLY) I'll take it, Chuck, I accept! (LAYS IT ON) A ten-dollar gold piece! Why, thank you, my boy, that's a VERY thoughtful gift. Just what I've always wanted! What a nice surprise.

CHUCK: (SAME MOOD) I'm glad you like it. Aunt Sarah helped me pick it out.

THEY BOTH LAUGH

CHUCK: Well, I'd better be going, Mr. McGee. Thanks for the Christmas cheer!

FIB: Cheer? Omigosh! I forgot to offer you anything to —

CHUCK: No, Mr. McGee. . . I mean the cheer you've given me during our visit.

FIB: Aw, pshaw.

CHUCK: Well, Merry Christmas, Mr. McGee.

FIB: Merry Christmas, Chuck. No — NO — not that door, Chuck. That's the hall closet!

SFX: CLOSET EFFECT. BELL TINKLES.

FIB: Gotta straighten out that closet one of these days.

DISContinued . . .



REPRINT from
Nostalgia
Newsletter
OCT., 1979

BY RICHARD WAGNER

A question which often comes up is: "How and why were 78 rpm records discontinued?"

It is a sad tale, but one that's worth the telling. Some of what follows is from personal recollections, so forgive any inaccuracies.

The 78's march toward oblivion began earlier than you may think. As far back as 1917, Thomas Edison experimented with long-playing records. Though the standard 10 inch disc of that period could accommodate up to three minutes per side, Edison developed one that could play for 20 minutes. He test-marketed them in 1923, but few people were willing to pay \$300 to \$500 for the special Edison Phonograph needed to play them. Too busy to waste time on such "minor" projects, Edison quietly scrapped the system within a few months.

In 1926 Western Electric chose 33-1/3 rpm as the speed for the new Vitaphone Sound Transcription Discs that were being developed for Warner Brothers Studios. Although far from perfect, and often out of synchronization with the film, this sound recording method heralded the age of talking pictures when the *Jazz Singer* premiered the following year.

After Radio Corporation of America's purchase of the Victor Talking Machine Co., "long playing" 10 inch - 33-1/3 rpm shellac records were introduced in 1931. Two serious mistakes were made. RCA Victor primarily issued inferior dubbings of previously recorded 78's and gave little or no consideration to an economical method of playing them. The American public of the early Depression years could find better things to do with \$29.95 than buy a separate player for some special records that didn't sound too good in the first place! And, squandering \$750.00 for the floor model version was unheard of. Besides, at that time, "radio was king."

During the 1930's several radio stations began to utilize 33-1/3 rpm - 16 inch discs for transcription purposes to delay or rebroadcast certain programs. Aluminum gave way to glass-based acetate and later, vinyl was used. But for home entertainment the 78 was still predominant. World War II would end that.

The success of 33-1/3 rpm Armed Forces

Radio Services transcription discs during World War II prompted Columbia to take a bold step in 1948. They introduced the 10 inch vinyl LP utilizing four tracks per side, which, coincidentally was equivalent to four 78's or an entire album. Philco began manufacturing a \$19.95 plug-in player as well as multiple speed combination radio-phonographs. A few months later, RCA bought out the first 45 rpm records and another inexpensive player. A bogus war developed between the new speeds and neither one was to be the loser. Although the end was still 10 years away, the clouds of doom were clearly on the 78's horizon.

As the 1950's progressed, the 78's decline in popularity hastened. At first all "Hit" singles issued were pressed on both the 78 and 45 rpm versions. This practice was discontinued in 1957 by the major labels like RCA Victor,

Columbia and Decca. For the next 3 years or so, 78's could sometimes be special-ordered. If enough requests weren't received to warrant a production run of a particular record, no 78's were pressed. Perhaps you can see why some records as late as 1959 and even 1960 may turn up as 78's while certain other earlier releases don't. A confusing picture awaits those who would collect 78's from this period. Finally in 1960, RCA Victor, the last holdout, gave in to popular demand and financial pressures. The 78 rpm record which has survived as the recording industry's standard for over half a century passed into history. Only a few of us "diehards" mourned the loss.

Many of those who encouraged the 78's demise have been proven wrong. What they expected to be re-issued on LP didn't always come to pass; master copies were lost or misplaced. Some were found to have been destroyed, accidentally or otherwise. Many recordings, despite their rarity, were considered unsuitable for LP re-issue because of limited appeal.

So here we are today, at the end of the century's eighth decade, finding 78's on the list of "collectibles" instead of on the junk heap.

Sports

* Reflections * * * * *

THE YEAR THE CUBS WON THE PENNANT

REPRINT from
Nostalgia Newsletter
AUG-SEPT, 1983

MICHAEL HAGGERTY



It seemed that the specter of war was hanging heavily over almost every part of our lives back in 1945, and its influence was being felt in major league baseball as well.

The playing ranks had been extensively thinned by the inescapable necessity of military service and there was even talk of doing away with baseball entirely for that year. The season was allowed to go on as planned, but the restrictions of the times were causing hardships to the already-depleted teams -- the Chicago Cubs among them.

In stark contrast to the presence of palm trees and warm weather of the sunny climes so synonymous with spring training, workouts for the Cubs were held under spartan conditions in French Lick, Ind. Exhibition games were played in Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky.

A nearby Catholic seminary, which had the resource of its own livestock was holding steak fries for its students on a regular basis in the midst of World War II meat rationing. The Cubs, no dummies, were taken up on their offer to give the students baseball clinics on those meaty occasions.

From these less-than-elegant beginnings the '45 Cubs would go on to capture the National League pennant. Under the happy-go-lucky managerial reins of banjo-strumming Jolly Cholly Grimm, the Cubs attracted more than a million fans -- 1, 037, 026 to be exact -- through the Wrigley Field turnstiles.

On May 18, after losing four straight to the pace-setting New York Giants, the

Cubs were nine games out of first place, mired in a six-game losing streak.

Then in late June, on their second eastern road trip, they won their last 10 games to take the league lead. They added their 11th after returning to Wrigley Field. They had put together what would be their biggest victory skein of the season and they stayed in first place without a break. Their margin over second place fluctuated from $7\frac{1}{2}$ games to $1\frac{1}{2}$ games.

Their most shining moment came in Pittsburgh on Sept. 29, which was also the date of the 23rd wedding anniversary of manager Grimm and his wife Lillian. The Cubbies clinched the flag against the Pirates in Forbes Field behind the pitching right-hander Hank Borowy, one of at least two bright spots on the mound staff.

Borowy had been traded to Chicago in mid-season after pitching his way to a formidable 10-5 record for the Yankees. He went 11-2 with the Cubs for an overall mark of 21-7.

Another rightly, Hank Wyse, compiled a 22-10 mark for the North Siders. They would not have another 20-game winner again until 1963.

The Wrigleys hadn't won a World Series since 1908 and the 98-56 Cubs were hopeful of closing that gap as they headed to Detroit to take on the Tigers in the autumn classic.

Hotel rooms were not plentiful, however, and they ended up with lodging on a pair of swaying summer excursion steamers docked on the St. Clair River for the off-season.

SPORTS REFLECTIONS

The Cubs' fate in the World Series turned to be as unpleasant as their rooming accommodations. They fell to the Tigers four games to three.

The following spring the Cubs prepared for the season on serene Catalina Island in sun-drenched Southern California. This time, among other amenities, they had the services of their own chef and the splendor of their spring training facilities was a vast improvement over the austere surroundings of French Lick.

But the magic of 1945 had somehow vanished for the Cubs. The National League championship of the preceding season had been their third under Grimm, the 16th in Cubs history and their fifth in 17 years.

And it was an accomplishment that the Cubs have not been able to match since.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

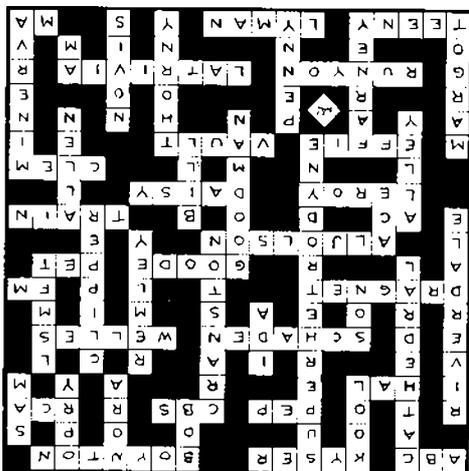
ACROSS

1. American Broadcasting Company
3. The old professor
5. Biology professor at Madison High.
10. Sponsored Superman
11. Columbia Broadcasting System
12. Radio Corporation of America
13. Sweeny's Pal
18. Happy seventh anniversary
19. The scare of our lives
20. Dum-de-dum-dum.
21. High fidelity broadcasting
22. Gunsmoke's Chester
23. Not carnation
24. The Jazz Singer
25. Replaced "A" and "B" batteries
27. Mysterious travelers conveyance
29. Water commissioner's nephew
30. The Bumstead's dog.
31. Skelton's "Hayseed" character.
34. Sam's Girl Friday
36. Holds Jack's fortune.
40. Created the character "Broadway"
41. Mayor of Wistful Vista
43. McGee's little friend.
44. Bandleader Abe _____
45. _____ Perkins.

SOLUTION TO NOSTALGIC CROSSWORD

DOWN

2. Great shape for a radio.
3. Best thing for an irritated throat?
4. _____ radio circuit.
5. Pepsodent's hope.
6. Mrs. Charles.
7. Grand Ole
8. Henry's father
9. Archie Andrew's home town.
11. Could cloud men's minds.
14. Eddie's wife.
15. Slightly tipsy guitar player.
16. Sky King's nephew.
17. Lucky Strike means fine tobacco.
18. Paul is to Henry Barbour.
22. King of Swing.
24. Jane's name by marriage.
25. Fred and Portland stroll down the _____
26. Just plain _____
28. George Burns and Gracie _____
32. Miss Brook's cat.
33. She knows the Shadow's secret.
35. Milton Berle's vocalist.
37. Ozzie's neighbor.
38. Sky King's niece.
39. Singer on Johnsons Wax program.
42. Amplitude modulation.

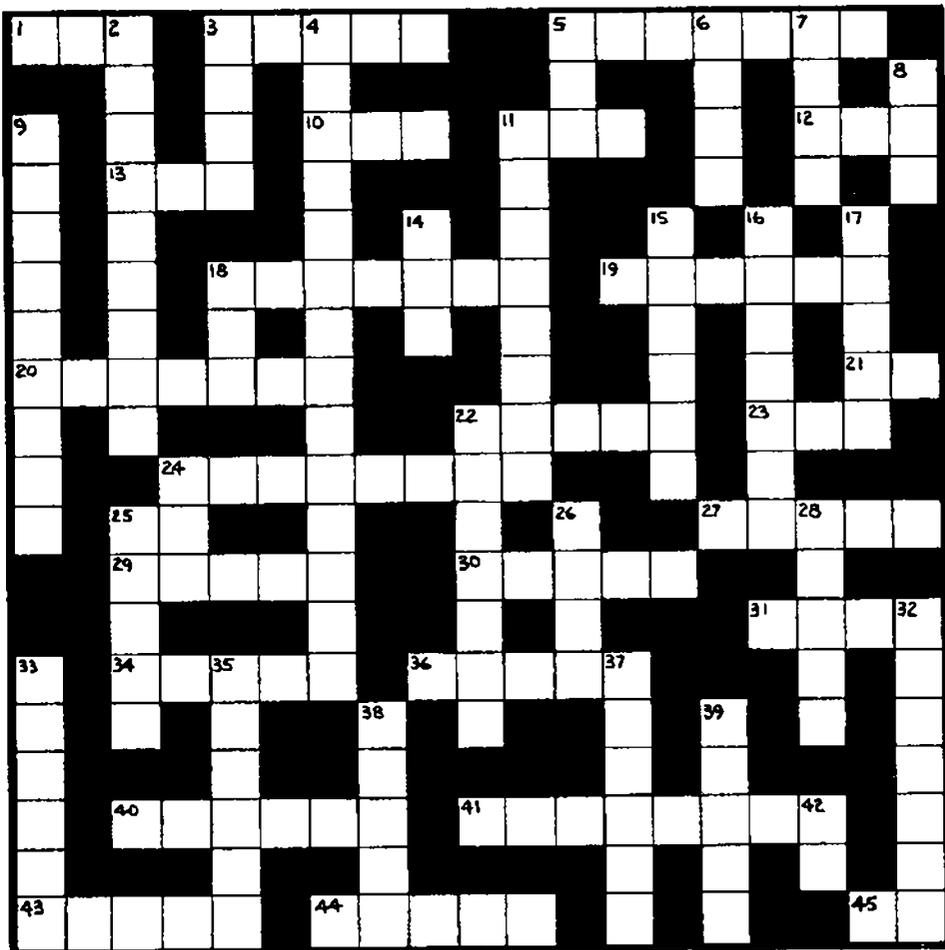


NOSTALGIA NEWSLETTER

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY DENNIS BUBACZ

REPRINT from Nostalgia Newsletter, MAY, 1977



Let's see how good a radio trivia fan you are. Try your luck with this special NATIONAL RADIO MONTH Crossword Puzzle prepared especially for readers of the NOSTALGIA NEWSLETTER by DENNIS BUBACZ, a member of our production team and one of the original old time radio trivia gang. If you solve this puzzle, you get an invisible facsimile from the Hall Closet. Solution to the puzzle is on page 28 — but don't peek until you're through. Have fun . . . and happy Radio Month!

TIMES Theatre: Home of the Triple Feature

REPRINT from Nostalgia
Newsletter, JAN, 1977

BY CHUCK SCHADEN

Today it's a ballroom, sometimes converted to a Bingo parlor, but it used to be the **TIMES** Theatre.

The **TIMES** was located on Milwaukee Avenue, about two blocks north of Lawrence in the Jefferson Park area. Today the building stands at the southernmost end of the Jefferson Park CTA Rapid Transit-Bus terminal.

The **TIMES** was a part of my life when I was a boy. My friends and I spent many long afternoons there watching spectacular triple feature movie programs.

That's right, **TRIPLE** features! The whole program usually lasted five or six hours and we would emerge from the theatre bleary-eyed, but happy!

A typical **TIMES** program would include at least one color cartoon, previews of at least the next six attractions, a newsreel, a short subject, and the three features: "Jungle Jim," "The Mark of Zorro" and "Tarzan and the Green Goddess."

The management liked to relate the three main features. For example, they would schedule an all-western program starring Gene Autry, Hopalong Cassidy and Roy Rogers.

Or perhaps they would feature an all-mystery show starring those super-sleuths Sherlock Holmes, Mr. Moto and The Falcon.

Occasionally the **TIMES** would show three films from a series: "Frankenstein," "Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man" and "The Bride of Frankenstein." We came out of the theatre scared of our own shadows!

As kids we went to the **TIMES** to laugh or to be scared or to be thrilled. And, of course, to eat. But we never went to appreciate the movies as works of art. Naturally.

We really had no idea of what we were getting for our 20 cents when the **TIMES** scheduled "A Night At the Opera" with the Marx Brothers; "Way Out West" with Laurel and Hardy; and W. C. Fields in "The Bank Dick," three film classics all on one program!

Probably every one of the movies we saw at the **TIMES** has been on TV many times (and quite a few of them have been seen at our **MEMORY CLUB** movie nights), but we've never been able to recreate the mood of the **TIMES THEATRE**: uncontrollable laughter, wild applause, boos for the bad guys, cheers

for the good guys, the constant milling about the theatre, and the race for the candy counter in the lobby whenever a mushy love scene came on the screen.

And, you know, there was a love scene in every single movie we ever saw at the **TIMES** ... even the horror ones!

As I remember, it was a good opportunity to get another box of pop corn or a package of Nibs!

Those were the days!

7. JON OLOR	"KISS ME, TELL ME WHY" Pursuit & Algiers	POB us F
Avenue DLO	TIMES 4847 Milw. 3 Features Op. 1:30 Thrills and Action on This SUPER TECHNICOLOR SHOW Maria Montez, Jon Hall, "SUDAN" Roddy McDowall, "MY FRIEND FLICKA" F. MacMurray, "Where Do We Go from Here?"	AVR LUN plus J
FEO RAY	ALAMO 3639 Chicago Ave. Mat. Daily IN TECHNICOLOR "YOLANDA AND THE THREE KINGS"	AB us F
VEN HLO	Joan Davis, "Kilina" Ethel Smith, "GEO. WHITE'S SCANDALS"	LOG plus 1
AX	MONT CLARE GRAND AVE. AT HARLEM Ray Milland, "The Wyman" "LOS WEE" Academy Award (Hit) "SAILOR TAKES A WIFE"	5IN 4B Ex B&K Plu
5. na all ook	TIMES 4847 Milwaukee, 3 Feats. Open 12:00 Funniest Show You Ever Saw!! SUPER LAUGH SHOW!!! LAUREL & HARDY "DANCING MASTERS" "MR. BUG GOES TO TOWN" JACK BENNY "Meanest Man in the World"	OK OB B&K Op B&K Op
nd t	WILFORD 3319 N. Pulaski Rd. Op. 1:30 RUGGED TOUGH: ALAN LADD EAST SIDE "THE RIGHT MAN" KIDS Running "COME OUT FIGHTING" Wild	TAKI 4S MAR ROBI O
46 45 V	GRAND 3434 W. North Randolph Scott	
ATH Pall	BELL 3064 Armitage—GREER GARSON "BLOSSOMS IN THE DUST" Leo Carrillo, "The Easton"	S&B Dead
los bl n n	WAKLEY 2327 Chicago, Open 12:00 "The Barker, "Traitor Within" Gale Storm, "Rhythm Parade" & "SAN FRANCISCO DOCKS"	HAI BEL
en	3 FEATS. • TIMES Open 12:00—Super Laugh Show! Jack Benny, "CHARLEY'S AUNT" CHARLIE CHAPLIN, "THE GOLD RUSH" Snuffy Smith, "HILLBILLY BLITZKRIEG"	SA Vir IM
en	MAIN 4815 4 Units, "THE BIG STRIP" Armit, "THE DARING YOUNG MAN" Disney Cartoon, "SPY SMASHER"	ROI Edw Virat c...
ynn. EY	METRO "THE DESERTE JOURNEY" JUDY GARLAND, "WIZARD OF OZ" MIL CARR 3311 N. Pulaski, Open 1:30	

BOOKS

BY-MAIL

ADD THESE BOOKS TO YOUR COLLECTION

HOLY MACKEREL — THE AMOS 'N' ANDY STORY by Bart Andrews and Ahrigus Juillard. The story of one of the most popular and talked about radio and TV programs ever produced. Hardcover, 188 pages. Original price \$15.95 **\$12.98**

RADIOS — THE GOLDEN AGE by Philip Collins. A dazzling collection of vintage radios in full color photographs depicting every detail of the artifacts of a golden era. Art deco style radios, trophy baseball radio, Hopalong Cassidy, Lone Ranger, others. Softcover, 118 pages of beautiful enamel stock **\$14.95**

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DECEMBER

Old Time Radio Classics — WBBM-AM 78
MONDAY thru FRIDAY 8:00-9:00 P.M.
SATURDAY and SUNDAY 8:00-10:00 P.M.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>PLEASE NOTE: — All of the programs we present on <i>Old Time 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 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. and so forth. Programs on <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> are complete, but original commercials and network identification have been deleted. Thanks for listening.</p>					<p>1 Lone Ranger Abbott & Costello</p>	<p>2 To Be Announced</p>
<p>3 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>4 NFL Football NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>5 Charlie McCarthy Burns & Allen</p>	<p>6 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>7 CBS Mystery Theatre "The Golem"</p>	<p>8 Abbott & Costello Charlie McCarthy</p>	<p>9 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>
<p>10 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>11 NFL Football NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>12 CBS Mystery Theatre "Turnabout Is Fair Play"</p>	<p>13 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>14 Burns & Allen Lone Ranger</p>	<p>15 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>16 CBS Mystery Theatre Double Feature: "The Premature Bride" "Berenice"</p>
<p>17 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>18 NFL Football NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>19 Charlie McCarthy Abbott & Costello</p>	<p>20 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>21 CBS Mystery Theatre "Cask of Amontillado"</p>	<p>22 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>23 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>
<p>24 Christmas Eve Old Time Radio Nostalgia Special</p>	<p>25 NFL Football NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>26 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>27 Lone Ranger Burns & Allen</p>	<p>28 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>29 CBS Mystery Theatre "A Death of Kings"</p>	<p>30 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>

JANUARY

Old Time Radio Classics — WBBM-AM 78
MONDAY thru FRIDAY 8:00-9:00 P.M.
SATURDAY and SUNDAY 8:00-10:00 P.M.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>31 DEC. To Be Announced</p>	<p>1 CBS Mystery Theatre "Sleepy Village"</p>	<p>2 Charlie McCarthy Lone Ranger</p>	<p>3 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>4 Burns & Allen Abbott & Costello</p>	<p>5 CBS Mystery Theatre "Faith and the Fakir"</p>	<p>6 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>
<p>7 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>8 CBS Mystery Theatre "Concerto In Death"</p>	<p>9 Lone Ranger Burns & Allen</p>	<p>10 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>11 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>12 Abbott & Costello Charlie McCarthy</p>	<p>13 CBS Mystery Theatre Double Feature: "Precious Killer" "Witness is Death"</p>
<p>14 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>15 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>16 Charlie McCarthy Lone Ranger</p>	<p>17 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>18 CBS Mystery Theatre "Ghost Town"</p>	<p>19 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>20 CBS Mystery Theatre Double Feature "Flowers of Death" "River of Hades"</p>
<p>21 To Be Announced</p>	<p>22 CBS Mystery Theatre "The Devil's Leap"</p>	<p>23 Lone Ranger Abbott & Costello</p>	<p>24 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>25 Burns & Allen Charlie McCarthy</p>	<p>26 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>27 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>
<p>28 To Be Announced</p>	<p>29 CBS Mystery Theatre "The Plastic Man"</p>	<p>30 Burns & Allen Abbott & Costello</p>	<p>31 Charlie McCarthy Lone Ranger</p>	<p>PLEASE NOTE: — Due to WBBM's commitment to news and sports, <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> may be pre-empted occasionally for late-breaking news of local or national importance, or for unscheduled sports coverage. In this event, vintage shows scheduled for <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> will be rescheduled to a later date.</p>		

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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

DECEMBER

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, DECEMBER 2nd RADIO TO PLAN YOUR CHRISTMAS LIST BY

CINNAMON BEAR (1937) Chapter 11 in the continuing adventures of Judy and Jimmy Barton and Paddy O'Cinnamon in the search for the silver star for the top of the Christmas tree. Fee Foo the Friendly Giant. Syndicated. (12:00)

TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES (12-20-47) Ralph Edwards hosts the audience participation show with a holiday consequence for a contestant. The show also visits a hospitalized, disabled World War II veteran Hubert C. Smith for a warm-hearted, sentimental "This Is Your Life"-type segment. A touching, moving program for the Christmas season. Duz, Drene, NBC. (7:02; 22:23)

INTERVIEW with **Hubert C. Smith**, the veteran who was the subject of Ralph Edwards' Truth or Consequences program. Conversation recorded on Dec. 22, 1988. (7:07)

CINNAMON BEAR (1937) Chapter 12. The Rhyming Rabbit and the Bumble Bee. (12:00)

CHICAGO THEATRE OF THE AIR (12-24-39) "Babes in Toyland" is the Christmas Eve offering of this popular program. Marian Claire narrates the childhood operetta by Victor Herbert with a cast that includes Mary Frances Desmond, Jonathon Hole, Norman Gottschalk, Sondra Gair, Elmira Roessler, Everette Clark. The story is preceded by a musical rendition of "Twas the Night Before Christmas" and a brief message by Col. Robert R. McCormick, publisher of the Chicago Tribune. Sustaining, MBS. (13:08, 14:33, 14:38; 16:53)

SUSPENSE (12-21-50) "Christmas For Carol" starring Dennis Day as a bank teller whose wife is expecting a child. AutoLite, CBS. (12:25; 16:05)

CINNAMON BEAR (1937) Chapters 13 and 14. Through the Picture Frame to see the Wintergreen Witch, Queen Melissa of Maybe Land offers help. (12:00; 12:00)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9th RADIO TO ADDRESS CHRISTMAS CARDS BY

CASEY, CRIME PHOTOGRAPHER (12-25-47) "The Santa Claus of Bum's Boulevard" stars Robert Dryden as Casey with Jan Miner as Annie and John Gibson as Ethelbert. A stranger has made an annual event of handing out Christmas money to residents of Skid Row and Casey covers the story in an attempt to discover the unknown benefactor. Tony Marvin announces. Anchor-Hocking Glass Co., CBS. (15:10; 13:45)

CINNAMON BEAR (1937) Chapters 15 and 16. Snapper Snick the Crocodile, Oliver the Ostrich. (12:00; 12:00)

HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (12-16-48) "The Desert Shall Rejoice" starring John Hodiak. The miracle of Christmas is relived as a tourist camp owner gives a room to two travelers. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (16:06; 12:40)

THIS IS MY BEST (12-19-44) "The Plot to Overthrow Christmas" by Norman Corwin. Orson Welles stars as Nero, who proposes "jazzing up" Christmas carols to do away with goodwill at Christmastime. All the baddies in Hell vote to poison Santa Claus (Ray Collins) and Nero is elected to travel to the North Pole to do the deed! John Brown appears as the Devil. Cresta Blanca, CBS. (15:18; 14:59)

CINNAMON BEAR (1937) Chapters 17 and 18. The mud-slinging Muddlers; the Cockerburrr Cowboys. (12:00; 12:00)

FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (12-25-51) Jim and Marian Jordan star with Bill Thompson, Gale Gordon, Arthur Q. Brian, Dick LeGrand, Harlow Wilcox, the King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. "The Spirit of Giving" is evident as McGee exchanges gifts with Doc Gamble, the Old Timer, Wallace Wimple, Mayor LaTrivia, and Teeneey. The King's Men sing "Christmas in Killarney" and Billy Mills plays "Teddy Bear's Picnic." Pet Milk, NBC. (9:05; 9:05; 10:20)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16th RADIO TO WRAP, BAKE AND DECORATE BY

SIX SHOOTER (1953) James Stewart stars as Britt Ponset, Texas Plainsman, in a retelling of the Charles Dickens classic, "A Christmas Carol," set in the West. Sustaining, NBC. (10:50; 16:22)

CINNAMON BEAR (1937) Chapters 19 and 20. To the Golden Grove: the Grand Wunky takes the Wintergreen Witch to exile in Looking Glass Valley. (12:00; 12:00)

KRAFT MUSIC HALL (12-24-42) Bing Crosby stars in his seventh Christmas show for Kraft Foods. There's a wartime flavor throughout this broadcast as Bing is joined by guests Fay Bainter, Jack Carson, Andrew Thomas, Janet Blair, Ken Carpenter, the Music Maids and Hal, the Charioters, John Scott Trotter and the orchestra. Fay Bainter reads, "Yes, Virginia, There is A Santa Claus." Sketches about Santa at the North Pole and Christmas Morning, 1776. Kraft Foods, NBC. (14:05; 15:50; 12:15; 16:20)

CINNAMON BEAR (1937) Chapters 21 and 22. The Land of Ice and Snow; Meeting Jack Frost. (12:00; 12:00)

GREAT GILDERSLEEVE (12-20-42) Harold Peary stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve, Walter Tetley as LeRoy, Shirley Mitchell as Leila Ransom, Earle Ross as Judge Hooker. While Hooker and Gildy vie for Leila's affections, the family opens their Christmas gifts. Kraft Foods, NBC. (16:14; 13:57)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23rd RADIO TO TRIM THE TREE BY

HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (12-23-48) "Silent Night" presents the story of the origin of our most played Christmas carol and how it came to be written. James Hilton Hosts. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (16:45; 12:25)

CINNAMON BEAR (1937) Chapter 23. Paddy O'Cinnamon gets stuck in a pile of Christmas stickers. (12:00)

GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD (12-21-47) "No Room at the Inn" dramatizes the story of the birth of Christ in a seasonal episode of the series based on the book by Fulton Oursler. Goodyear Tire Co., ABC. (14:11; 15:14)

CINNAMON BEAR (1937) Chapter 24. Judy, Jimmy and Paddy O'Cinnamon attend the Christmas Tree Parade. (12:00)

DRAGNET (12-22-53) The classic Dragnet Christmas story. The statue of the infant Jesus is stolen from the Mission Church. Jack Webb as Sgt. Joe Friday, Ben Alexander as Det. Frank Smith. NBC. (12:45; 13:48)

CINNAMON BEAR (1937) Chapter 25. Captain Tin Top returns the star, but the Crazy Quilt Dragon steals it! (12:00)

A CHRISTMAS CAROL (12-25-49) Lionel Barrymore stars for the 15th time as Ebenezer Scrooge in a radio

version of the classic Charles Dickens story. Cast includes Bill Johnstone, Shirley Mitchell, Byron Kane, Eric Snowden, Joe Kearns. Announcer is Dick Mack. K-Part Dealers, MBS. (13:45; 15:53)

CINNAMON BEAR (1937) Chapter 26. The final episode in the adventure. Do our heroes find the star for their Christmas tree? (12:00)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30th HAPPY NEW YEAR WITH GOOD OLD RADIO

FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (12-30-52) Fibber finally wangles an invitation to the New Year's Eve dance at the Country Club. Jim and Marian Jordan star with Bill Thompson, Arthur Q. Brian, Dick LeGrand, Gil Stratton, Jr., Harlow Wilcox, the King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Reynolds Aluminum, NBC. (10:00; 12:45; 8:25)

EDDIE CANTOR SHOW (1-2-46) In a flashback, Eddie tells of his New Year's Eve party. Leonard Seuss, Bert Gordon, Kenny Delmar, Thelma Carpenter. First peacetime New Year since the end of World War II. Ipana, Trushay, NBC. (7:45; 12:35; 9:30)

ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET (12-26-48) Ozzie remembers when he and his brother believed their father when dad said it would snow. Cast includes John Brown, Janet Waldo, Joe Kearns, Tommy Bernard, Henry Blair. International Silver Co., NBC. (12:25; 17:20)

RED SKELTON SHOW (1-1-46) The Skelton Scrapbook of Satire salutes "Bells and Resolutions" with Deadeye and Junior, the Mean Little Kid. Rod O'Connor, Anita Ellis, Verna Felton, David Forrester and the orchestra. Raleigh Cigarettes, NBC. (8:20; 7:55; 11:50)

GREAT GILDERSLEEVE (12-27-42) Harold Peary stars with Walter Tetley, Verna Felton. LeRoy wants to play with his new chemistry set while Gildy gets a letter from Leila Ransom. Kraft Foods, NBC. (14:41; 15:07)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (12-28-41) It's Jack's traditional New Year's broadcast, featuring the gang's annual play, "The New Tenant" starring Jack as The Old Man, Mary Livingstone as Columbia, Phil Harris as Uncle Sam, Don Wilson as Texas. Interesting and moving early wartime broadcast following Pearl Harbor. Jell-O, NBC. (14:45; 8:40)

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THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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

JANUARY

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6th

“Those Were The Days” Program Number 1,000!

For this special broadcast, we invite you to take a trip through the time tunnel, back to our very first show, May 2, 1970. You'll hear our original three-hour *Those Were The Days* program in its entirety, just as it was broadcast on radio station WNMP, Evanston from 1 to 4 p.m. on that cool Saturday in May, almost 20 years ago.

That first show contained many clips and bits from a variety of radio shows including **Frank Sinatra on the Major Bowes Amateur Hour** in 1935; **Sam and Henry** in 1926; and the **National Barn Dance** in 1943. Also included in that first *TWTD* program were a few complete broadcasts from radio's golden age: **The Taystee Breadwinners**, Billy Jones and Ernie Hare from 1934; **Ma Perkins** from the 1940s; The **Pepsodent Show** with Eddie Cantor, Red Skelton, Fibber McGee and Molly, Amos 'n' Andy, and Walter

Winchell substiting for Bob Hope in 1947 while Hope was on his way to England for the wedding of Princess Elizabeth to Prince Phillip; plus **The Thin Man** and the "Case of the Passionate Palooka" from the 1940s.

In the beginning on WNMP (which became WLTD in November, 1970) our programs carried several five-minute news and sports programs during our three-hour time period and as we replay the first *TWTD* show, you'll hear everything as it was then.

We hope you'll tune in and celebrate our 1,000th program with this look back at the roots of *Those Were The Days*.

Don't miss it if you can!

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13th

THE WHISTLER (5-19-48) "Murder On Margin" features Willard Waterman and Betty Lou Gerson in a story by Frank Lovejoy. A stockbroker plans to leave his wife to marry another woman. Signal Oil Co., CBS. (8:53, 15:40, 4:12)

MEL BLANC SHOW (5-13-47) with Mary Jane Croft, Joe Kearns, Hans Conried, Jim Bacus, Victor Miller and the orchestra. Mel wants to marry Betty, but her father has a condition before he gives his permission. Colgate Tooth Powder, Halo Shampoo, CBS. (10:15; 13:20)

CHALLENGE OF THE YUKON (7-26-51) Sergeant Preston investigates a gold robbery. Paul Sutton stars. Quaker Puffed Wheat and Rice, MBS. (18:00; 11:40)

SUSPENSE (3-6-48) "In A Lonely Place" starring Robert Montgomery. A World War II veteran—and strangler—encounters a buddy from his wartime service, now a detective on the Los Angeles Police Department. Sustaining, CBS. (15:18; 14:48; 16:37; 12:54)

FRED ALLEN SHOW (3-28-48) Mr. and Mrs. James Mason join Fred as he tries to arrange for their appearance on an English radio program. Ford Dealers, NBC. (15:22; 14:28)

(ED. NOTE—This is our 1,001st *Those Were The Days* program and our 750th broadcast on WNIB, Chicago!)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20th

FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (3-5-40) Jim and Marian Jordan star in what is now a milestone program from the long-running series. When Molly goes to the hall closet to get the dictionary, an avalanche of junk hits her. This is the first time the hall closet gag was used on the air. Cast includes Bill Thompson, Hal Peary, Isabel Randolph, Harlow Wilcox, the King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (6:45; 10:40; 9:00)

LUX RADIO THEATRE (12-15-52) "African Queen" starring Humphrey Bogart and Greer Garson in a radio adaptation of the 1951 motion picture. Bogey recreates his Academy Award winning role in this story of a soue and spinster traveling up the Congo during the First World War. Irving Cummings is the producer. Lux Soap, CBS. (16:30; 14:45; 21:05)

HALLS OF IVY (1950) Ronald and Benita Colman star, as a bruiser of a football player brings a personal problem to Dr. Hall. Cast includes Robert Easton, Alan Reed, Gloria McMillan. Schlitz Beer, NBC. (17:09; 11:38)

FRONTIER GENTLEMAN (5-25-58) John Dehner is J.B. Kendall, reporter for the London Times, who helps a cowboy searching for a woman kidnapped by Indians. Cast includes Jack Moyle and Lawrence Dobkin. Sustaining, CBS. (11:20; 11:50)

INNER SANCTUM (5-24-45) "Musical Score" starring Barry Kroeger in a drama about a man who is haunted by a symphony. Lipton Tea and Soup, CBS. (14:45; 14:25)



MR. & MRS. RONALD COLMAN

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27th

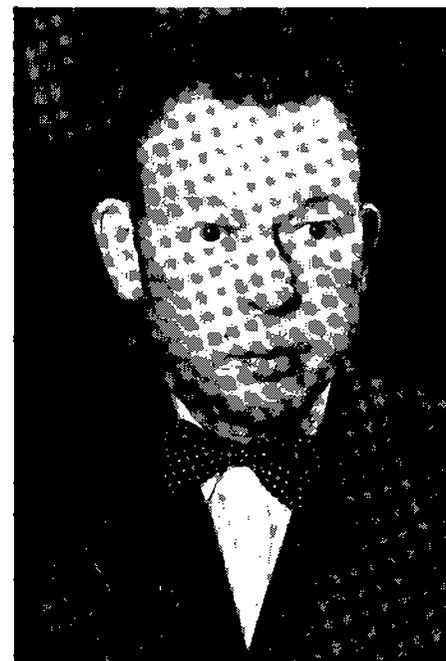
ROY ROGERS (9-19-48) It's the King of the Cowboys with Dale Evans, George "Gabby" Hayes, Foy Willing and the Riders of the Purple Sage. Gabby tells a tale of a Ghost Town dweller. Quaker Oats, MBS. (11:10; 8:55; 9:50)

LIFE OF RILEY (11-10-50) William Bendix is Chester A. Riley who tries his luck in a "Guess the number of beans in the bowl" contest. Paula Winslowe is Peg; John Brown is Digby O'Dell, the friendly undertaker, Barbara Eiler and Bobby Ellis are Babs and Junior, the Riley offspring. Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer, NBC. (12:40; 13:05)

SCREEN DIRECTORS PLAYHOUSE (1-21-51) "Spellbound" starring Joseph Cotten and Mercedes McCambridge in a radio version of the 1945 Alfred Hitchcock film. Hitchcock hosts and narrates the story of a psychiatrist who tries to uncover her patient's hangups. Cast includes Herb Butterfield, Howard McNear and William Tracy. Jimmy Wallington announces. Anacin, RCA Victor, NBC. (12:52; 11:45; 14:15; 14:30)

BURNS AND ALLEN (1942) George and Gracie with singer Jimmy Cash, Bill Goodwin and Paul Whiteman and the orchestra. Gracie's old sweetheart is coming to town and George is jealous. Swan Soap, CBS. (10:05; 12:45; 5:00)

LIGHTS OUT (12-15-42) "Knock at the Door." Arch Oboler introduces the famous "Mother-in-Law Story" about a young man who brings his bride home to his mother, with devastating results. Ironized Yeast, CBS. (11:30; 15:05)



FRED ALLEN

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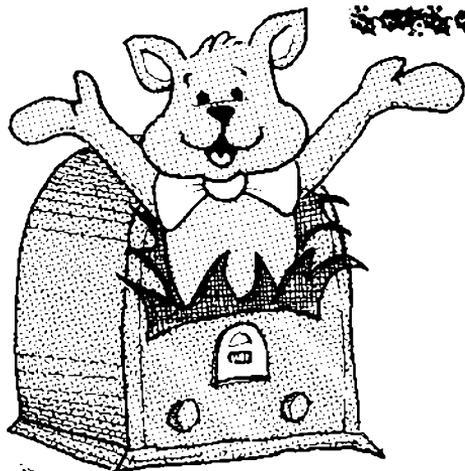
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“Say Goodnight, Gracie”

BY TERRY BAKER

The entertainment industry has produced a long list of “Dumb Doras.” That is, comediennes who have portrayed silly characters. Their history dates back to the days of vaudeville where many a bill would include one of these women. Some performers achieved a marginal degree of success but most faded from sight. Few were able to parlay their talents into stardom. The first of these was Grace Ethel Cecile Rosalie Allen.

Gracie Allen was born in San Francisco on July 26, 1905. Hers was a good-size Irish Catholic family that included her brother George, and three sisters, Bessie, Pearl, and Hazel. Her father, George Allen, was a popular dancer who performed all along the west coast. Gracie’s mother, while not an entertainer herself, did all she could to encourage her children’s ambitions. With her father’s background and her mother’s support there was never a doubt in Gracie’s mind that she would wind up in show business.

Her first stage performance was at the age of three when she danced with her father and sisters at a church social. Gracie was pleased with her first effort and decided to join her sisters in taking lessons. All four daughters became quite accomplished dancers. Gracie did not enjoy dancing as much as her sisters but did believe it would help her break into the business.

Gracie’s first paying job came as a singer in her early teens. During school vacation Gracie would sing songs in between shows at local movie houses. After graduating from convent school, Gracie was able to use this experience as she teamed up professionally with her



GRACE ETHEL CECILE ROSALIE ALLEN

sisters in a short lived song and dance act called The Four Colleens.

Upon the demise of The Four Colleens, Gracie chose to set off on her own. She was hired by Larry Reilly to appear in his vaudeville routine. Reilly staged a dramatic act and Gracie was one of the heroines. It was her first acting role but she performed well and the act was successful enough to get bookings all along the Pacific coast.

It wasn’t long before Reilly decided to make changes in the act. He hired two of Gracie’s sisters, Bessie and Hazel, and took the act on the road under the title “Larry Reilly and Company.” They played to good reviews throughout the midwest but by the time they reached the east coast, Gracie’s sisters had returned to San Francisco. Bessie returned to get married and Hazel wanted to help Pearl

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE

with a dance school they had started.

With two performers gone, Reilly renamed the act again calling it "Larry Reilly." Gracie could live with being billed as "and Company" but she would not accept no billing at all. When the act reached New Jersey, she quit.

The year was 1922 and Gracie found herself in New York City with no family, no friends, and no job. For six months she searched for a new partner but found none. Her sisters sent her money to live on but if Gracie planned to stay there until finding a partner, she would have to find a steady job in the meantime.

Since she had no job skills, Gracie enrolled in a stenography school hoping to find employment as a secretary. While studying for her new career, Gracie took up residence in a New Jersey rooming house. Her two roommates, Mary Kelly and Rena Arnold, also had show business aspirations. Mary became her closest friend but it was Rena who would introduce Gracie to her lifelong partner, both on stage and in life.

Rena Arnold was working in a comedy act at a small theater in Union City, New Jersey. Appearing at the same theater was the team of George Burns and Billie Lorraine, a variety act that consisted of impersonations of top vaudeville stars. It was a good routine but after working together for close to a year, the two men had agreed to part company. Rena had heard that both men would be looking for new partners and she convinced Gracie to come watch the boys perform and see if she wanted to work with either one.

Gracie liked their act and after meeting both men, chose to work with George. They agreed to perform a comedy act that he had written and bill themselves as Burns & Allen. George got top billing because he wrote the act and was essentially the star of it. He got all the laughs and it was Gracie's job to set them up for him.

They rehearsed for three weeks prior to



GRACIE ALLEN'S WRITERS—These four men devoted their lives to keeping Gracie a "dumbbell" arrive at the office nice and fresh. Standing, from left, are Bill Burns, George Burns and John Medbury. At the typewriter is Harvel Helm. They seem to have an idea.

their first booking, refining the act as they went along. Gracie didn't rehearse well but George would soon come to realize that she never rehearsed well. It was onstage, in front of an audience, that Gracie's talents came to light. George found this out on opening night.

Their first appearance was at the Hill Street Theater in Newark, New Jersey. Both were nervous when they walked onstage but with the first line of dialogue, George knew this was a different Gracie. She spoke with a confidence and sincerity that was not apparent in rehearsals. And the audience loved her.

While the audience was enthralled with Gracie, the act itself did not go too well. George was supposed to be the comic but Gracie was getting all the laughs with her straight lines. George liked being the star but he also wanted the act to be successful and that meant making some changes.

Before the second show that evening, George altered the routine so that Gracie got a large portion of the punch lines. The second performance went much better and as they played other theaters, George gave practically all of the funny lines to Gracie. He gauged audience reaction to Gracie and added the types of jokes they liked to hear her tell. Eventually George created lines he liked to call illogical logic. These were lines that made no sense to anyone else but perfect sense to Gracie. These became the cornerstone of their routine and served them well for the next 35 years.

It didn't take long for word of Gracie's talent to spread. In only a matter of months the team of Burns & Allen became one of the hottest properties in vaudeville. Wherever they went critics raved about

Gracie's comedic talents. Most of them ignored George completely but it didn't matter. George knew he had something special with Gracie and wasn't about to louse it up. Besides, he was falling in love with her.

George had no designs of romance when they first teamed up. Over time his feelings for her grew. Gracie was easy enough to fall in love with. She was pretty, smart, considerate, and extremely talented. Trouble was, she had been seeing another gentleman on a regular basis.

Gracie had met Benny Ryan during her stenography school days. Ryan was a popular actor and songwriter and the two liked each other very much. On occasion, Gracie would confide to George how much she cared for Ryan. George knew he had



GRACIE'S WRITERS—Well, the idea didn't work. So the boys sit down to think.

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE



GRACIE'S WRITERS—Gracie steals a pencil and starts making up as the boys start to really labor.

to do something if he was to have any chance romantically with her. He confessed his feelings for her but she didn't take him seriously.

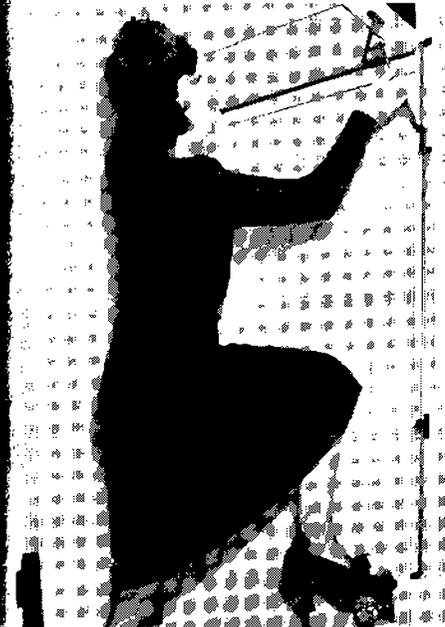
Gracie was all set to marry Ryan in the fall of 1925 but George got a reprieve when they were offered a four-month booking with the Orpheum circuit at \$500 a week. That kind of money was too good to pass up so Gracie agreed to postpone her wedding until they returned.

All through their trip George attempted to convince Gracie that his feelings were genuine. He even proposed but she turned him down. Upon returning to New York in December, George decided to ask her one more time. By now Gracie had realized that George was sincere and she was starting to feel the same about him. After much soul searching, Gracie accepted George's next proposal and they were married the following month.

With their personal relationship now settled, they were able to focus more attention on their careers. Just six weeks after their wedding, the Keith Orpheum circuit signed them to a five year contract that paid them on average \$500 a week. Burns & Allen was now a name act and only played the top vaudeville houses. In 1928 they even played a five month booking in England and were just as well received as they had been in the states.

Upon returning home, George and Gracie got the chance to try out their talents in a new medium. Fred Allen had been hired by Paramount Pictures to star in a nine minute short but he had to back out at the last minute. Jack Benny was asked to replace Fred but he instead suggested that his friends George and Gracie be given the job.

The resulting short was simply a brief segment of their vaudeville routine



GRACIE TRIES TO LEAVE—"They're nuts. I'm getting out of here!"

performed in front of a camera. They were paid \$1,800 for their efforts and Paramount liked them so much that they were hired to do four more at a salary of \$14,000. Over the years they appeared in 14 shorts and 14 feature films. Gracie even appeared in two on her own, "The Gracie Allen Murder Case" and Mr. & Mrs. North."

It's unfortunate that, as their popularity in vaudeville was at its peak, vaudeville was dying. Radio was slowly killing it and all the top stars were making the switch to this new method of entertainment. George had no doubts that he and Gracie would be able to make the switch. In 1929 while back in England, they had been called on to promote their tour by appearing on several British radio stations. These broadcasts went well and as long as the act had Gracie there was no reason to believe that Burns & Allen would not succeed on American radio as well.

Surprisingly, some did have doubts. One advertising executive told George that their act would never fly on radio because



GRACIE'S WRITERS—But they catch her and try to explain the joke. Gracie doesn't get it.

Gracie's voice was too high. Luckily they got the chance to prove him wrong.

In the fall of 1931, George and Gracie were appearing at the Palace in New York with Eddie Cantor. Eddie already had his own successful radio show and thought it would be a great idea to have Gracie on as a guest. George also liked the idea, provided that Gracie agreed to it and that they used material that he wrote.

Gracie however wanted no part of it. She did not like working without George nor was she excited about moving into a new medium. For all of Gracie's talents, she was never very confident of her abilities. It would be up to George to convince her that the move was necessary for their careers and that she would do just fine. Gracie did the show and it was like she and Eddie had worked together for years.

The show went so well that right after the broadcast, NBC offered Burns & Allen \$750 to appear as guests on Rudy Vallee's "Fleischmann's Yeast Hour." This led to their first regular radio job on The Guy Lombardo Show on CBS. Robert Burns

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE

Cigars hired them to provide eight minutes of comedy during the program. The unique part about this job was that Guy Lombardo's orchestra never stopped playing. George and Gracie were in another studio and performed their routines over the music. This continued for almost a year and when Guy Lombardo decided to switch networks, George and Gracie were hired to take over the program themselves. They remained on radio for the next 17 years.

Radio gave them the opportunity to perform for a lot of people who had never gotten the chance to see them onstage. They had heard of Gracie's antics but now were able to listen to her in the comfort of their own house. With Gracie leading the way, the show became a hit. Everyone could identify with her. Listeners either understood her crazy logic or knew someone who did.

Initially their show was done without a studio audience. This suited Gracie just fine as she did not like looking out at audiences knowing they were staring back at her. In vaudeville they solved this problem by aiming spotlights at her eyes so she couldn't see anything. When a studio audience was added to their radio broadcasts, Gracie simply turned herself at an angle towards George so she couldn't see the crowd.

Gracie wanted nothing to do with the inner workings of the show. Just as she trusted George to handle all their financial matters, Gracie also trusted him and the writers to create a quality script each week. It was a rare occurrence when Gracie would refuse to read a line but if she made up her mind that a joke was not funny, not even George could talk her out of it.

During the show's first seven years, Gracie played a part in two of the most famous stunts in radio history. The first was the "lost brother" episode. In January of their first season, CBS planned to move



GRACIE'S WRITERS—"Now, boys," says Gracie, "it's easy to write jokes. All you do is punch the typewriter keys."

the show into a new time slot and needed an inexpensive way to promote this fact. Gracie was always talking about her mythical brother on their program and it was the network's plan to have her pop up on other shows looking for her "missing" brother.

It started with a visit to Eddie Cantor's program. A half hour later she showed up on Jack Benny's show. During the next two weeks, Gracie appeared on a host of other CBS shows, each time searching for her brother. The publicity they received was beyond anything they could have dreamed of. The network received over 250,000 letters, even some claiming to have kidnapped Gracie's brother. Eventually the press tracked down Gracie's real brother, an accountant in San Francisco. He was not thrilled about his sudden celebrity status and fired off a letter to Gracie asking her to please find another way to make a living.

There was also Gracie's run for the presidency on the Surprise Party ticket in 1940. Her slogan was "Down with



GRACIE'S WRITERS — With Gracie properly cared for, the boys get busy and finish the script.

common sense, Vote for Gracie." With the assistance of the Union Pacific Railroad, Gracie began a whistle stop campaign that took her to 34 cities between L.A. and Omaha, Nebraska. Even though it was all a joke, over 200,000 people came out to meet the train along the way. Gracie obliged them by giving a good old-fashioned speech at each stop. On election day Gracie received several thousand write-in votes but could not overtake FDR.

With the increased exposure that radio provided, Gracie's popularity soared. She found herself in great demand as a guest on other programs and in areas outside of radio as well. With the aid of the show's writers, Gracie penned an advice column and wrote a book. She also endorsed a number of products ranging from bath salts to wedding gowns. George thought this was very amusing because if audiences believed Gracie to be so dumb, why would they buy anything she recommended? Gracie took it all in stride, never believing she was as big a star as everyone said she was.

In the late 1930's with their radio career running smoothly, George and Gracie decided to start a family. Unable to have children, they adopted a boy and a girl, moved into a beautiful home in Beverly Hills and tried their best to raise the children in a normal family environment. Gracie spent as much time as possible with the children, playing games, teaching them proper manners and the like. George was a pushover when it came to the kids so Gracie had to provide most of the discipline. With two loving parents, the children grew up to be well-adjusted adults, neither one having any desire to go into show business.

The radio show sailed through the 30's but by the early 1940's, their audience began to drop steadily. Listeners tastes were changing and the vaudeville routines that had been their staple were not as popular as they once were. In order to win the audience back, changes were made.

The program became more of a situation comedy with each episode focusing on George and Gracie's exploits as man and wife. In order to take some of the load off Gracie, more attention was given to their strong supporting cast which included announcer Harry Von Zell, bandleader Meredith Willson, Bea Benaderet, Elvia Allman and Mel Blanc. Gracie was still playing her same mixed-up character but the change in format brought new life to the program and put it back at the top of the ratings until they left radio in 1950.

George was anxious to move into television but it was another case of having to convince Gracie to try something she was unsure of. She finally agreed to make a series pilot so George brought together much of the cast and crew from their radio show to assist them. The show would revolve around a married show business couple with George narrating the story as well as providing commentary on the proceedings. Gracie's contribution was to just be Gracie.

The pilot was successful and the television show ran for eight seasons but not

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE

without taking its toll on Gracie. Television was a full time job and required her presence on the set five days a week. Since her dialogue usually made no sense, Gracie couldn't play off other actors lines so she would have to memorize the entire script. All this work grew tiring and she began looking forward to the day when she could call it quits.

When Gracie announced her retirement in 1958, no one took her seriously. They all felt she would jump right back into performing after a good rest. Gracie knew differently. Her career was over and she just wanted to take it easy and spend time with her children and grandchildren.

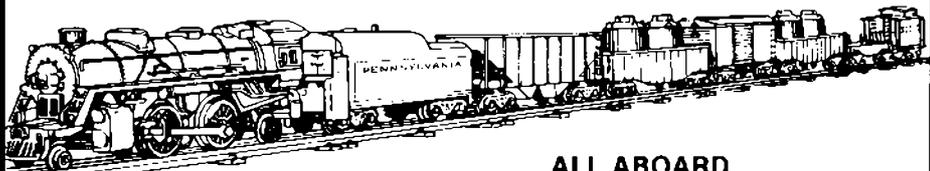
George never tried talking her out of it but Gracie sensed that he wasn't ready to retire. Gracie encouraged George to go out on his own and was quite pleased when he

decided to try his hand at a night club act. Though it never bothered George, Gracie was always upset that he didn't get the credit he deserved for their success. She knew how important he was to the act and how respected George's talents were throughout the entertainment industry. Unfortunately, audiences only knew George as the guy who stood next to Gracie. When George became successful without her, no one was more happy than Gracie. George is now 93, still performing with no plans to retire.

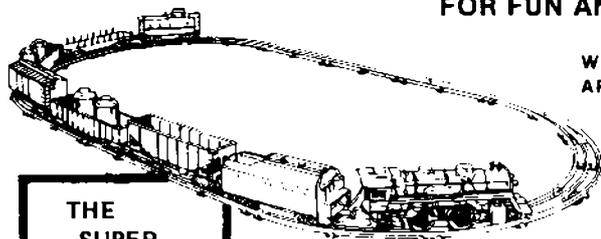
Gracie's last few years were spent out of the limelight, the way she wanted it. A heart condition began slowing her down in the early 60's and she died of a heart attack in 1964 at the age of 59. A loving wife, mother, and gifted performer, Gracie was anything but dumb. It was because of her special talents that she was able to convince audiences otherwise and entertain us so well for 35 years.

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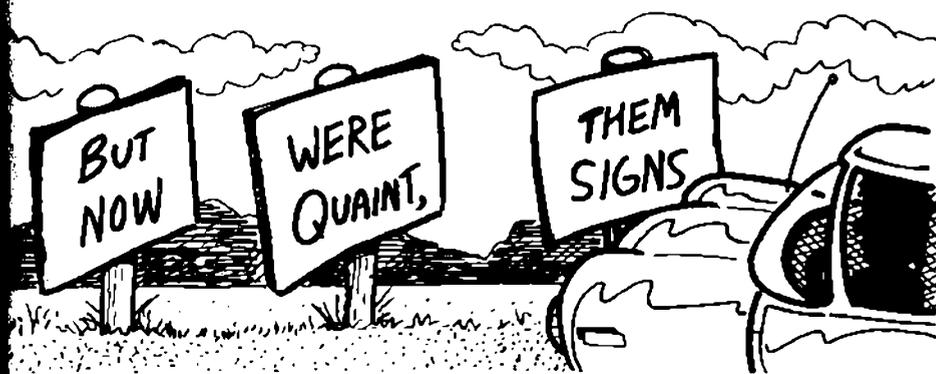
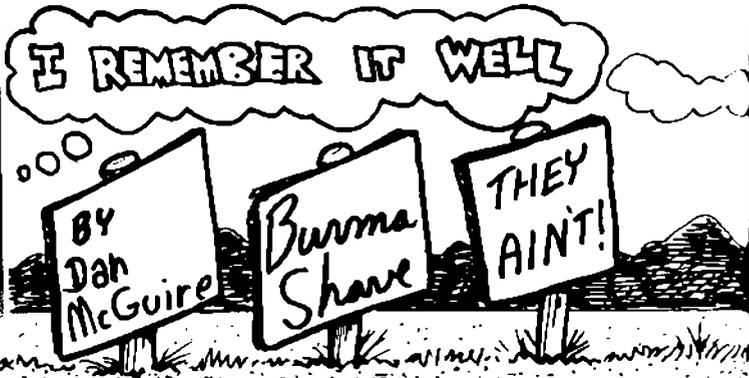
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When gas rationing ended after V-J Day, the Chicago McGuires began visiting the Springfield McGuires several times a year. In that era before divided four-lane freeways, it was a six hour journey that included a lunch stop enroute.

One thing that helped pass the time was watching for the series of small red signs that occasionally appeared beside the road. In a short, loosely rhymed cadence, they presented messages such as:

THE BEARDED DEVIL
IS FORCED
TO DWELL
IN THE ONLY PLACE
WHERE THEY DON'T SELL
BURMA SHAVE

The first time I observed a set of these lyrical commercials, I repeated it to myself, grinned and recited it aloud for my parents. "Did you see those signs?" I asked, thinking I'd made a great discovery.

Mom and Dad shared a chuckle over that. The Burma Shave signs had been gracing U.S. roads since before either of them began driving.

Although it was the comic verses we all came to love, early Burma Shave signs were strictly commercial messages. In 1925, Clinton Odell, founder of the Burma-Vita Company, was seeking ways to promote a brushless shaving cream. His son, Allan, suggested posting sequential signs on roads leading to towns where

druggists were stocking the new product.

Clinton wasn't keen on the idea, but agreed to try it. The first signs were constructed from secondhand boards full of nailholes. Allan and his brother, Leonard, cut them into 36-inch lengths and used stencils to paint the slogans.

The boys contracted with farmers for the right to post signs in selected spots. They did all the digging and mounting themselves. A typical first year set of signs read:

SHAVE THE MODERN WAY
FINE FOR THE SKIN
DRUGGISTS HAVE IT
BURMA SHAVE

To the surprise of the older Odell — and the delight of all — repeat orders began coming in from druggists in towns near where the signs were located. The trio immediately set out to utilize the new sales technique on a broader scale. In 1926, signs sprouted throughout Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa. In 1927, they dotted highways in most of the Midwest. By 1930, they were amusing travelers from New England to the Deep South and from Atlantic to Pacific coasts.

The humorous content that caught my attention in Illinois crept in gradually as sales and the Odells' spirits continued to rise. One of the first comic verses, still fondly remembered by some senior motorists, appeared in 1929:

EVERY SHAVER
NOW CAN SNORE
SIX MORE MINUTES
THAN BEFORE
BY USING
BURMA SHAVE

WHEN THE STORK (Alan)
DELIVERS A BOY (Danny)
OUR WHOLE (Dickie)
DARN FACTORY (Alan)
JUMPS FOR JOY (Danny)
BURMA SHAVE (Dickie)

Initially, Allan and his father composed all copy. The catchiness of rhymed lines was evident at once. After a few tentative efforts, the basic format was established. In 1930, it edged out most of the straight sales pitch copy.

By the late 40s, my brothers and I had become (for those times) frequent travelers. Besides family visits to Springfield, there were weekend fishing trips with Dad and a week in Wisconsin. Watching for Burma Shave signs became a ritual that added to the adventure.

Sometimes whoever spotted the lead sign would alert the others. Then we might all crowd the windows and read the verse in unison:

I USE IT TOO
THE BALD MAN SAID
IT KEEPS MY FACE
JUST LIKE
MY HEAD
BURMA SHAVE

Whoever got stuck reading the "commercial" invariably would demand, "I get to go first next time!"

Often we brought along books, cards or other diversions. Then we took turns reading aloud to each other. This necessitated periodic seat swapping, which had the indirect benefit of minimizing arguments about who would sit where.

For a change of pace, someone often looked back and read signs across the road — in reverse order:

BURMA SHAVE
TRIED
UNTIL YOU'VE
DON'T BE CONTENT
JOKES ASIDE
ALL LITTLE RHYMING

The other passengers would repeat each line and mentally flip them around until someone came up with the correct forward rendition.

The snappy verses by this time had several distinct categories. One was a pitch to smoother boy/girl relationships via smoother shaves:

Or we might take turns reading successive signs:

I REMEMBER IT WELL

HE HAD THE RING
HE HAD THE FLAT
BUT SHE FELT HIS CHIN
AND THAT
WAS THAT
BURMA SHAVE

Some were more subtle, but just as pointed:

A BEARD
THAT'S ROUGH
AND OVERGROWN
IS BETTER THAN
A CHAPERONE
BURMA SHAVE

Many verses qualified as public service messages. Not surprisingly, the majority dealt with safe and sober driving:

SLOW DOWN, PA
SAKES ALIVE.
MA MISSED SIGNS
FOUR
AND FIVE
BURMA SHAVE

Even such serious subject matter didn't prevent some outrageous puns from creeping in:

HER CHARIOT
RACED AT 80 PER
THEY HAULED AWAY
WHAT HAD
BEN HUR
BURMA SHAVE

On our routes, the trains we encountered usually were running parallel to the road. Still, one cautionary poem so amused and impressed me that I remember it yet today:

HE SAW
THE TRAIN COMING
AND TRIED TO DUCK IT
FIRST HE KICKED THE GAS
THEN HE KICKED THE BUCKET
BURMA SHAVE

Even signs that simply plugged the product bore the light-hearted imprint of

a company with the confidence to poke fun at itself:

ALTHO
WE'VE SOLD
SIX MILLION OTHERS
WE STILL CAN'T SELL
THOSE COUGHDROP BROTHERS
BURMA SHAVE

Burma Shave signs could even be educational. "What's 'the pentagon'?" I asked my father after reading:

IN SEVENTY YEARS
OF BRUSHIN' SOAP ON
GRAMPS COULDA PAINTED
THE PENTAGON
USE BRUSHLESS
BURMA SHAVE

Thus I learned not only what and where the famous military building is, but why it's called The Pentagon.

The success of their roadside signs caught the Odells somewhat unprepared. By 1930 their creative juices were running dry as they strained to produce new copy.

They solved that problem with an annual contest that paid \$100 to any entrant whose verse was accepted. Would-be versifiers came forward by the thousands. Many became repeat contributors. The Odells had to hire a team of copywriters to help screen and select entries.

Installing the signs took on an almost military strategy. An advance man would tour an area seeking likely sites. After striking an agreement with the landowner, he notified the office. Soon a truckload of husky youths arrived and started digging postholes at premarked intervals.

Signs were mounted at a precise height, a precise distance from the road's center line and a precise distance apart. Early signs were spaced only twenty yards apart. As cars became faster and roads wider, that lengthened to about fifty yards.

The signs became a uniform size. A silk-screen process eliminated bleeding and running. Pressure-treated wooden posts proved more durable than rust-prone steel posts.

At first, signs were changed as annual contracts were renewed. Later, the routine became: inspect this year; replace next year.

For over two decades, the formula worked as smoothly as the brushless cream it promoted. But even as the motoring audience grew, Burma Shave was discovering potholes in its road to success.

By 1955, sales had plateaued. The addition of other products helped little. Likewise experiments with other media.

In 1963, the company was sold and became a division of American Safety Razor. Clinton Odell had died in 1958. Allan and Leonard stayed on as consultant and president respectively.

Concurring with a corporate decision to adopt other advertising techniques, the Odells set in motion a plan to dismantle all signs. In the process, they reaped one last burst of media mileage.

As the signs disappeared, the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Reader's Digest* and newspapers everywhere featured nostalgic "end-of-the-road" articles. By special request, Leonard presented a representative set of signs to the Smithsonian Institute. He chose a favorite of the Odells:

WITHIN THIS VALE
OF TOIL
AND SIN
YOUR HEAD GROWS BALD
BUT NOT YOUR CHIN
BURMA SHAVE

Many factors contributed to the demise of the little red signs and their clever verses. The impact of competitors' TV advertising took its toll. Faster cars and the proliferation of superhighways surely played a part. And, as Allan Odell observed, simply, "Times change."

True; and a world burdened with more serious problems has little time to mourn their passing. But those of us who fondly recall them, may sometimes imagine one more verse appearing along the roadside:

DRIVING'S
MUCH LESS
FUN WE THINK
SINCE THESE SIGNS
BECAME EXTINCT
BURMA SHAVE

Editor's Note: For a fact filled and entertaining history of the Burma Shave signs, read The Verse By The Side Of The Road by Frank Rowsome, Jr., published by Stephen Greene Press.

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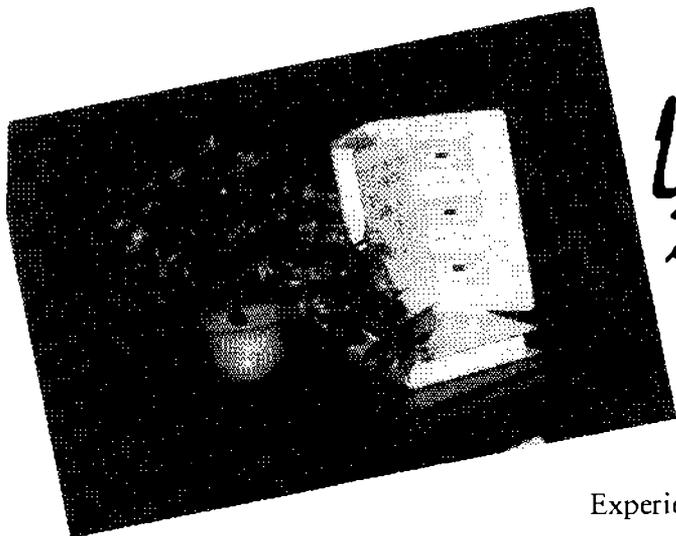
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By BOB KOLOSOSKI

Last December a new version of the Charles Dickens story *A Christmas Carol* was filmed with Bill Murray in the role of Scrooge. "Scrooged" was a big disappointment to the moviegoing public and therefore an alarming disappointment to the producing studio. The movie failed to produce a big profit and more than one studio executive saw the Ghost of Unemployment beckoning. And, of course, it's hard to feel remorse for those greedy movie makers who made the movie just to turn a profit. After all, they wanted to take Mr. Dickens' delightful story and make money with it, which is exactly what motivated Mr. Dickens to write the now classic Christmas epic. He wanted to make money. He needed funds desperately and he surmised that the quickest way to fill his ailing bank account was to exploit rich old Ebenezer Scrooge.

Charles Dickens' success as a popular author was the stuff of legends but in the summer of 1843 he was, in spite of his success, undeniably flat broke. He was a genuine nineteenth century yuppie living the good life and spending money on the adults toys of his era. The eminent author was supporting two homes, one in the city and a modest country estate, not to mention five children. And, the gossip columnists of the day linked him to a young mistress. His rise to fame and fortune had been rapid after the publishing of the *Pickwick Papers*, *David Copperfield* and *Oliver Twist* assured him a place in the ranks of

the Nouveau Riche. However it all went to his head and he decided to take an extended trip of the United States in early 1843. He stayed at the best hotels in New York, Boston and points west and dined at the finest restaurants with his wealthy American counterparts. Life was good to Dickens but he danced a little too long in the colonies and when he returned home to London the bitter truth was he couldn't pay the piper.

In October of 1843 Dickens' creditors were hounding him at a steady pace and he hit upon a bold but simple plan. He would write a Christmas story in time for the upcoming holidays and earn another small fortune to pull him out of the economic quagmire he was sinking in. He decided also to pay for all the printing costs himself and thus maximize his profit by being his own publisher. Through October and into November he feverishly wrote his *Christmas Carol*, aware that his Christmas deadline was just around the corner. As he created his characters and outlined his story he began to come under the spell of his own work. He fell in love with the story and hired an artist well known in his day, John Leech, to do all the illustrations for the short story.

Dickens became obsessed with making his book the handsomest he had done to date. Printers worked day and night printing thousands of copies in less than one month. The illustrations were converted to four color plates and 24,000

FILM CLIPS

such plates had to be hand colored. Accordingly, 18,000 edges had to be gilded. Dickens priced his book relatively low so more people could afford to purchase a copy. He wanted everyone to enjoy his story but the inflated printing cost kept his profits down. He expected to earn a one thousand pound profit but when the holiday dust cleared he had a net profit of two hundred and thirty pounds. Disappointed, but proud of his story, Dickens continued to write, lecture and spend money until his death in 1870.

Thirty years after the death of Charles Dickens a new century was born and the most influential creation of the 20th century — the movie camera — brought the genius of Charles Dickens to millions of movie goers. Virtually every story written by Dickens, including his last unfinished novel *Edwin Drood*, has been filmed. There has been silent and talking versions of *Oliver Twist*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *David Copperfield*, etc.

However, the most filmed, most beloved story by Mr. Dickens remains *A Christmas Carol*. Anyone who has read the story can verify that the prose seems to leap up and engulf the reader. The character of Scrooge is one of the richest in literature. He is immediately likeable and eventually loveable. His early penny pinching gruffness cries out for sympathy and when he does "see the light" and decide to change his ways it's with the full support of the reader. The story is a joy to read and Dickens at times is downright playful with his third person narrative. Nearly one hundred and fifty years after its first publication it is still a delightful Christmas present to give.

As far as film versions are concerned the two leading the pack are the 1938 MGM production and the 1951 British film. The first starred Reginald Owen as Scrooge. He replaced Lionel Barrymore who was originally cast in the role he made famous

on his annual radio broadcasts.

In fact, the decision to film the story of Scrooge by MGM executives was probably reinforced by the popularity of Barrymore's broadcast. However, he suffered a damaging fall before production began and he was confined to a wheelchair — eventually for the rest of his life. This accident nearly caused the cancellation of the film because a British version named "Scrooge" had been released in 1935 by Paramount and had failed at the box office. Without the services of Barrymore it was an "iffy" project. The vast acting resources under contract at MGM won the day when Owen was selected to replace the ailing Barrymore.

Reginald Owen had been an actor for thirty years and in films for nearly ten when the chance to be Scrooge came along. He had experience with Dickens having been in the superb "A Tale of Two Cities" starring Ronald Coleman. Gene Lockhart as Bob Cratchet, Ann Rutherford, Leo G. Carroll and Ronald Sinclair were also stock players at MGM and added to the production. The MGM film was given an "A" picture budget and a dash of class by producer Joseph Mankiewicz. The film is a delight from first frame to last and although it lacks brooding atmosphere it still is a great film.

On the other side of the dramatic coin — the 1951 British version is all atmosphere and the emphasis is on mood. Alistair Sim's Scrooge is a man whose tormented soul is evident in every nook and cranny of his expressive face. Sim's performance is nearly flawless and he makes up for the barebones set and relatively poor production standards. This is an excellent version of the story and perhaps would receive Mr. Dickens seal of approval.

Television has done "A Christmas Carol" several times in the past forty years. The premier version is also the most recent. George C. Scott plays Scrooge as if he knew the character personally. He pulls no punches and the production values are excellent but still a bit behind the

MGM version. This particular version has been telecast for the past five years.

Chances are this year one or several versions will turn up on local television or cable. And both of the film versions mentioned here are available on video tape. Seeing one of them is a worthwhile experience as is reading the story. When

Dickens began his modest money making story he probably had little idea what a classic he was penning. *A Christmas Carol* is the perfect bit of Christmas fiction just as "White Christmas" is the perfect Christmas song. We should be thankful that Mr. Dickens gave in to his spendthrift ways. His story has enriched all our lives.

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Those Golden Years of Radio

BY RUSS RENNAKER

In the early 1930s there was a dance ballroom out on the northside of Chicago known as the Aragon. This was the era of the big bands and every band you can name played there at one time or another. All of the major networks broadcast from the ballroom on a weekly schedule.

In 1938 a little known orchestra directed by a chap by the name of Lawrence Welk was booked into the Aragon and was scheduled to do a half-hour program over the CBS network. I was assigned the program as audio engineer and Jack McCormick was the announcer.

Fresh from one-night stands in the midwest Mr. Welk was possessed of a distinct accent, traced directly to his Nordic ancestry. This fact was well known by the "brass" in the Wrigley Building and the word had come down that under no circumstances was Mr. Welk to get on the microphone, although he protested that he had always announced his band's selections in other ballrooms where they had played. Not on CBS, came back the answer and that was that.

One night Jack McCormick, for some reason that was never actually determined, did not show up for the broadcast. Announcers were notably late for their appearances and I didn't worry much until we had less than five minutes before air time. Even then I envisioned Jack dashing up the stairs just in time to read the introduction. The minute hand hit zero; I heard the studio announcer say, "And now we take you to the Aragon Ballroom for the soothing strains of Lawrence Welk and his champagne music. No Jack McCormick.

Without any introduction the band swung into the theme while I frantically shouted into the talk circuit back to the control room. When I explained that we had no announcer a sleepy voice at the other end said simply, "Well, let the band director do it." I discovered later that particular engineer had never heard of the edict.

I felt I had no alternative and so I waved to Lawrence Welk and pointed at the microphone. For thirty minutes Lawrence

Russ Rennaker was born in rural Indiana in 1906. He obtained his amateur radio license at age 13 and commercial operators' license in 1926. In 1929 he built a 100 watt broadcast station in Marion, Indiana, and later worked for WFBM in Indianapolis. In 1934 he joined WBBM-CBS, Chicago as a broadcast engineer and was transferred to WJSV, Washington, D.C. in 1939. He was with the State Department during World War II and after the war joined ITT in Telecommunications. He retired in 1973 and still operates his amateur station, W9CRC. These memories of his radio days are from his soon to be published book, *Those Golden Years of Radio*.



introduced each number in what was destined to become a very familiar voice over the champagne music.

It turned out that from the moment his voice came out of loudspeakers all over the country the CBS switchboard lit up and stayed lit up for the duration of the program. It seemed that that distinctive accent, which some bigwig had banned, had caught the fancy of the female listeners throughout radioland.

So far as I know no announcer was ever assigned to do the Lawrence Welk show again, at least not on CBS.

* * *

Most listeners think popular radio stars of the '30s just blossomed overnight into their fame. Of course that is no more true of radio stars than of motion picture stars. Very few of either reach that pinnacle of success without long hard years of trying.

In the late 1930s there was a local radio performer in Washington, D.C. by the name of Arthur Godfrey. He got his start on a Baltimore station, transferred to the NBC station in Washington, and eventually ended up at the CBS station in the Capitol.

Arthur did a record program five times a week. Such a show today would be called a disk jockey, but that term was unknown in those days. I was the studio engineer for his program.

He owned a Hawaiian type ukulele and he dearly loved to strum it and sing to his own accompaniment. Usually, before air time, he would come into the studio with his ukulele and play and sing for his own amusement until show time. For some unknown reason his singing and his ukulele were banned on the station. I guess the program manager just didn't like ukulele music, or felt his singing wasn't professional enough. At any rate I had been warned that he might try to sneak his live music into one of the programs.

On this particular day, a few minutes before air time, Arthur's program was cancelled due to a Hitler speech from



ARTHUR GODFREY

Germany. I was already in the control room and Godfrey was in the studio. He picked up his ukulele and strummed a few chords and then started singing. I opened the mike and turned on the monitor speakers. My first thought was why won't they let him sing on the air. It occurred to me that it was very entertaining.

I was engrossed in listening when I suddenly realized there was someone back of me. Then a voice said, "Say, that's real good." I turned and there before me was Harry Butcher, the station manager, a vice president of CBS. Godfrey looked up and saw who was in the booth with me and stopped abruptly. I motioned for him to continue. "Yes," I said. "Sounds good enough to go on the air."

It wasn't long after that that Godfrey got his chance to sing and play his ukulele on the air. You know the rest. Godfrey never forgot that and for years after he became famous I always got a bottle of Scotch from him at Christmas time.

WE GET LETTERS

ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS — *I am a "Golden Age Nut," even though I'm only 13 years of age. I listen to Old Time Radio Classics on WBBM regularly. Unfortunately, I can't pull in WNIB-WNIZ here due to a very powerful local station. I also enjoy the Digest. Keep up the good work! I collect classic shows and also information about them such as cast members, years on air, etc.*

Last school year, we were asked to write a research paper on a topic we wanted to learn more about for one of my classes. I chose "The History of Radio Broadcasting" and found the research very interesting. Enclosed is a copy of the report, which I hope you will read and find interesting as well. — RODNEY FREDERICK

(ED. NOTE—*We did find the paper interesting, Rodney, and we hope our readers will, too. We understand you received an "A" on the paper. Congratulations!)*

THE HISTORY OF RADIO BROADCASTING

BY RODNEY FREDERICK

Radio began when an Italian teenager named Guglielmo Marconi became interested in the work of German physicist Heinrich Hertz, who had demonstrated in a laboratory that radio waves existed. Marconi began experimenting himself and by 1894 had produced a wireless telegraph system. He then founded a corporation to manufacture his product. This development, followed by the perfection of voice communication via radio by engineer Reginald Fessenden in 1906 and the invention of the vacuum tube a year later, made up the basics of early radio.

The first experimental broadcast originated in 1910 from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. The program was hosted by Lee de Forest and starred the singer Enrico Caruso. However, it was not until a few years later, in 1916, that the idea of marketing radio for broadcasting to mass audiences was introduced by David Sarnoff, an executive for Marconi's company. Several experimental radio stations began operation in the late teens.

The question of what was the first commercial radio station is a controversial

one. Some feel that the distinction belongs to WWJ in Detroit, which began regular broadcasts in August, 1920; others feel that KDKA-Pittsburgh was the first.

It is sure that KDKA produced the first professional broadcast when it aired the presidential election results on November 2, 1920, from the roof of a six-story factory owned by Westinghouse Electric Company. The announcer asked listeners to send the station a card if they were receiving the broadcast.

Radio grew rapidly. In 1921, the first broadcasting license was issued (to WBZ in Springfield, MA), and by 1922 there were 600 radio stations nationwide, with radios in one million homes.

Radio was so popular because it linked people all over America together by bringing them all the same message, breaking the confines of a person's respective area. However, early radio had its disadvantages.

Program timings were erratic, the sound quality was poor, and interruptions and production mishaps were frequent. As more and more radio stations began operating, it became impossible to avoid interference with others. Therefore, a listener might miss their favorite show because of another station blocking the signal.



RODNEY FREDERICK

As a result, the government organized the Federal Radio Commission (later the Federal Communications Commission), which set up 110 channels and assigned one to each station.

Between 1925 and 1927, stations began making improvements in their broadcasting by building larger studios equipped with better microphones and more powerful transmitters. Early programming consisted of 60 percent music and 40 percent news, sports reports and games, lectures, and experiments with dramas, church services, etc.

In 1926, the first broadcasting network, NBC, was begun. It was followed in 1927 by CBS and Mutual, and later by ABC.

Prior to the 1930s, all broadcasting was transmitted via constant wavelengths, known as amplitude modulation (AM), which produced a lot of static. Then a man named Edwin Armstrong sought to reverse this by keeping the voltage constant, but varying the wavelength. He called this frequency modulation (FM), and in 1935 sent a successful static-free signal from Yonkers to New York City.

FM gradually caught on and experimental radio stations opened using the system.

The Great Depression was a boom to

radio because radio was cheap and allowed Americans to let the day's tensions and uncertainties go during the evening and be entertained. The era was the rise of the Golden Age of Radio, which had begun in Chicago in 1928 and lasted until the mid-1950s.

The Golden Age featured breakfast shows, soap operas, comedies, quiz and giveaway shows, and talk shows.

Radio's audience exploded during World War II, when Americans listened for the latest news bulletins. A record 60 million people heard President Roosevelt declare war on Japan. It was hoped that radio would continue unifying the country and would educate the public during the complex postwar days, but television arrived, literally stopping radio dead in its tracks temporarily.

For more than twenty years, radio lost its popularity. Then, in the 1960s, came the boom of FM, whose growth had been hampered during the war. The expansion was stimulated in part by growing listener interest in the high-fidelity offerings of many FM broadcasters.

Today, nearly 100 percent of American households have a radio, and 4 out of 5 people tune in every day. Today's format generally consists of prerecorded music and news, talk shows, and sports games. Stations are truly local and broadcast to a narrowly defined audience, as they are sponsored by advertisers who market to the people most likely to buy their product.

Yet there is still an interest in syndicated shows. Programs such as "Rockin' America Top 30" and the "Larry King Show" are owned by Westwood One, Inc., which grosses over \$7 billion annually.

In the future, it may well be possible for listeners to program their radio to play only selections they choose from a "menu" of station offerings.

In short, radio is a medium that, though once lacking popularity, has resurrected to regain its place in modern communication, and we're certainly glad it has.

WE GET LETTERS

TINLEY PARK, IL — I've found my first copy of *Nostalgia Digest* to be very interesting and am looking forward to all the other issues. I must mention how nice it is to be able to step back in time while listening to *Old Time Radio Classics* and *Those Were The Days*. I am so enjoying the One Man's Family series once again. You have created a whole career for yourself providing memories for others.

— MRS. EDWARD SUTENBACH

CHICAGO — I really enjoy listening to your show which is always so well-organized and entertaining. Keep up the wonderful work and thanks for the memories... they're grand! — SUSAN ARGONDIZZO-MARSHALL

CHICAGO — Thanks for the many hours of pleasurable listening. Hardly seems possible that you have been in publication for 15 years. Still have all my copies!

— JEANETTE CECOLA

SHOREWOOD, IL — The programs that you have featured over the last couple years have brightened many a solitary evening when I am working late at the office. I hope WBBM keeps you on the air until you are able to start playing John and Felicia as old time news broadcasts! The programs are superb.

— MICHAEL L. BOLOS

NORTHBROOK, IL — I enjoy your *Old Time Radio* show on WBBM, especially in the summer when it's not interrupted by hockey! Thanks for providing so many hours of pleasure. I like your store Metro Golden Memories and bought your 3-cassette set on One Man's Family.

— ANN CALLAWAY

RIVERSIDE, IL — I so look forward to your Saturday program being my companion every week, including during a recent hospital stay (head phones are wonderful). Last month, during a car trip to Michigan, your Jack Benny tapes provided hours of great fun and warm memories.

— MRS. BERNARD BABKA

STEPHENTOWN, NEW YORK — We caught one of your shows while driving through Chicago. Great stuff! I am interested in getting addresses for obtaining books and/or tapes of the Cinnamon Bear stories. They were apparently broadcast in the Boston area in the 40s and sponsored by Cushman Bakeries and my mother-in-law is wanting a copy. We weren't able to catch and write down the complete addresses in the Chicago traffic.

— MEREDITH RHINDRESS

(ED. NOTE — the book is \$6.50 postpaid, the tapes are \$37.95 postpaid, from the Hall Closet, Box 421, Morton Grove, IL 60053.)

FOX POINT, WISCONSIN — The entire family enjoys *Nostalgia Digest* magazine. I noticed several errors,

however, in the Batman article by Dan McGuire (October-November, 1989). Captain Marvel was not published by Marvel Comics. He appeared in Fawcett publications and later in DC comics. There was no hero named "Submarineman" — perhaps McGuire is thinking of Submariner who was published by Marvel. Also, the Batman villain was Ali Babble, not "Ali Blabber." Still, it was a fun article. Thanks!

— DION BERLOWITZ

(ED. NOTE — Dan's column is entitled "I Remember It Well." Perhaps it should be "I Think I Remember It Well." At any rate, after being sentenced to six hours of community service in the Bat Cave, Dan should be straightened out by this issue.)

DECATUR, IL — I am a new subscriber to your magazine. I have a couple of questions. When I listened to radio during the 40s, I remember a character named Froggy and the announcer said, "Twang your magic, Froggy." Do you know what show it was on? Second, on Big Jon and Sparky, the theme was the "Teddy Bear's Picnic." Where can I find the lyrics? Third, I found two books on Old Time Radio, but they were both out of print — John Dunning's *Tune In Yesterday* and Frank Buxton and Bill Owen's *The Big Broadcast*. Do you have any suggestions?

— DAVID GLAHN

(ED. NOTE — On the great old Saturday morning kids' show, The Buster Brown Gang, it was Smilin' Ed McConnell who said, "Pluck your magic twanger, Froggie" to Froggie the Gremelin. Someone out there in Nostalgioland must know the lyrics to the "Teddy Bear's Picnic." If we hear from them, we'll let you know. As far as the radio books are concerned, there's still another that is out of print: *Radio's Golden Years* by Vincent Terrace. Best bet is to search used book stores, garage and rummage sales, etc.)

CHICAGO — I look forward to your *Digest* and the day it comes is the day I read it. Sometimes I get so busy that the time I get to it is very late at night. Example: the October-November issue was read at 1:30 a.m. But then, with a smile on my face from recalling "the good old days," a good night's sleep was had. So thank you for the fun you keep providing.

— MR. & MRS. RICHARD BLEIER

CHICAGO — I attended the Cinecon convention in Cleveland over Labor Day weekend. Joan Bennett was guest of honor and, consequently, several of her films were shown. One of the biggest hits was "Artists and Models Abroad" in which she appeared with Jack Benny. A friend from Berkeley, California told me he enjoyed this film as much as anything shown at Cinecon due to Jack Benny's expert comedy timing and unique style. True — his performance lifted this lightweight film into a higher realm by his very appearance. Later I read that this film was Paramount's biggest box office grosser of 1938 — thanks to Jack's tremendous popularity from the air waves. Viva Benny!

— ROBERT ROSTERMAN

WESTMONT, IL — I wanted to let you know how very much I enjoyed reading (and re-reading) your book, *WBBM: Yesterday and Today*. You did an amazing and thorough job of blending history and nostalgia, and your writing never lost my interest. Bringing the station up to the present answered many questions I had, and the book introduced me to people, facts and events that I now see have significantly shaped what we hear today on the radio dials in Chicago since Mr. Atlass first launched what would become WBBM. I hope to read your sequel in a few years.

— S.J. PETERS

GLENVIEW, IL — Thank you so much for doing the Johnny Mercer show. It was a real pleasure and thrill for me to be a part of it. I was really pleased with the way that it turned out and it was so satisfying to contribute to the remembrance of such a great and uniquely American talent as he was. Your relaxed manner made me feel right at home and the hours just flew by.

— BILL SHELDON

(ED. NOTE — And we thank you, too, for your part in our *Those Were The Days* salute to a great composer.)

ADDISON, IL — Just want to let you know how much I enjoy old time radio. I am partial to detective shows and mysteries. When I receive my *Nostalgia Digest* I read through the calendar and mark off the shows I want to tape. It is very handy. Just one thing I find distracting: the station time tone signal that turns up at 8:30 during the Mystery Theatre. Can't you schedule a commercial at that time? Mystery Theatre is my very favorite.

— GLORIA HORAN

(ED. NOTE — If we scheduled a commercial — or other — break at precisely 8:30 we almost always would have to interrupt the story at an unnatural time. We'd rather have the time tone which, incidentally, cannot be eliminated. Sorry.)

URBANA, IL — Thanks again for announcing the first meeting of the Illini Golden Age of Radio Club here at the University of Illinois. It really is special for the club to know that we have a friend in Chicago. We had Quad Day last week and 71 people signed up. This evening we had our first meeting of the new school year. I was happy to see 10 new and enthusiastic members attend. One young lady said that in high school, her drama club performed radio mysteries, and she would be very interested in participating in our broadcast re-creations. We also passed a resolution to give you honorary membership in the Illini Golden Age of Radio Club. It's our way of saying "thanks for your support."

— TOM TIRPAK, President

(ED. NOTE — Thanks very much for the honor. We're always glad to encourage interest in the great radio shows of the past. Hope to see you and some of our Illini friends at one of our Saturday afternoon programs at the Museum of Broadcast Communications the next time you get to Chicago.)

WAUWATOSA, WISCONSIN — Renewal time seems like a great time to write you a long overdue, annual letter. First, I want to go all the way back to December, 1988, and thank you for rebroadcasting my all-time favorite Christmas program, the Truth or Consequences episode in which the hospitalized sailor "visits" his home town. The follow-up interview with the sailor now, which you added last year, was especially nice. It was so good to hear things seemed to have worked out for him — one of those radio mysteries solved!

I also wish to thank you for the Gildersleeve "specials" you have featured: Marjorie's wedding on Saturday, and Gildy's "wedding" on WBBM. Gildy is my favorite of the radio comedies. Enjoyed hearing the complete "Book" of One Man's Family, too, this summer. I was introduced to that program through record albums available from our public library several years ago.

The Wizard of Oz program was top notch. What fun to sit back and imagine the excitement of that film when it was new. Like many Americans, my only exposure to that movie is from television, so this was a real imagination treat.

The *Nostalgia Digest* is tops, but I want to especially comment on a recent issue. The "letters" section is the first I head for, and I must tell you the enjoyment we got about the letters section that featured several letters about the actual old radios people have. My dad is a collector of sorts, and those letters really hit a responsive chord.

— JULIE A. GUTKNECHT

MONTGOMERY, IL — As both a listener of old time radio and a subscriber to *Nostalgia Digest*, this letter has been a long time in its making. You have been a welcome friend/voice in our house for more years than my subscription indicates. How did you decide to do what you do? Was your love for old time radio programs a hobby that blossomed to a life/career? I can imagine how much time you put into this creation of yours. Even into two decades of experience, the workload/schedule must still be there no matter how much of a science you have gotten it down to. Is this a labor of love? You do not make it sound like work at all. Keep up all that you do. You touch many more lives than you will ever know unless, of course, you have an angel as did George Bailey! You have a quality that transcends the tube — it makes one feel very at home — very welcome. You have a genuine caring and warm personality that is as important to this listener as the given old time radio broadcasts. Thanks.

— ED PIENKOS

(ED. NOTE — Well, we're certainly blushing at all your kind words. We've been very lucky to turn our hobby into our career. And we couldn't have done it without the continued support of you and all our listeners and readers. We'll go into some detail about how it all started when we present our 20th Anniversary broadcast on Saturday, April 26, 1990. And, thank you very much.)

WE GET LETTERS

CHICAGO — Just a note to thank you for your "digression" (about personal memories of Chicago as a child) on this evening's program. You certainly released a flood of my own reminiscences, not exactly similar but coinciding enough to almost getting the tear ducts to working! Hope you continue to have your program on WBBM for a long time or for as long as you can and want to. Occasionally I listen to your Saturday afternoon presentations on FM. They are great, also.

— HENRY DEMBINSKI

CARBONDALE, IL — Would you know if any of the old time radio serials or radio plays are currently being broadcast in my area? The local PBS station here, WSIU, has broadcast radio serials in the past, but is not currently doing radio plays of any kind. WBBM is the closest radio station I know of, and the reception is very weather dependent. Any information you could provide would be most welcome. — DAVID AUBERTIN

(ED. NOTE — Your best bet is to call or write to the radio-TV writer of your town's major newspaper. That person should know if any stations in the area are carrying vintage or current radio dramas. Some newspapers also carry broadcast information in a "radio highlights" section, and it is good to look for that listing, or to encourage your newspaper to feature such a listing if it doesn't. Very often radio takes a back seat to TV coverage and that disappoints fans of both old-time and new-time radio.)

OAK PARK, IL — The *Nostalgia Digest* is the only publication that I read from cover to cover (even the fine print) and never get bored! I grew up in the 60s, but I can still relate with many of the stories by Dan McGuire. Today things are very different, but between my time and Dan's, things have not changed too drastically. I am an over-the-road salesman. I listen to your programs as much as I can. Unfortunately, however, I am disappointed more often than not because I have to leave my car in the middle of an enjoyable program! Also, growing up in the 60s, I remember very little of old time radio, which is why I enjoy your program so much. It allows me once again to use my imagination.

— IGNATIUS J. LACIAK

MAIDEN, NORTH CAROLINA — I tuned in your signal at 780 kHz tonight shortly after 9 p.m. local time. That would be 8 p.m. your time. My receiver is a Radio Shack DX-360 battery-powered portable. Your signal strength varied from S-6 to over S-9, then it faded at around 9:57 p.m. to the extent that I lost track of the program for a few minutes. Soon afterward, though, reception returned to normal. The antenna is inside the radio. My DX-360 sits atop my antique Firestone "Air Chief" radio. I could restore the Firestone to normal electrical operation, but I have decided not to. Its tubes, resistor and capacitor have their original labels and

markings bearing the trade marks of manufacturers no longer around.

It was a great pleasure to listen to *The Green Hornet* again after many, many years. For some reason, tonight I did not bother to turn on my television, and I just turned on the radio instead. I am glad I did. During the old time radio shows I listened to, I imagined I was hearing them on the old "Air Chief," right under my modern, tubeless receiver.

I am 49 year old. I do not have a family of my own. When I was a small child, back in the 1940s, I recall how wonderful it was listening to the man on the radio say that the war was over, and immediately afterward I heard every factory whistle in the city of Lenoir, N.C., where I was born, sound off so loudly that nobody could talk to anybody else 'til the celebration had subsided. I also listened to *The Shadow*, *The Lone Ranger*, Roy Rogers, Big Jon and Sparky, and many more. My grandparents would simply not allow me to make a sound during news commentaries by Gabriel Heatter and Lowell Thomas. Whenever FDR talked, everyone listened. — BOB NULL (Amateur Radio N4QR)

VILLA PARK, IL — As always, it's a great pleasure to send in my renewal for another year of *Nostalgia Digest*. You and your very knowledgeable staff do a great job. I cannot, however, resist this opportunity to voice my opinion on a controversial subject — one that finds its way into every issue in *Letters From Listeners*. You guessed it! The CBS Radio Mystery Theatre. And I agree with the majority, it seems. I can't stand it! Here's why. First, it's not old enough to be "old time radio," being made in the 70s. Come, now! Second, the acting can't hold a candle to the true "mystery" theatres of years gone by like *Suspense* and *Inner Sanctum*. The plots are always predictable and lacking for any kind of good content, many even containing evil and sinister themes. Just the titles turn me off — and I turn off the radio fast!

Finally, when you are only on the air for an hour each night, why, oh why, can't we lighten our daily load of worry, stress and tension with more comedy at the end of a long, hard day and week? You play far too little Jack Benny, Burns and Allen, Fibber and Molly, etc. And we really resent your wasting an entire two-hour slot every Saturday night with two Mystery Theatre shows. Forgive me, but it almost seems like an easy night for you since you have to add so little to the show's own narration.

And now you mentioned last Sunday night you will be pre-empted every Sunday night for the next several months by hockey, so there is no more Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night. How about moving it to Saturday night instead? Haven't we suffered through enough Mystery Theatres yet? Anyway, as for me and my family, we would like to start listening to WBBM again each night if only your calendar wasn't crammed each month with the Mystery Theatre. So that's my two cents. Thanks for listening. A truly devoted fan.

— TAMARA McPARLAND

(ED. NOTE — Sorry about the seasonal wrap-up of the Sunday night shows. Can't move *Nostalgia Night* to Saturday, 'cause hockey mostly takes over that night, too. And, after four hours on WNIB every Saturday, afternoons, it's nice not to have too much to say on a Saturday night! As far as the "controversy" regarding the Mystery Theatre . . . well, it still goes on. Read the next letter for another view on the subject.)

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN, WISCONSIN — I've been following the on-going debate about whether the CBS Radio Mystery Theatre is worthy of being included in your *Old Time Radio Classics* on WBBM. Of course it is . . . the show is now a part of broadcast history, just like all the other shows aired during the week.

Some people complain that Mystery Theatre isn't as "good" as the old shows from the 30s and 40s. Mystery Theatre was never supposed to be as good, or bad, as those shows. It was conceived as an alternative to what had become very boring, sound alike, radio in the early to mid-70s. This was the time that FM really began to take off and AM stations were beginning to lose their luster with listeners and began their eventual slide to the news/talk/sports/full service doldrums that are in vogue today. Mystery Theatre was able to attract between two and six million listeners a night, about the same number that the Larry King radio show gets to this day. Mystery Theatre was, and still is, far superior to the competing show offered by Mutual/Sears for about a year.

It seems that it took (producer-director) Hyman Brown about a year to finally settle down to a good writing staff, one with less fascination with death, and a good ensemble of actors before the show was really good. The first season he seems to have tried to get almost every actor in New York and Hollywood to come on the show . . . some worked, some didn't. Some of the actors he finally settled on were superior "voices" . . . Alan Martin, Robert Dryden, Bryna Rayburn, Russell Horton, etc.

So far, your WBBM show is only scratching at the 1975 season. The show got quite a bit better by '76 when the Bicentennial could be exploited, and programs with adaptations of O. Henry, Mark Twain and Sherlock Holmes stories came into being.

I originally discovered Mystery Theatre in late '75, and finally began taping the shows in early '76, finally getting over 330 shows on tape. Since the show was re-released last year, I've increased my shows on tape to about 470. WCCO and KOA carry the Mystery Theatre at least five days a week, so they are about six months, or more, ahead of WBBM. However, since those stations fade quite often, I can get much better tape when the same shows finally come around on WBBM. With WCCO I also have to contend with "Radio Havana" blasting them off the air all summer long!

For my money, it's too bad that WBBM can't schedule Mystery Theatre at 10:30 or 11:30 each night. That way hockey wouldn't be in conflict, and the *Radio Classics* listeners could still get their "fix." Thanks for the great programs

— W. CORNWELL

CLUBB, MISSOURI — I enjoy listening to your old time radio shows. I live about 125 miles south of St. Louis. I'm going to have to get up a better antenna as I have a hard time pulling in your station sometimes.

— IRA B. ROTHENHOEFER

HILLSBORO, IL — I'm an inmate at the Graham Correctional Center and listen to your program even though it is very staticky. I have my wife in Chicago listen to them also so if I can't hear it sometimes, she could tell me about it. She drove down one time and said she was unable to pick the station up after driving such a distance. I would like to be able to hear more clearly. We are so far from Chicago, 250 miles. The other inmates enjoy listening to your program also, especially FBI and Dragnet. — NAME WITHHELD

CLEAR LAKE, IOWA — Thank you for many hours of great entertainment. I do enjoy the older programs. The CBS Mystery Theatre lacks the variety of actors and the intensity of the programs of earlier times. To me, these pre-TV programs had more depth, more effort put into them. I must also confess that I was indifferent to the sport of hockey until it infringed on *Radio Classics* broadcasts. Now I dread seeing the season approach.

I live on an acreage several miles out of town (Mason City), but I still have difficulty maintaining a strong, consistent signal from WBBM. Would anyone in your engineering department have any suggestions as to what I could do or buy to improve reception. At present I am using the tuner in our stereo. Would a short wave receiver give me more clarity? I find it very refreshing to have your program to enjoy. Radio and its programming in our vicinity has been limited to nearly all "top 40" broadcasts . . . very monotonous.

— MICHAEL MASKARINA

(ED. NOTE — We often get similar letters from listeners trying to pull in our radio signals from a great distance. One of our diehard OTR fans, Jim Melka, recommends the *General Electric Super Radio II* for grabbing the signal and hanging on to it for good long distance reception. He says the radio — Model 7-2885 — sells for around \$45 and has both the AM and FM bands. Jim wrote about D-Xing, the art of listening to long distance or hard to pick up radio signals, in the December, 1984 issue of the *Digest*. His article is reprinted on pages 12 and 13 of this anniversary issue. Hope this information helps.)

BROOKFIELD, IL — I wish to congratulate you on a great job on your *TWTD* broadcast "Remembering Franklyn McCormack." A great show that I was able to tape on cassette and add to my collection.

— JACK KISSANE

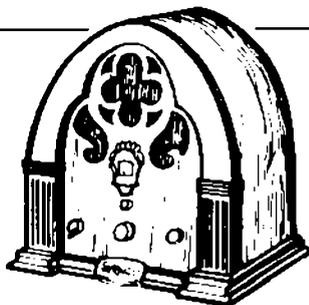
RIVER FOREST, IL — I wouldn't be able to clean house or work in my garden without your Saturday show!

— LENORE LEV

CHICAGO — Thank heavens for old time radio. That's entertainment!

— ELEANORE DASH

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TAPE #3 (11-29-42) Sketch: "Three Men in a Tank" about soldiers in Africa; (10-10-43) Jack returns from overseas camp tour.

TAPE #4 (1-23-44) Alexis Smith guests from Army Air Field; (2-6-44) Jack recalls how he joined the Navy in World War I.

TAPE #5 (3-12-44) Remote before an audience of sailors at US Naval Air Station; (4-23-44) Dennis' last show before entering the Navy.

TAPE #6 (11-19-44) Guest Larry Adler from US Naval Hospital. Jack recalls his days in the Navy; (4-8-45) Guest William Powell at Turney General Hospital.

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