

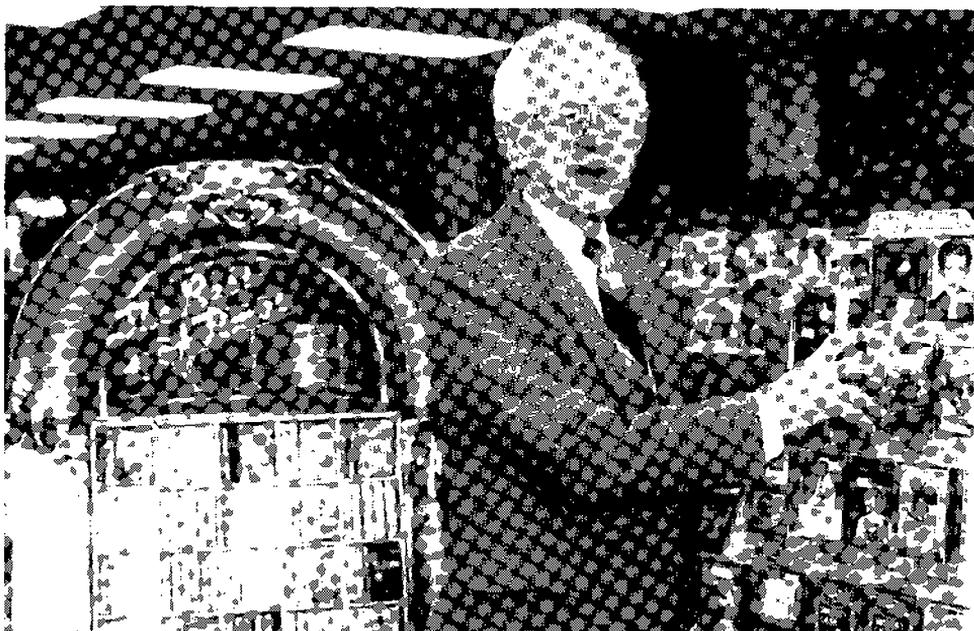
CHUCK SCHADEN'S
NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND
RADIO GUIDE ©

JUNE — JULY, 1990



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BOOK SIXTEEN CHAPTER FOUR
JUNE-JULY, 1990

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NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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In August of last year, 1989, we were on the West Coast and we were very excited about two events that were about to happen.

One was the prospect of recording an interview with Harriet Nelson, of the long-running Ozzie and Harriet radio and television programs.

We had made advance arrangements to visit with her and had a delightful time talking about her broadcast career as we looked out on the beautiful blue Pacific Ocean from her living room. She mentioned that her son David and his family had been down from Hollywood to see her over the previous weekend. We asked if she though he might also be interested in talking with us. Her answer was yes and, the next day, in Los Angeles, he invited us to stop in for a chat, which we also recorded.

After we returned home, we found that our heretofore trusty tape recorder had malfunctioned and, while we were able to *record* the two conversations, the tape was not of sufficient quality to *broadcast*.

But the memories of Harriet and David Nelson are here for you to read in this issue of our *Nostalgia Digest*. They are both very nice, friendly people and we're glad to share the words of our conversations, if not the conversations themselves.

The other event that happened last August was our stop at the home of the late Jim Jordan, radio's Fibber McGee, to receive from his widow, Gretchen, the bound volumes of the complete collection of Fibber McGee and Molly radio scripts for the Museum of Broadcast Communications.

The results of that stop and all the other exciting events that followed, will be offered to you in detail in our next issue.

Chuck Schaden

SPEAKING OF RADIO

Chuck Schaden's Conversation with **HARRIET NELSON**



We met the star of the Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet in her Pacific Ocean-front home in Laguna Beach, California where we said that all her fans and friends in the Chicago area sent their love. Harriet Nelson said that she had played Chicago many times since she was a young girl of sixteen. She was working with comedian Ken Murray at the Palace Theatre, dancing, playing parts and doing "straight" for him.

Singing was kind of a sideline. In Vaudeville, in the old days, you had to do everything. You had to sing, you had to dance, you had to do sketch comedy. You did all those things and you just took it for granted.

My mother and dad were in the business. As a matter of fact, my dad worked out of Chicago. Chicago was the center for dramatic stock, and he was a director/actor. So I've been kind of a Chicagoan almost since I was born.

I started working with my parents when I was six weeks old. My mother was a leading lady in stock. She carried me on and I played my first speaking part when I was three. So in stock I began as an actress. Then I went into New York and I joined the Castle Ballet. Then I met up with Ken Murray, through friends, who was looking for a straight woman. He took me on and we were in the first year of the RKO unit that was ever on tour. It's a long story . . . you don't want all of that.

We love the stories. We know what you accomplished over the years, but we don't know much about the beginning. It's fascinating to know about those early vaudeville days. How long were you with Ken Murray?

A whole year. Then I went to Danny Duncan's act — that was sketch comedy

in vaudeville. You'd pick a play which was successful, condense it, and you were on for 20 minutes with it. I did the whole tour again and wound up again back in Chicago.

Were you Harriet Hilliard at that time?

Yes. My father was Roy E. Hilliard. Then I went into New York with my mother. You were based in New York if you were with RKO, which was the big circuit. From there I went into a very large nightclub called the Hollywood Restaurant in New York City. I was the Mistress of Ceremonies there. I was pretty young to be a Mistress of Ceremonies, but I was.

I met Ozzie at that time. It was his idea to have a girl with a band. I was the first girl with a band. It was his idea. He wanted to do musical comedy duets at the bandstand. He said the boys would have something to look at as well as the girls!

How long had Ozzie had his band when you joined it?

Well, he was still in school. He had a degree in law and was still going to law school when he had his band. I think it was the first band at the Glen Island Casino in New York, where a lot of bands started. I just had the engagement for the summer. If it didn't work out and he didn't have a



THE NELSON FAMILY IN THE 1940's - Ozzie and Harriet with Ricky and David.

job in the fall, I was going to go back to Hollywood. But that was the end of that. At the end of the summer we had fallen in love. We had a very long run . . . 45 years as a matter of fact.

It was wonderful that you could work together all those years.

♦And it just kept growing and growing and we went into radio. We were on radio

SPEAKING OF RADIO with Harriet Nelson

first with Joe Penner and after that with Red Skelton. I played the mother of the Mean Little Kid! Then I did Daisy June with Klem Kadiddlehopper and I did Deadeye and Calamity June!

Did you have fun working with Red?

Oh, yes, he's such a brilliant comic. I've often said, when his timing was so right, I used get chills down my back. It was like listening to a great symphony. Such a talent!

Where did you get the idea to start the situation comedy with the Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet?

Red was taken into the service. We were going to go on with another comedian doing the same thing we did with the band. Ozzie used to work with Red, too, on straights. Then, when he was taken into the service, we were going to go on with another musical group. One day Don Quinn (the writer on Fibber McGee and Molly) was talking to me and Ozzie at the Brown Derby and he said, "Oz, why don't you write your own show?" It never occurred to us before and so Ozzie did, and wrote the first show all by himself and we got a studio at CBS and did the audition show. That was scary. You don't know whether you're going to be top gun or not. When that first laugh comes rolling in . . . ahh, it's heaven! You think, we've got it made! They're going to laugh at us!

Had Ozzie done much writing before?

I think Ozzie's written his whole life. But we didn't know if he could write a whole show. We didn't know if we could get laughs, because we had never done that kind of comedy before.

John Guedel, who was very active in radio, took the (audition) platters and flew them to New York and a week later we were signed with International Sterling Silver. They were our sponsors for five

years. I don't think we ever had a sponsor that was less than five years.

When your show began, you and Ozzie played a husband and wife band leader and band singer.

That's right, it started differently. He wrote the first show like a day off in the life of a band leader and his vocalist wife. It was a wild comedy. Jack Douglas was one of the writers, and J.P. Medwick. But it didn't make any sense. It wasn't a sensible kind of thing. It was just wild comedy. Then it eventually grew. Before we'd done, I would say, five or six shows, it started to get more "legit." Audiences tell you what they want you to do. We got that feeling from them and it just evolved. We didn't ever start to do anything but a half hour comedy show, and pretty soon it started to get more legitimate.

We had two bunches of kids who were able to read on sight, but they were right at the age where their voices were changing. So we had gone through three sets of boys and we were sitting at the dinner table one night and Bing Crosby was going to do a guest spot on our show. We never had guests so this was a special thing. The boys, my boys, used to play tennis with Lindsay, Bing's son, and they said, "Why can't we do the show if Bing's sons do it?" We didn't know, but they said they wanted to do the show. In those days you'd do a preview, then cut, then do the proper show.

A preview before a studio audience? Like a dress rehearsal?

Exactly. It was like a dress rehearsal, so we could overwrite the show and then bring it down to time by cutting, because the more you cut — people don't think so — the better it is.

Well, we told the boys they could do the preview, but not the show. There wasn't enough experience there. We weren't about to put our careers in the hands of a couple of kids who had never been on before. Well, they did the preview for the



OZZIE AND HARRIET

audience. The first time that either one of them spoke up, the laughs came from the back of the studio! And I thought, oh they've tasted blood! This is it! So, they did the show with us. It was very successful. People loved them right away.

Had the boys expressed any interest in doing this before that time?

Once in a while, when we were looking for another set of kids, but we would always say, "you're too young, you can't read." They didn't have to read. Ricky would do the sketch and then have it memorized.

How old were David and Ricky when they came on the show?

Ricky was eight and David was eleven. Of course, David could read, but Rick couldn't read that fast to do a radio show. It didn't seem to matter. He was too little to reach the microphone, so we had a table set up at center stage and he'd sit in a chair

with a script in front of him. He had a knack for learning fast. As a matter of fact, there were many times that he'd almost given me a heart attack. He couldn't see his feet and so long as he couldn't see them, he didn't see why the audience could. So he'd kick off his shoes first thing. He'd be sitting there looking at the ceiling and doing everything this side of whistling and he'd have a line coming on and I'd think he's not going to make it. But he did! He'd give me a heart attack! I got use to it after a while. As long as we'd come up to his cue, he'd look down like he was reading and say the line. But we lived through all of that.

Rick always had the snapper and would always get the big laugh. And I tell you, David griped about it one time. I said, "Listen, everybody needs a straight man. A comic can't get a laugh without a straight man. You're a straight man and I'm a straight woman. Both of 'em need us to get along." That soothed his ruffled feathers.

Did the boys really enjoy doing this work?

Yes, they did. Then, as time went on, we always worked around them, like when we went into film for TV. They went to public school all the time that they did it. We'd work around them, like we'd save what they had to do 'til Saturday. Then they got into sports. Rick got into tennis and David got into football, and we worked around that, too. So they led a perfectly normal life. They seldom worked outside of the family. We were 14 years on television. We had the same crew, we worked in the same studio from the time we started. It was like home, being at the studio, because we had our bungalow over there. Everything was set up in advance. It was a long and happy career.

Which studio did you use to produce the TV show?

General Services, in Hollywood, about 10 minutes from our house. We drove down the hill about 12 blocks and we were at work.

SPEAKING OF RADIO with Harriet Nelson

The you really didn't live at 1776 Rogers Road?

No!

You had an announcer on radio, and I think he moved into TV with you, named Verne Smith. He had a wonderful pleasing smile in his voice.

He was a member of the family. He was with us a long time. Then Jack Bailey was with us for a while.

He did Queen For A Day on radio.

I think he was out of Chicago, too.

Now, somewhere between radio and television, you made a movie, "Here Come The Nelsons."

That's right. We used that for the pilot for TV, at Universal.

Did you have any trouble moving from radio to television?

No problem at all, because I have been in pictures. I did my first picture, "Follow the Fleet" in 1935 with Rogers and Astaire. Ozzie had been in several pictures with the band. So it was a very easy thing for us to do, the move from radio to TV. Of course, you didn't have the leeway in television that you did in radio, so that took some doing.

You were more confined on TV.

Yes, and it wasn't a breeze, because we began our own company. So we had to, in a hurry — one big hurry — learn about making pictures and we'd never made pictures before. We'd been in them, but we'd never made them! So, there was one year and a half that was rather frantic.

It was astute of you to decide to make your TV shows yourself rather than have someone else produce the programs.

Ozzie was always head honcho. He determined everything.

It's amazing, Ozzie Nelson always came across on the radio and the TV shows as a very easy-going, relaxed kind of person. Over the years they kidded him because he didn't have a job or visible means of income.

Number one question!

The big thing was going to the malt shop with Thorny and wallow away their cares in a milkshake.

And Thorny always had Ozzie on. Ozzie was always the butt of everything.

But in reality, Ozzie the business man was a sharp taskmaster and knew what he was doing.

Yes, he was a graduate in law. In New Jersey you had to be a clerk for year in a law office before you could hang out your shingle. But by that time he was doing too well with the band and he couldn't afford to do that.

He never actually practiced law?

Only as far as we were concerned. But he was a good enough attorney to know that you don't work in your own behalf that way. So we had the same outside attorney for 35 years. He and Ozzie had a wonderful relationship.

In the beginning, when Ozzie was writing the radio shows, he had some other writers. A brother?

That's right, Don. Donald, his younger brother, was going to school at Southern California. He used to write scripts and turn them in, too. Part of everybody's script was used. Ozzie would edit the whole thing and write one master script from it. They would have a meeting once a week trying to decide what to do. Then each writer would write a script, turn it in to Ozzie. He would get them together, taking parts of everybody's script, edit the whole thing and put it together. That's how he worked.

Did you have any input into the script-writing process?



OZZIE AND HARRIET cuddle close for a scene in the 1944 Paramount film, "Take It Big."

No, I did not. That wasn't my cup of tea. Can't sit still too long! Ozzie had everything to do with the business, totally. Of course, he would ask my opinion. There isn't a husband in the world that doesn't ask his wife her opinion, and I would tell him. I was a pretty good editor. But I took care of the house and the boys and I had everything to do with that. He figured I knew more about that and I did. We had a wonderful working relationship, besides the other relationship.

At what point did Ozzie give up the band?

It sort of phased out when we started "Ozzie and Harriet," about the first few years after we got into more "legit" comedy. For a while we would do both. Where there was a break in the script, there would be a band number. We would either sing together or one or the other

would. It just gradually phased itself out.

And eventually the whole half hour was the "legit" comedy. There were some marvelous warm laughs and entertainment on those radio shows. I assume you had a good time doing all those things.

Yes we did. I think it was successful because we had such a good time with it. We never got tired of it. I got a little tired at the end of 14 years on TV. Ozzie never lost interest in it because he did it all. He directed, he produced, he laid the music. He was the head cutter. He also had more variety to do than I. I sort of stood in the same spot in the same set and said the same thing more or less.

You washed the dishes and said, 'What time are you coming home, Ozzie?'

• Ha ha! that's right!

So many people grew up with David and

SPEAKING OF RADIO with Harriet Nelson

Ricky and with Ozzie and Harriet. How did you respond to that, being in the spotlight as your family grew up? How did it affect your life together?

I don't think that it affected us, but I think we affected a lot of other people through the mail and all that I receive, even now. I am so thrilled and flattered — especially for Ozzie — that this could happen. He hasn't been here for a very long time and he's still playing on the Disney Channel. I have little people come up to me when I'm in stores. It's such a thrill for me because little five and six year olds look up and say, "I watch you on television." Do you know how wonderful that is? Not to have done the show for so many years.

Did Ozzie's Girls begin after David and Ricky left the original series.

Yes, but David produced Ozzie's Girls because Ozzie was ill and wasn't really well enough to do it. David understood his father, saw that Ozzie was getting a little worn out, a little pained. David would just close shop and say that's all for today. He had learned under Ozzie's tutelage, because he grew up in the studio. So he knew every department and knew the way Ozzie worked. He had directed several of our shows, too, before he quit. He was sort of broken-in that way. Ozzie would give him the shows that had to do with young people in our cast.

Why did the Ozzie and Harriet TV series end? Was it because the boys had gotten older?

I don't know. Both Ozzie and I had the feeling that we had come to the end. We were worn out and the show was being worn out. We just had a feeling about it and, sure enough, at the end of the season — it was no surprise to us. It was a sad thing, the closing, because we had all been

together for so long.

Your fans were with you, too, for a very long time. First in radio, then on television. We embraced your family and shared the joys and sadness that you had through the years.

Thank you. I know they're still friendly. I get such mail from people. Now I get mail from the younger people who grew up with the show, who now have children and tell me about them. So it goes on and on. We didn't intend to represent the American family when we started, we really didn't. We just started out to be a half hour comedy show. But our audience decided what we would be.

What was the best time for you?

Well, I loved radio best and I'll tell you why. You could have a life of your own in radio. It was the best of all worlds. It was big time. You did it live. Then you had the thrill of working in front of an audience and having one crack at it. You didn't dare make a mistake, so you were absolutely on your best. It only happened once a week, so you could live like a human being the rest of the week. You could go to the movies, you could have people in for dinner. When we went to television, it was 24 hours day, seven days a week. So I had more personal time when we were in radio, and yet had the best of it all.

I still get such a kick out of those radio shows.

We're glad you did them, too. They play very well today.

Do they, really?

Yes, and they sound like you folks are having a good time and the audience is having a good time. And we, too, have had a wonderful time today sharing your memories.

Thank you.

And thank you for all the good work you and your family have done over the years.

Oh, it's been my pleasure.

SPEAKING OF RADIO

Chuck Schaden's Conversation with DAVID NELSON

David Nelson grew up before our ears and eyes on radio and television as the eldest son on the *Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*. We visited with him in his office at Casablanca Productions in Hollywood, California where he produces commercials and industrial films between occasional acting stints which keep him active today in show business. We talked about his "Ozzie and Harriet" career.

My first appearance, which was kind of interesting, was with my father's orchestra. I got away from somebody and walked out on stage while they were performing in Chicago at the Palmer House. I was backstage. I came along with the luggage and Rick wasn't around yet. Actually, when Rick was a year old he stayed with Grandma Hilliard, my mother's mother, in New Jersey. I continued to go on the road with my parents. I always blame my father for the

fact that I couldn't get up and wake up for school in the morning. They kept me up 'til two or three in the morning, because those were their hours. Of course, they slept 'til 11 a.m.! My father was always on band hours.

He gave up the band some time into the radio series, didn't he?

He kind of eased out of the band. The first trumpet player and arranger was Billy May. As they got into the Ozzie and



OZZIE NELSON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

SPEAKING OF RADIO with David Nelson

Harriet show, Billy really took over the band and it became more of a studio band than it was a touring band, up until the time they left Red Skelton. Red went into the army, as it happened. They started to do the Ozzie and Harriet show, but during that time my father still had the orchestra.

In your dad's heyday as a bandleader, before he started playing for Skelton and his own show, how popular was his band?

Well, he won the *Times-Mirror* Poll Award. I think he was still going to Rutgers University and had just started the band. Then he got a radio show and he was on the air for a furniture company. This was 1928, 1929. But there was a popularity contest and I guess it was conducted by the *New York Times-Mirror*. He won that; I still have the plaque. He was very popular with the young people because he was an athlete, played football and did all those things while going to Rutgers. He had probably the youngest band around New York and New Jersey area.

People could identify with him.

He did a very smart thing, I think. Rudy Vallec was very hot and Dad saw that most of the gals would stop dancing and stand in front of the bandshell when Rudy would sing. So he devised a method of hiring a female vocalist to be up on the bandstand with him, so that the guys would have something to watch as well as the girls. But he was very much like Rudy Vallec in his interpretation, because Rudy was from Yale, and he promoted that and of course Dad promoted Rutgers.

So, you were three years old and you stole a bow!

Then my next appearance was really on the Art Linkletter show, House Party, and that was the first for my brother and myself.

You mean, "Kids Say the Darndest

Things?"

Yes. He asked my brother — he asked all the kids this — "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Rick said he'd like to be either a "Club Scout" or a "Lone Stranger." He asked me and I said — at that time my father had gone to law school — so I said, "Well, I'm going to go to law school and become an attorney and then I'm going on the radio."

And that happened when I was eleven! Bing Crosby was a guest on the show. Child actors had been playing David and Ricky's parts for the first three years into the work.

Tommy Bernard and . . .

. . . Henry Blair. Tommy played David and Henry played Rick. And I believe that Joel Gray played Rick for maybe six to seven months. When they first started the show there was a guy about 40 years old playing Rick. He had a hoarse voice and father'd say, "Gee, we gotta get the kid's tonsils out!" It was pretty broad in those days!

Did you want to be on the radio?

I think we did. If somebody had said, "Okay, you can go on now, but you're going to have to spend 14 years doing this every week, day in and day out," we might have had second thoughts. But at the time it was something our parents did and we thought would be fun. Plus, the fact that the first show we did, Bing Crosby was on and he brought his son Lindsay to play himself. So we said, since we knew Lindsay Crosby and played tennis with him, couldn't we be on the show, too.

At that time, Rick couldn't read. So the first two years on the show, Rick memorized all the radio scripts. They didn't have a microphone short enough for him, so they sat him down at a table and had, like, a gooseneck mike that came over him. But he refused to go in front of the studio audience — about 250 people — without a script, even though he couldn't read. He would watch us out of the corner



THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET — Ozzie, Ricky, David and Harriet on the air!

of his eye, and when we turned the page, he'd slide a page over. He said he felt the audience would think he was dumb, so he had a script.

Did he memorize all the lines or just the cue lines?

The cue line and his line. I don't know how he did it, to be honest with you.

But you, of course, were standing at the microphone with script in hand.

Yes, I was just reading it off.

Can you describe what the radio studio setup was? Where you stood, and your folks, and where Rick's table was.

We had an audience of about 250 people. There was a center audience, then two aisles, and then seats on the aisle. It was

really like a small motion picture theatre. The stage itself was maybe about four and a half feet above, at kind of head-height to the audience. If you were in the audience looking at the stage, the sound man and his equipment were all to the right. They had big glass shields that surrounded him, so that he wouldn't lean over into the mike. The two main mikes were center stage. Rick has his table right behind the two center mikes and a chair, and behind that was the band. The band was set up on tiers. To the left of that was the control room with the director and the sound engineer. Above that was what they called a sponsor's booth, and that's where Rick and I went most of the time during the first two years when we'd go down and watch the show. We'd go up into the sponsor's booth and watch.

SPEAKING OF RADIO with David Nelson

Before you were on the show, did you go to the studio every week?

Yes, we did quite often go down to the studio with them. They had a preview and then an air performance.

When you were on the show, how much rehearsal did you have before you actually got to the preview or the actual broadcast?

I think we just really read the script over a few times, but then Dad would always try lines out with us at home. He would even try the lines out with us at home, lines for Tommy and Henry. They were good friends, too, so we could go down to the studio to see them.

Did you have a good time when you were doing this?

Yes, I had a wonderful time and it was great! There was the band and we knew all the guys in the band.

Were you nervous on your first Ozzie and Harriet show?

You know, I can't remember back that far, but I'm sure I was. We wanted to do a good job, too.

Had your folks said to you, if this works, okay, but if not, we're going back to the other kids?

I don't think they made any particular commitment. It was only after we had done it that they started thinking about it. I think my father thought real serious about it because Rick got so many laughs. He was this little skinny kid who just stood right up and spoke out . . . funny!

On both radio and TV, you were the more serious of the two boys and Rick was a little more of the cut-up, a little more spontaneous.

You have to understand that my parents came from vaudeville and the stage and that my mother played with George Burns



OZZIE NELSON

and Gracie Allen, while she was still dancing. She was out on the road with Ken Murray. She had specialty acts that she did, but she worked with and was straight for Bert Lahr. So she knew stand-up comedy, vaudeville- kind of burlesque-type humor. In those days, that's where radio came from, at least according to what I've been told. I'm old enough to remember "Blackouts" with Ken Murray. There was a straight man and a comedian. Abbott and Costello . . . Martin and Lewis . . . there was a straight man and a comedian. I was told, I was sold the line, that I was the straight man, Harriet was the straight man, and Ozzie and Rick were the comedians. A comedian was no better than a straight man who gives him the lines and he does the joke.

It certainly worked. The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet on radio and television was among the best of the shows.

You have to give my Dad credit for all of that, I think, because he was a man with six hats. He did everything. He wrote it, he produced it, he directed it. If he was mechanically capable, he probably would have shot it, too!

He loved doing it all, didn't he?

It was like a third child in our family, the show itself. There was David, Ricky and the show. We all sort of felt that way, it was a little bit bigger than all of us. My father signed one of the first, if not the first, ten-year agreements with a major network. I know Lucy did a year later, but it was a play or pay situation for ten years. So he knew we were going to be there for ten years. So his thinking, in terms of how the show would progress, was really from year to year and growing with the Nelsons, if you will.

People would say, "To what do you attribute the success of the Ozzie and Harriet show?" I'd say it's really my father, he has a finger on the pulse of middle America." My Dad would say, "That's not true at all! If you're out there guessing what an audience is going to like, you're in trouble. You have to listen to yourself." I think that holds true today and I still remember that. If it's a question of making a decision of whether you direct somebody in one direction or another, do what you think is right. Don't do what you think somebody else will appreciate or what you guess that the audience would think is funny. It has to be funny to you first. There are an awful lot of people who have made livings in the business by stealing other people's material and changing it a little bit because they knew it worked. In my father's case, he was really honest and just did what he thought was funny.

About your mother . . .

I don't think she's gotten her due for all the films and all the work she's done outside of Ozzie and Harriet, because she had a whole successful career before that even started.

She was a fine singer and a very appealing film actress.

She was a good dancer, too. A lot of people don't know that my grandmother was also a hooper. She had an act with her sister and she married my grandfather,



HARRIET NELSON

who was a director with Morts Brothers Night Company in the midwest. So our family goes back another generation in show business. He ran the amateur vaudeville house in New Jersey. My grandmother played this wonderful kind of honky tonk piano.

You and Rick grew up on the shows, and you got married on the shows.

Well, we had a strange phenomena, because by the time we went off, we actually had three shows in one. We had what my father knicknamed the "Pozzie" which was the older group, the women's club and Joe Randolph and Clara. Then I was an attorney and was married and had my life. Rick was married to Kris and somehow they were still going to school and Rick was singing. So there was the fraternity and school in one, my involvement with clients in another, and then we would all come back together. There were actually three shows at once.

When we went off the air, it was really ABC who made the decision. Rick and I were ready, by my father never was.

**In fact he continued, then, with Ozzie's Girls, didn't he?*

SPEAKING OF RADIO with David Nelson

I produced that with Al Simon and Filmways. We did 24 shows until my father got sick. I started directing on the Ozzie and Harriet show, through the good graces of my father. As I mentioned, the show was a third child in our family, so for him to lend me his third child for a week was . . . really . . . I have to give him credit, because I wasn't that old. I was 20 years old.

Did he really let you do it or was he the shadow standing behind you?

My Dad went to Bobby Marino, who was our cameraman at that time. Bobby tells this story, but Dad didn't tell me. Dad asked Bobby, "Do you think he's capable of doing it?" Bobby said, "Absolutely! There's no doubt in my mind. We're all here so there's nothing that David can do that's going to be wrong. But there's one condition." My father said, "What's that?" Bobby said, "That you don't come on the sound stage!"

We shot the show and my father lived up to his agreement. He did not come on the sound stage. He came in and saw the dailies every day, and worked on another script. But Bobby came over to me on about the third day into the show and said, "Come here. I want you to see something." We walked over to the stage door, and he opened it a little bit and there was my father pacing back and forth in the alleyway on Stage 5 at General Service Studio!

It's hard to give up a third child!

I think that the only person other than himself that he would have allowed to direct it was me. He did all of them except for the first year where we had a director for the first two shows. My father had no experience directing up until that time. But by the time they had done the second or third show, he felt qualified enough to direct.

He had an important hand in the writing of all these shows and he knew the characters.

Absolutely. As far as the crew was concerned, he also went out and hired the best people that he could possibly hire.

Did your family produce the radio and TV series? Did you own it?

Yes, we did. And the contractual agreement as well, with ABC. It was the only deal that I know, that was a 10 year deal where the network was putting up the money, giving us the money and father had full artistic control and ownership of the thing.

He knew what he wanted and he knew what would work.

That's the advantage of going to law school. He never practiced law, but he was always guilty of practicing without a license. He graduated from law school, but never took the bar, because his band was so successful. One of his professors said to him, "You're crazy. You should open a small law firm in Jersey." Dad said, fortunately, he never had to do that.

After the show went off the air in '67, late '66, my father edited 200 of the 435 shows for syndication. They had to be shortened in time for syndication, so he took that opportunity to update a lot of the shows. He was mainly interested in music, so he changed the music in the majority of the shows he edited.

You mean the bridge music, the background music?

Yes, he just felt that they were too old fashioned. And to this day I still like to go back and look at the original films that have the old music in it, because it's almost like looking, for me anyway, looking at a Rolls Royce where they changed the fenders!

It's interesting to me that, although we did two years in color — the last two years — my father felt the show was funnier in black and white. Since he had done 12



THE NELSON FAMILY GROWN UP — David, Ozzie, Harriet, and Rick.

years in black and white, we had black and white prints made from the color negatives! So the whole series of 200 are all in black and white. My mother said, too, that she felt the comedy was funnier in black and white.

In black and white or in color, your family was warm and friendly and welcome guests in our radio and television homes. You provided us with good entertainment and we thank you for all of it.

Thank you.

JUNE			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 are not able to obtain advance information about storylines of these shows so that we might include more details in our <i>Radio Guide</i>. However, this easy-to-read calendar lists the programs in the order we will broadcast them. Programs on <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> are complete, but original commercials and network identification have been deleted. This schedule is subject to change without notice.</p>					1 Jack Benny Gangbusters	2 The Shadow Flash Gordon Sherlock Holmes Six Shooter
3 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	4 Mystery in the Air Lum & Abner	5 Adventures By Morse Charlie McCarthy	6 Bold Venture Hop Harrigan	7 Mr. & Mrs. North Burns & Allen	8 The Shadow Ma Perkins	9 Six Shooter Abbott & Costello Gangbusters Hop Harrigan
10 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	11 That Brewster Boy Hop Harrigan	12 Adventures By Morse Burns & Allen	13 Lum & Abner Lights Out	14 The Shadow Abbott & Costello	15 Theatre Royale Six Shooter	16 Mystery House Lum & Abner Sherlock Holmes Charlie McCarthy
17 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	18 Lights Out Little Orphan Annie	19 Adventures By Morse Jack Benny	20 Charlie McCarthy Theatre Royale	21 Boston Blackie Hop Harrigan	22 Escape Ma Perkins	23 Sherlock Holmes Family Doctor Six Shooter
24 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	25 The Shadow Lum & Abner	26 Adventures By Morse Bickersons	27 Burns & Allen Six Shooter	28 Jungle Jim Great Glidersleeve	29 Screen Guild Players Little Orphan Annie	30 Abbott & Costello Gangbusters

JULY			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
1 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	2 Mel Blanc Show Strange Dr. Weird	3 Adventures By Morse Jack Benny	4 Boston Blackie Louella Parsons	5 Beyond Tomorrow Pepper Young's Family	6 Lum & Abner Jungle Jim	7 Richard Diamond Chandu The Magician The Shadow
8 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	9 The Shadow Pepper Young's Family	10 Adventures By Morse Burns & Allen	11 Strange Dr. Weird Mercury Theatre	12 Captain Midnight Lights Out	13 The Weird Circle Mystery Theatre	14 Gangbusters Sherlock Holmes Six Shooter Lum & Abner
15 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	16 Flash Gordon Mysterious Traveler	17 Adventures By Morse Charlie McCarthy	18 Pepper Young's Family Mel Blanc Show	19 My Friend Irma Guilty Or Not Guilty?	20 Little Orphan Annie The Shadow	21 Abbott & Costello Theatre Royale Charlie McCarthy Gangbusters
22 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	23 Lights Out Pepper Young's Family	24 Adventures By Morse Abbott & Costello	25 Humphrey Bogart Theatre Little Orphan Annie	26 Quiet Please Flash Gordon	27 Walter Winchell Lights Out	28 Abbott & Costello Six Shooter Sherlock Holmes Adventure is Your Heritage
29 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	30 Captain Midnight The Shadow	31 Adventures By Morse Charlie McCarthy	<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>			

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THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1-5 P.M.

JUNE

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, JUNE 2nd

INNER SANCTUM (8-22-49) "Mind Over Murder" starring Everett Sloan and Elsbeth Eric in the story of a woman who is the victim of a violent crime and a witness who declines to help. AFRS rebroadcast. (10:40; 13:40)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (1-17-43) In a rebroadcast from New York, Jack and the gang welcome guest Oscar Levant. Featured are Mary Livingstone, Dennis Day, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Don Wilson, Joe Besser, and guest conductor Abe Lyman and the orchestra. Sketch: "Information Please." Grape Nut Flakes, NBC. (11:50; 7:20; 8:20)

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; 13:30; 14:15; 14:30)

YOURS TRULY, JOHNNY DOLLAR (3-29-59) "The Jimmy Carter Matter" stars Bob Bailey as "America's fabulous free-lance insurance investigator, the man with the action-packed expense account." Cast includes Virginia Gregg, Dick Beals, Larry Dobkin, Forrest Lewis, Edgar Barrier, Jack Krushin. Participating sponsors, CBS. (9:17; 6:45; 7:00)

SPACE PATROL (1950s) "Black Marketing on Titan" stars Ed Kemmer as Commander Buzz Corey, with Lyn Osborn as Cadet Happy. Sustaining, ABC. (10:50; 12:25)

SUPPER CLUB (10-9-44) Perry Como stars with guest Nat King Cole, the Satisfyers, Martin Block and Lou Schaeffer's orchestra. AFRS rebroadcast. (14:30)

SATURDAY, JUNE 9th

ONE MAN'S FAMILY (10-2-49) Book 71, Chapter 1 "Father Barbour and his Three Sons" begins a 14-chapter series of programs written and created by Carleton E. Morse. J. Anthony Smythe is Henry Barbour and Minetta Ellen is his wife Fanny. Sustaining, NBC. (17:02; 12:40)

DR. SIX GUN (1954) Karl Weber portrays Dr. Ray Matson, a "gun-toting frontier doctor . . . in the old Indian territory." Matson must repair the damage done by Rango Kane, a gunfighter with very unusual dueling equipment. AFRS rebroadcast. (12:30; 16:00)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (11-4-70) Bandleader Dick Jurgens talks about his musical career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded at the Willowbrook Ballroom in Western Springs, Illinois. (11:00)

ONE NIGHT STAND #1001 (5-15-46) Dick Jurgens and his orchestra in a remote broadcast from the Garden Room of the Hotel Claremont in Berkeley, California. Vocals by Jimmy Castle. AFRS. (8:20; 10:00; 11:15)

ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET (3-2-47) Typical complications as neighbor Thornberry leaves his wife's present with Ozzie and Harriet thinks that it's for her. AFRS rebroadcast. (11:50; 13:14)

ONE MAN'S FAMILY (10-9-49) Book 71, Chapter 2. "Clifford Delves into his Past." Sustaining, NBC. (13:20; 16:15)



SATURDAY, JUNE 16th

JIMMY DURANTE SHOW (6-16-48) The Schnozzola and guest Victor Moore plan a trip to Pismo Beach, then tour the 48 states to see how the country feels about men in beauty parlors! Cast features Alan Reed, singer Peggy Lee, the Crew Chiefs, Roy Barge and the orchestra. Rexall, NBC. (8:25; 9:10; 10:50)

LUX RADIO THEATRE (5-29-39) "Only Angels Have Wings" starring Cary Grant, Jean Arthur, Thomas Mitchell, Rita Hayworth and Richard Barthelme, all recreating their roles from the original 1939 film. This is a rehearsal recording of the drama about mail flyers taking risks in South America, providing the background for an interesting love story. Lux Soap, CBS. (25:00; 19:45; 15:35)

SUSPENSE (6-5-47) "Make Mad The Guilty" starring Hume Cronyn as a down and out actor who catches his wife in a tryst with their handsome boarder. Truman Bradley announces. Roma Wines, CBS. (12:10; 16:35)

OUR MISS BROOKS (11-14-48) Eve Arden stars as schoolteacher Constance Brooks of Madison High School with Gale Gordon as Mr. Conklin, the principal, Jeff Chandler as Mr. Boynton the biology teacher, and Richard Crenna as Walter Denton. Colgate-Palmolive, CBS. (12:20, 17:15)

ONE MAN'S FAMILY (10-16-49) Book 72, Chapter 3. "Father Barbour Gets Left Behind." Sustaining NBC. (13:55; 16:30)

SATURDAY, JUNE 23rd

JOAN DAVIS SHOW (1040s) The comedienne is looking for a manager for her Tea Room so she can find another career. Guest Danny Thomas portrays a tailor. Karl's Shoe Stores, CBS. (15:45; 15:20)

ACADEMY AWARD (7-31-46) "Hold Back the Dawn" starring Olivia deHavilland in her original screen role from the 1941 film, with Jean Pierre Aumont taking the Charles Boyer role. A gigolo marries a spinster to get into the U.S.A. House of Squibb, CBS. (15:08; 14:52)

KRAFT MUSIC HALL (1-6-49) Al Jolson, at the peak of his comeback after the success of the film "The Jolson Story" welcomes the actor who portrayed him on the screen, Larry Parks. Oscar Levant, Ken Carpenter, Lou Bring and the orchestra. Kraft Foods, NBC. (8:45; 10:10; 11:20)

ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET (12-5-48) Bing Crosby and his son Lindsay visit the Nelsons. International Silver Co., NBC. (15:00; 15:08)

ROGER KILGORE, PUBLIC DEFENDER (4-27-48) "The Case of George Brown" starring Santos Ortega as the public defender who must prove the innocence of a down and out man charged with grand larceny. Sustaining. MBS. (16:10; 12:15)

ONE MAN'S FAMILY (10-23-49) Book 72, Chapter 4. "A New Twist to an Old Story." Sustaining. NBC. (14:45; 14:45)



**J. ANTHONY SMYTHE
AS
FATHER HENRY BARBER
ON
"ONE MAN'S FAMILY"**

SATURDAY, JUNE 30th

FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (2-24-48) Marian and Jim Jordan star. Fibber gets a neighbor to contact Manila on his short wave radio so he can collect a debt from an old friend. Featured in the cast are Bill Thompson, Gale Gordon, Arthur Q. Brian, the King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (11:00; 11:15; 7:45)

RADIO'S BIGGEST SHOW (1946) On the 45th anniversary of the Walgreen Drug Company, Bob Hope hosts an all-star program, set at Hope's "Grand Hotel" in the Sierras. Frank Morgan, Ginny Simms, the Andrews Sisters, Dennis Day, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Vera Vague, Eddie Duchin, Harry Von Zell, Ray Noble and the orchestra. Walgreen Drug Stores, NBC. (9:50; 14:35; 14:15; 19:40)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (5-10-72) Orchestra leader John Scott Trotter reminisces about his broadcasting career in this conversation with Chuck Schaden. (30:30)

KRAFT MUSIC HALL (1-20-44) Bing Crosby stars with John Scott Trotter and the orchestra, Ukie, the Charlottees, Ken Carpenter, and guest Dale Evans. "Time Marches Back" to 1930. Kraft Foods, NBC. (11:15; 6:30; 12:05)

ONE MAN'S FAMILY (10-30-49) Book 72, Chapter 5. "Family Reactions to Rexford Frome." Sustaining. NBC. (14:55; 14:05)

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1-5 P.M.

JULY

SATURDAY, JULY 7th

ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET (3-6-49) David and Ricky Nelson make their debut as themselves in this episode. (Young radio actors previously played their parts on the series.) The Nelsons go to an auction. Cast also features John Brown, Janet Waldo, Marvin Miller, Joe Kearns. Announcer is Verne Smith. International Silver Co., NBC. (16:28; 14:06)

FRED ALLEN SHOW (3-16-47) Beatrice Lillie is guest as Fred has an idea for a British version of the musical hit, "Oklahoma!" The Allen's Alley question: "Should a housewife receive a weekly paycheck?" Portland Hoffa, Kenny Delmar, Parker Fennelly, Tenderleaf Tea, Shefford's Cheese, NBC. (16:20; 13:00)

HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (3-9-50) "Home to the Hermitage" starring Burgess Meredith in a story of Andrew Jackson and his home in the Tennessee country. Jeanette Nolan co-stars as Rachel Jackson. James Hilton hosts. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (14:10; 15:06)

DUFFY'S TAVERN (1940s) Guests Jimmy Durante and Ann Sothern perform a play written by Archie, the



JIMMY DURANTE

manager of the Tavern. AFRS rebroadcast. (12:40; 14:20)

MAISIE (1949) Ann Sothern stars as Maisie Revere, who tries to help a friend impress his rich aunt. Cast includes Virginia Gregg, Hans Conried, Frank Nelson, Pat McGeehan, Gee Gee Pearson. Syndicated. (14:00; 13:30)

ONE MAN'S FAMILY (11-6-49) Book 72, Chapter 6. "Rex Frome Invades the Barbour's." Sustaining, NBC (14:25; 14:40)

SATURDAY, JULY 14th

SUSPENSE (4-27-44) "Death Went Along for the Ride" starring Gene Kelly as a motorist who gives a ride to a mysterious hitchhiker. Roma Wines, CBS. (4-27-44)

SCREEN GUILD (6-7-48) "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" as narrated by Jimmy Durante and Margaret O'Brien with Mary Jane Smith as Snow White and Mel Blanc as Sneezey! A mini-version of the Disney classic. Camel Cigarettes, NBC. (13:00; 14:00)

GREAT GILDERSLEEVE (10-26-41) Hal Peary stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve, with Lurene Tuttle as Marjorie and Walter Tetley as Leroy. Marjorie's friend Oliver has an eventful overnight stay at the Gildersleeve household. Kraft Foods, NBC. (12:40; 17:15)

GREAT GILDERSLEEVE (11-1-50) Willard Waterman stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve, with Marylee Robb as Marjorie and Walter Tetley as Leroy. Gildy campaigns for Craig Bullard for Mayor. Kraft Foods, NBC. (13:20; 16:35)

STORY OF DR. KILDARE (12-1-50) Lew Ayers stars as Kildare with Lionel Barrymore as Dr. Gillespie. The doctors cope with a benefactor who enters the hospital for her annual "rest." Syndicated (13:05; 12:10)

ONE MAN'S FAMILY (11-13-49) Book 72, Chapter 7. "Paul Meets the Lady in the Case." Sustaining, NBC. (14:10; 15:00)

SATURDAY, JULY 21st

ADVENTURES OF TOPPER (8-31-45) Roland Young stars as Cosmo Topper who feigns illness to avoid his mother-in-law. George and Marian Kirby are played by Paul Mann and Frances Chaney. Hope Emerson is Mrs. Topper. Maxwell House Coffee, Post Toasties, NBC. (8:46; 11:35; 6:48)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (8-25-75) Jay Jostyn recalls his career as radio's "Mr. District Attorney" in this conver-



JAY JOSTYN as Mr. District Attorney



LEN DOYLE as Harrington

sation with Chuck Schaden recorded at the Masquer's Club in Hollywood, California. (18:00)

MR. DISTRICT ATTORNEY (3-9-49) "Murder à la Cart" stars Jay Jostyn as Mr. D.A., with Len Doyle as Harrington and Vicki Vola as Miss Miller. Ipana, Sal Hepatica, NBC. (10:45; 12:02; 9:45)

STARS IN THE AIR (2-7-52) "The Yearling" stars Gregory Peck and Jean Hagen with Johnny McGovern in a radio version of MGM's film treatment of Marjorie Kinnan Rawling's sensitive story of a young boy's attachment to a deer. Sustaining, CBS. (14:00; 15:00)

CRIME CLUB (3-27-47) "Silent Witness" A newspaper reporter investigates a shooting. Sustaining, MBS. (16:23; 13:30)

ONE MAN'S FAMILY (11-20-49) Book 72, Chapter 8. "The Dinner That Was Interrupted." Sustaining, NBC. (15:20; 14:55)

SATURDAY, JULY 28th

YOUR HIT PARADE (4-10-43) Frank Sinatra and Joan Edwards sing the top tunes, with Mark Warnow and the orchestra. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS. (9:08; 15:24; 11:24)

BOSTON BLACKIE (1945) Richard Kollmar stars as Blackie, "enemy to those who make him an enemy, friend to those who have no friends." Blackie responds when a woman sees a ghost! Lesley Woods as Mary, Blackie's girl friend. Syndicated. (10:30; 13:50)

LUX RADIO THEATRE (4-1-46) "Barnacle Bill" starring Wallace Beery and Marjorie Main in their original roles from the 1940 film. Producer is William Keighley. Cast features Carol Ann Beery, daughter of the star. AFRS rebroadcast. (16:52; 18:10; 16:45)

EDDIE CANTOR SHOW (1-31-45) It's Eddie's 53rd birthday and helping him celebrate are George Burns and Gracie Allen. Featured are Leonard Seuss, Nora Martin, Bert Gordon, Harry Von Zell, Bristol Myers, NBC. (8:35; 12:35; 7:05)

ONE MAN'S FAMILY (11-27-49) Book 72, Chapter 9. "Dr. Thompson Opens Paul's Eyes." Sustaining, NBC. (13:30; 15:20)

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I REMEMBER IT WELL...

ATTENTION GRADUATES: READY, SET, COMMENCE!

BY DAN MCGUIRE

The fellow who said "Everything is relative" knew whereof he spoke.

For folk over thirty, 365 days can whiz by all too rapidly. While from a six year old's perspective one week often seems an eternity to wait for some special occasion.

Aware of the difference, our parents made no reference to a time frame when they enrolled my classmates and me in our first grade class. Our area had no junior high. This new adventure would occupy us for *eight years!*

Trusting innocents all, we approached our first day with nervous excitement. Could we have envisioned the scope of our commitment, no doubt we would have rebelled *en mass*. Picture 42 male and female tykes throwing themselves prostrate, pounding small fists on the polished wood floor, wailing: "Mommy! Daddy! How can you sign me up for 8 years? I haven't even *lived* 8 years yet!"

Nevertheless, as in those Mutt and Jeff comic book poker games, Time passes. One day there comes a revelation. Not only have we entered our teen years. We are now the eighth grade class. Those 8 years are mostly behind us and a fateful event looms: *Graduation!*

It was formally known as a "commencement exercise." But the formal phrase was seldom used except on invitations and tickets and in our principal's speech.

The James Giles Elementary School year was divided into two semesters. Rather than being referred to as January and June classes, all our grade levels were

designated as A (upper) and B (lower). Thus, regardless of the month the 8A group always was the one about to graduate. A major portion of that semester was spent in preparation.

In February, soon after my class moved up to 8A status, Miss Hubick began collecting payments toward class ribbons, class pins and a class gift to the school. The cloth ribbons were about an inch wide by 14 inches long with a W-shaped cut at the bottom. One was gold, the other dark blue (our school colors). They were joined into a bow at the top. A safety pin device facilitated pinning them to lapels, dresses or shirts.

Without exception, everyone in the class ordered two ribbons. One would be tucked neatly into a drawer at home to save for graduation night. The other would be initialed by each of our classmates.

Early in March, Mrs. Brockway, the school's music teacher, and Principal John V. Leigh agreed on two musical selections to be sung by our class. In our weekly music lessons, Mrs. Brockway began rehearsing us on a Stephen Foster medley and "America the Beautiful" (all four verses). After a month or so, she pronounced herself pleased with our performance. Music classes then resumed their more varied format, with just one run-through of the two pieces each week.

In April we all received scripts for what was called a choral recitation. It was a sort of pageant in words. A typical choral recitation would highlight the history of

our "sweet land of liberty" from the landing of the Mayflower through the Civil War.

We were often gathering to rehearse once, sometimes twice, a week. Seated on the auditorium stage, in roughly the formation we would assume for graduation, we followed Mr. Leigh's direction as he explained where to put dramatic emphasis. Gradually, he designated small segments to be recited by girls only, boys only, a small group, individuals, left side, right side, etc. The effect was rather riveting.

A photographer arrived in April to take class pictures. This was a yearly ritual for all grades, but for us soon-to-be graduates it took on a special significance. Instead

of ordering one copy for the family albums, most parents would distribute copies to grandparents and other close relatives.

By the end of April, Miss Hubick had tallied everyone's grade average to determine who would be our valedictorian and salutatorian. These two students would work with her to prepare and deliver short speeches at the ceremony.

Since I had an above-average scholastic record, it occurred to me that I might qualify for one of these supposedly coveted roles. If so, I knew—not just feared, but *knew* beyond any doubt—that on the most important night of my young life, I would: 1) choke up and become speechless; 2) throw up; 3) wet my pants; 4) faint; or 5) all of the above.

Fortunately, Garrison Keillor is correct. God does look out for shy people. At least one girl and one boy proved to have grade averages superior to mine.

By May first, things really began fulminating. We spent less and less time on classroom work, more and more on rehearsals and other preparations.

Our class ribbons and pins arrived and were distributed. Girls, who always knew how to do these things, helped boys attach pins to the center of their ribbons' bows. The pin was no bigger than a dime. It bore the school's name and the month and year of graduation.

We had all acquired autograph books by now. These little imitation leather-bound books were about the size and appearance of a diary, with pages of many different colors, all unlined and blank. As we circulated our extra ribbons, acquiring classmates' inked initials for posterity, we also penned remembrances in each other's autograph books.

Except for some mushy messages to close friends, the sentiments were mostly lighthearted or plain goofy.

"Mary: Best wishes for your high school years and beyond. May all your troubles be little ones. Ha ha! Love, Joan."



I REMEMBER IT WELL

("Little ones." Kids. Get it? We were all very family oriented.)

"Eddie: Roses are Red, Grass is Green, Stovepipes are hollow and so is your bean. Your classmate, Betty."

"Charles: When you get married, don't marry a fool. Just marry a girl from James Giles School. Elaine."

"Ron: I love you little, I love you big. I love you like a little pig. Wanita."

"Richard: I better hurry and write on this page for the keepers are coming with your cage. Janet."

And, at the bottom of the last page of my book:

"Danny: By hook or by crook, I'll sign last in your book. Your pal, Eddie."

Eddie wasn't really my pal. I just tried to be nice to him at recess because he was kind of a jerk and no one wanted to play with him. (Years later I learned that Eddie thought *he* was being the nice guy.)

One of the girls got really ticked at Eddie because he wrote this clever verse on the inside back cover of her autograph book after someone else filled the last page. Covers were sacrosanct and not to be mutilated.

Early in May, every store that sold kids' clothing had a graduation sale. Anyone who did not already have an outfit laid by found himself or herself on a streetcar with Mom, heading for Sears, Wieboldts, Goldblatts or some other favored department store. Boys, especially, had to shop early, since their suits would require fitting and a return trip.

Harold Spencer, the class weirdo, owned a wild red plaid sport coat that he wore to parties. Harold informed all of us that he would attend commencement exercises wearing that jacket with a pair of striped pants, a checked shirt and a polka dot tie.

Apparently he neglected to apprise his mother of this plan. On the big night, Harold showed up in a dark grey double-

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breasted suit, white shirt and conservative tie. At that, he managed to stand out among the crowd of navy blue suits that predominated.

On the last couple of weekends in May, there were numerous pre-graduation parties. These were boy/girl affairs held in streamer decorated basements of kids' homes. They featured snacks, soft drinks and dancing under dimmed lights to music from 78-RPM records. There were enough parties to insure that even the class deadbeats and wallflowers were invited to at least one.

June arrives. Now we're rehearsing complete run-throughs of the ceremony. We no longer count weeks. Now we're counting days.

On Wednesday of *the week*, we're treated to a luncheon by the ladies of the Parent-Teacher Association. Tables are set up in the half of our school basement which serves as assembly hall, indoor gym and movie hall. Our lunch period is extended so we can partake at leisure and hear a few congratulatory comments from our principal, teachers and the PTA president.

For graduation night, our janitor arranged seating by lining up neat rows of square-shaped wooden slat folding chairs. Tickets were distributed equally, based on class size and seating capacity. My class received five tickets each. That enabled Mom and Dad to invite Grandma and Grandpa Farr. Aunt Evie, a school teacher who would appreciate seeing her oldest nephew graduate, was honored with the

last ticket.

The organizational experience of our principal and teachers, and our countless practice sessions, paid the desired dividends. The actual event went quite smoothly.

We marched up the center aisle to the tune of "Pomp and Circumstance" and found our assigned seats without confusion. The salutatorian and valedictorian remembered to speak slowly and clearly and not stop if they occasionally flubbed a line. One of our classmates presented the class gift to a representative of the 8B class.

Mr. Leigh gave the main address. He had been almost bald since my first grade days. In his opening greetings, he apologized if his head was reflecting the stage lights into the eyes of guests in the front rows. It was a well worn gag, but always got a laugh.

Becoming serious, he congratulated us on the accomplishment of reaching this momentous goal in our lives. He thanked our parents for their support in making it possible. Speaking to the class, he touched on some of the challenges and opportunities that lay before us. In conclusion, he gave his twice-a-year assurance to relatives and friends in the audience that "I believe this is probably the best graduating class we've ever had at James Giles School."

Almost before we realized it was happening, we departed Giles School for the last time. Proudly clutching our rolled diplomas, most of us accompanied parents home for one more party with aunts, uncles and cousins.

It would be a while before the elation subsided. Eventually, we would pause to reflect upon our triumph. An 8-year commitment—nearly two-thirds of our young lives—had been successfully completed.

Ahead loomed the greater challenge of high school. But we were no longer children. We were teenagers now. And high school would require only four years. "Greater challenge?" Are you kidding?

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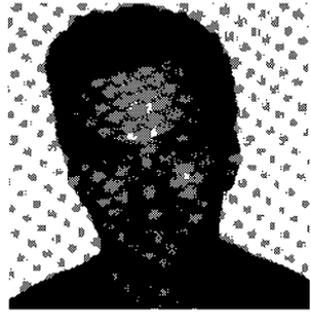
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The Rise and Fall of Soap Operas on Radio

BY TODD NEBEL



Once upon a time, within the golden age of radio era, there was a silver lining called the soap opera. Its existence spanned over twenty-five years. And while today's televised soap operas continue many of its predecessor's traditions, never were the soaps as loved or as vast in number as during the golden age of radio.

Remarkably, the soap opera form of entertainment is only sixty years old. At the beginning, daytime radio programming was a vast wasteland as it had been since regular radio programming began in 1920. However, the scheduling of the first soap opera or episodic serial, "Amos 'n' Andy," to the evening radio schedule, would soon change all that.

The "Amos 'n' Andy" storyline followed the life of two Harlem blacks who owned the Fresh Air Taxi Cab Company. Freeman Gosden, who portrayed Amos Jones, and Charles Correll, as Andrew H. Brown, were both white actors. Their program began broadcasting from Chicago in 1929. In a daring move, NBC and the program's sponsor, Pepsodent, decided to air the program fifteen minutes each day, six days a week. And this was contrary to the common belief that all units of air time must be in hour and half-hour increments. However, the amazing success of the "Amos 'n' Andy" format only left the chance for imitation programs to follow. And although "Amos 'n' Andy" was not a true soap opera, it did contain many of the ingredients for a soap opera program: curiosity, interest and suspense in the

eventual fate of its characters. All these ingredients are still a part of today's televised soap operas.

With the success of the night time broadcast of "Amos 'n' Andy," several other serial programs joined the evening line-up. Soon afterward, several of these programs would move over to daytime programming slots. One of the most famous of these was "Just Plain Bill," which began on the evening schedule in 1932 and moved to a daytime slot in 1933. "Just Plain Bill" remained on the air until 1955.

The year 1933 proved to be the real growth year for daytime serials as their numbers grew from two to nine. By 1940 their total weekly hours had climbed to 59 hours a week for the combined networks. This serial exposure translated to nine out of every ten sponsored daytime hours. Happily, from the network's point of view, the sponsorship of these daytime serials accounted for nearly \$26.7 million in revenue by 1940. And hoping to appeal to the serials' proven success with housewives, soap manufacturers had now become the prime sponsors enabling the term "soap opera" to be coined.

Throughout the golden age of radio, soap operas were typically fifteen minute programs which were scheduled for the same time slot each weekday. Their listening audience consisted of one half of all of the women who were home during daytime hours. To many of these women, the soaps provided companionship which

SOAP OPERAS

would continue on for years. Furthermore, soap operas provided to many housewives in the listening audience, a means of escape from their everyday chores.

Audience loyalties were mostly to the veteran soap opera programs like "Backstage Wife," which began in 1935, and dramatized what it meant to be the wife of a famous Broadway star; "The Guiding Light" which was the story of a kindly cleric; and "Lorenzo Jones" which told us about an inventor of useless gadgets. "The Romance of Helen Trent" and "Ma Perkins" had leading women who managed the challenges of their time, and each aired for twenty-seven years.

All in all, the soap opera listeners devotion to these programs and others were well proven since most of the soap operas aired for fifteen or more seasons.

At the peak of popularity in 1940, sixty-four serials were broadcast each day. Soon, it was not surprising that some people began to complain that there was nothing else to listen to during the day. And in fact, choices were severely limited in many areas of the country where CBS and NBC affiliates were all carrying them. As a result the number of soap opera broadcasts began to decrease as some listeners began tuning out. By 1943, the number of soap opera broadcasts had declined to a total of forty sponsored programs a day. Because the listening audience had been overwhelmed by the typical soap opera format, quiz programs and other variety programs like Breakfast in Hollywood, The Arthur Godfrey Show and Queen For a Day, began to replace many of the soap opera broadcast slots.

By 1950, the number of soaps on radio had dropped to twenty-seven. Over the next five years, the number remained constant, even with the drastic changes taking place in radio's evening programming. The soap opera, therefore, had become one of the last outlets for network radio advertising at a time when

most evening network shows had gone sustaining (carried without advertising support by the network). This reprieve occurred because many soaps were owned and produced by their sponsors and also because it took until the mid-50's for daytime television to get off the ground. During this somewhat stable period for the soaps, none of the favorite veteran soaps were cancelled but only one new program, "Woman in My House," lasted more than one season.

The radio era of the soap opera began to crumble by 1955. By 1956, the number of soaps had diminished to sixteen (ten of which were on CBS and the remainder were equally divided between NBC and ABC). Four years later, ABC discontinued all of its soaps. NBC had only "True Story" and CBS had seven remaining programs on its schedule. By the end of the 1959-1960 season, CBS was the only network broadcasting soaps, six in total since they dropped "The Romance of Helen Trent" on June 24, 1960.

The 1960-61 radio season was the soap operas' last season. In mid-August of 1960, CBS, which began the season with six programs, decided to cease its soap opera broadcasts on the last Friday of November.

CBS gave each of the remaining programs three months and the opportunity to conclude their plots as best as they could. Realistically, though, none of the programs could successfully bring an end to all of the overlapping and intermingling problems since the soaps were all plotted to the end of infinity. Heroic efforts were made, however, by the shows' producers to bring some sort of conclusion to their major conflicts. And, possibly hoping for clemency, none of the programs were brought to such finality that the plot could not be resumed at a moment's notice.

November 25, 1960, marked the end of "Ma Perkins," "Young Dr. Malone," "The Right to Happiness" and "The Second Mrs. Burton" as well as the soap opera era on radio.

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TAPE 2

- Cimmaron Rolls I
- Dennis and the Doc
- "Si," "Sy" II
- Railroad Station II
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WE GET

NORTHRIDGE, CALIFORNIA — Has it really been 20 years? Though I joined your listeners a year late, I can still remember coaxing WLTD's signal south on Lake Shore Drive on my way to Saturday afternoon work as a WBBM-TV newswriter. Though I expected it, it was always disappointing when the signal "conked out" for good as I rounded the Drake Hotel. Or that time I drove up to Milwaukee to visit my parents . . . and got hooked on "I Love A Mystery" . . . and, at the state line, pulled over to the side of the highway for 15 minutes or so until the almost inaudible signal revealed who the "killer" was.

— JIM WARRAS

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, IL — The April-May issue of *Nostalgia Digest* is absolutely the best. You and your staff are to be congratulated. The many "stories behind the stories" are wonderful reading and offer insights truly interesting and nostalgic. Keep up the good work and thanks for broadcasting.

— RAY OSSMAN

CHICAGO — Boy, time sure does fly by . . . especially on Saturday afternoon. My husband and I grew up in the 40's and can relate to all the articles in the *Digest*. We wish you well for another 20 years of broadcasting and then another 20, etc., etc.!

— DONNA STANKIEWICZ

NILES, IL — Happy 20th anniversary and many more. It has been ten years since I discovered your *Those Were The Days* program. I can't tell you how much enjoyment you bring to my weekends, whether I'm working outdoors gardening or indoors on schoolwork. *TWTD* is always a part of my Saturday. Although I only remember the radio of the 1950's, your program has opened a much larger world of radio to me. Over the years I have recorded my favorite shows. I have almost 500 tapes. That's my "click" you've been hearing! With *Radio Classics* on WBBM, I can enjoy old radio all week! Chuck, you are such a friendly and knowledgeable host, I come to look forward to your program, like the visit of a good friend.

— FATHER CHRISTOPHER A. KUHN, CSC,
Holy Cross Fathers

WARRENVILLE, IL — A hearty congratulations on your 20th year broadcasting the good old radio shows! Keep going for another 20! This is what it's all about — nostalgia, to bring back the old radio days. We don't live in the past, we live WITH it, as you said at one time. The April-May issue was great!

— CHUCK HUCK

BURLINGTON, VERMONT — BRAVO . . . CHAPEAU, Chuck! Congratulations on your Twentieth Anniversary, and thank you for including *The Saga of WNMP* in *Nostalgia Digest*. It brought back some wonderful memories that linger for me. I'd like to share some experiences with you.

While attending Northwestern University, I was hired as a weekend announcer by Angus Pfaff in 1957. His

only critique of my on-air enunciation took place on a Saturday afternoon as a classical music selection was playing.

He opened the studio door to tell me that I was not pronouncing "W" correctly on station breaks. "It's dubba ya NMP", said Mr. Pfaff, articulating with his Scottish inflection. My Boston accent immediately changed from that moment on.

I worked with Don Ferris on weekends at WNMP, and on weeknights, I was on the air at WEAW, a competing Evanston station owned by Edward A. Wheeler. I used a different on-air name ("Dean Bailey") to keep employed at both stations while working my way through Northwestern.

I remember engineering the board for Dino Lavenitis and his "Greek-American Hour" drivetime program on WEAW-AM. After introducing Dino as the program host, he would thank me on the air with my "real name," much to my chagrin. I never did hear from either Ed nor Angus revealing my double identity as an Evanston broadcaster.

I also had a weekly show on WNUR, following a program hosted by Dick Benjamin (now actor, Hollywood producer-director), but the 10 watt college station didn't compete.

Your "saga" of WNMP reminded me of yet another experience with Buddy Black a year later. My evening shift in the tiny WEBH studio at The Edgewater Beach Hotel attracted lobby visitors who would peer into the studio window to observe a live broadcast, while listening to the Mantovani instrumentals from the outside monitor.

Producing a mood music show in this "fishbowl" was a bit unnerving when the occasional spectator tapped on the window when the microphone was on the air.

Buddy Black did have some unusual programming ideas, for instance at WEBH, he insisted that there always be Mantovani background music used under every newscast, and that announcers were to accentuate the slow-pace narration of news stories.

He was convinced that I could do a late night, quiet jazz program to perhaps compete with Jay Andres' American Airlines show, "Music Til Dawn." I brought my boxful of albums in each night to program "Surfsounds . . . from the Sandcastle of Quiet" until the wee hours.

A great show to do in Chicago at that time, especially with a blend of ocean surf sound effects and a background of romantic jazz piano music while I read lines of poetry and encouraged listener's requests. It seemed to compliment the edge-water/beach image. The phonecall response was terrific every night . . . advertisers were not coming forward. Jay Andres was immovable, of course.

These were the early days of FM radio in Chicago,

LETTERS

when WEFM was a test station for Zenith receivers, and WFMT went on the air with limited resources. WXFM was indeed "experimental" FM. The major advertiser was Blaupaunkt FM converters for automobile radios on any station, attempting to build a market for an FM audience.

Frank Kovas, you mentioned, with his wife were "it" at WKFM. I had a brief career announcing at WKFM. The programming demonstrated the high fidelity benefits of FM radio with a collection of audiophile albums and a stereo, sound effects program every evening for the few and faithful.

My broadcasting career moved ahead with part-time employment at NBC in The Merchandise Mart as a page. The uniform didn't fit, but the NBC emblem on it made all the difference to me. There were live, audience participation shows to work (Merv Griffin comes to mind) on television, network Kraft commercials from Chicago studios to demonstrate how easy it is to spread Philadelphia Cream Cheese on camera with the voice-over coming from New York.

WMAQ had Jack Eigen's live remote from The Chex Parea ("We're heard in 38 states"), Gus Chan's "Rio Rhythms" (until he goofed on-air), musician union members spinning 78's, NBC's "Monitor" on weekends with Dave Garroway and inserts from Chicago, and real programs. I had visions of Rockefeller Plaza and Radio City.

Perhaps you have seen a copy of the *Chicago FM Guide* publication, listing every FM station and a description of FM-only programs on the air in the early-1960's. It was the same size as *Nostalgia Digest*, published monthly for newsstand sales.

It was started by Lester Vihon after he sold the first *TV Guide* to Walter Annenberg in the 1950's. Les also started WFMO at 107.9 FM with studios and transmitter in downtown Chicago in the Bell Savings and Loan building.

I joined Les as the station went on the air. The format was to bring "AM" to the "FM" dial with on-air personalities, including Jerry Leighton hosting a pop music program. There was opera on Saturdays, a weeknight jazz show with Greg — from the Chicago Daily Defender, classical music on Sundays, and just about everything else to attract an audience to "the high spot on the FM dial, WFMQ."

This has been a great afternoon remembering Chicago, prompted by your anniversary issue. Thank you, Chuck.

Incidentally, after I left the Midwest for Vermont radio in 1966 to raise a family, I've remained in broadcasting. A few years in San Francisco and Olympia, Washington, then back to New England. I have had a weekly, nostalgia/big band program on public radio here for ten years called "Ella, Frank and Friends."

some on-camera work fundraising for public television and doing local commercials, five years in Montreal representing a broadcast network, and other related experiences in broadcasting, programming, sales and sales promotion. It all started in Chicago!

— RUSSELL B. BUTLER

(ED. NOTE — Thanks for the memories.)

PALOS HEIGHTS, IL — While reading the article about Old Time Radio's Longest Running Shows in the April-May issue, I noticed that The Shadow wasn't listed. Being my favorite program, I was upset it was overlooked. I believe The Shadow started in 1930 as the "master of ceremonies" on Street and Smith's Detective Story Hour and Street and Smith's Love Story Hour. When those had run their courses, he briefly hosted various mystery contests on Blue Coal Radio Review before graduating to his own short-lived show in 1932. Then, until he "died" at the end of the 1934-35 season, he narrated mystery stories. The Shadow did, however, restart his "career" in 1937 (as a crime-fighter this time) sponsored by Blue Coal and starring Orson Welles with Agnes Moorehead as the "lovely Margo Lane." After a whole cast of actors and actresses replaced and re-replaced the two main characters, the series finally ended in December, 1954, after about 22 seasons in all. By the way, how long was The Green Hornet on? Keep up the great work and I hope you will be on for as many more years as possible.

— ANDREW KRZAK

(ED. NOTE — Thanks for the Shadow information. It was indeed, one of radio's longest running shows. The Green Hornet made his radio debut on January 31, 1936 and continued to buzz around the radio waves until December 5, 1952.)

STEVENSVILLE, MICHIGAN — This letter is to thank you for asking Ken Alexander to substitute for you when you need a day off on a Saturday. I am a regular Saturday afternoon WNIB listener and an occasional weekday WBBM listener. Ken is a knowledgeable, soft-spoken, intelligent and interesting personality and I would like to hear him more frequently on the radio than I do. His ability at voice "doubling" (and even "tripling") is a rare talent, and his mimicking of familiar radio voices is really very good. Ken's "Great Gilderleeve" voice is flawless! Please tell him I particularly liked (and saved on tape) his remembrances of Chicago's streetcars. Thank you, Ken Alexander, for sharing your memories with us!

— JOHN KARAS

(ED. NOTE — We share your admiration and respect for one of the nicest and most talented guys in Chicago radio.)

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE — I enjoy the old time radio shows on Saturday night. I grew up listening to these radio shows on my family's old cathedral radio in Chicago in the early 1950's.

— BOB CRANKSHAW
Nostalgia Digest -31-

WE GET LETTERS

SHAWNEE, OKLAHOMA — I'm dropping you a note to request your list of old radio shows I hear on WBBM. Sometimes they fade out too much to hear, but I still listen. Seems the commercials never fade!

— **HERB HAWK**

ZION, IL — I'm writing to thank you so much for the programming on *Those Were The Days*, and especially for the month of February, which was dedicated to Jack Benny. I grew up in Waukegan and had heard the name Jack Benny before, seeing as we have a school and other buildings named after him. But it never meant anything to me until four years ago when I stumbled onto your show. Since then I have been a faithful listener. I enjoy all your programming, including *Old Time Radio Classics*. Thanks again for all your work. If it wasn't for you I still wouldn't know who the Jack Benny Junior High School was named after, and would be the sadder for it.

— **KRISTEL HAMALAINEN**

NORTHBROOK, IL — The first part of this letter is for Elton Dorval from Racine, Wisconsin (whose letter was printed in the April-May issue). The little ditty goes like the following:

"Tie a little string around your finger, so you'll remember me. Any little finger that will finger in your memory. If you always listen in to Jolly Joe, oh how happy I will be. Sooo, tie a little string around your finger so you'll remember me."

It is nice thinking about long ago. I guess Elton was more honest than I was because I used to raise my hand even if I wasn't dressed! My sister used to laugh when Jolly Joe would say someone had his had up and wasn't dressed!

This part of the letter is about theatres. I know that you were from the north side, but did you ever go to the Southtown on 63rd near Halsted? They had a pond in the lobby with fish and ducks. We didn't mind waiting in line because we could watch the birds.

— **ART BUCKLEY**

HOMWOOD, IL — It's time for my two year renewal to the *Digest*. I really enjoy your programs — all of them, especially when they come through an old time radio, as they do at my home. Your Jack Benny programs during February were great. All of this old time radio is decent, clean entertainment. No wonder that I don't watch TV, except for Channel 11! More power to you.

— **JOHN L. FRIGO**

NILES, IL — My family and I want to thank you for your super old time radio programs, especially Mystery Theatre. We really enjoyed those. Is there any chance you can get more of them during this year?

— **MRS. MARY ANN KLANCNIK**

DES PLAINES, IL — I have been listening to old time radio for two years now, but it seems that my favorite

programs have all but disappeared. I know why we lost Mystery Theatre, but where have the Lone Ranger, Gangbusters and Sgt. Preston disappeared to? Box Thirteen with that stupid Suzy and Harry Lime certainly don't compare to the above three. Please put them back.

— **JERRY DUCHEN**

BERWYN, IL — We are still enjoying your programs as the years fly by . . . and we especially like the Jack Benny Month extravaganzas. I'm afraid we've let too much time go by between fan letters. Just to show you we are REAL fans, I recently purchased hundreds of dollars of videos from Metro Golden Memories. And I want to let you know what a help Ted Okuda is. He's so nice and patient with me on the telephone, and my requests are probably so off the wall, but he treats me like a regular, normal person! And he knows so much about what's in the video world. I just wanted to let you know.

— **LEAH BEZIN**

CHICAGO — In 1943, when Lou Costello became ill with rheumatic fever and was forced to leave his radio show, did Bud Abbott continue with another comedian in place of Costello, or did they just substitute with Durante-Moore from the start? — **MICHAEL FINASHE**

(**ED. NOTE** — Abbott wouldn't work without his long-time partner, so Jimmy Durante and Garry Moore were brought together to replace the Abbott and Costello show for the remainder of the season. In the fall, Durante-Moore opened their own show, and Bud and Lou continued with their series.)

NORTH AURORA, IL — I want you to know you saved my face at a conference last summer! You have no idea how grateful I am that you used to listen to the radio in the dark. Last June I was at a Gilbert and Sullivan Conference out east and gave a talk on Gilbert and Sullivan during the Golden Age of Radio. I was supposed to talk first thing in the morning on the last day of the conference. The night before though, was the big conference party that, from what I gather, didn't break up until the wee hours of the morning. I don't know what happened to the conference organizers, but the next morning when I got to the hall to give the talk, nobody was there to get out the equipment. And those of us awake enough to make it to the talk couldn't figure out how to turn on all the lights. I had brought my own equipment, so we all sat in the semi-darkness and listened to G&S-related selections from vintage radio programs. Before I began the talk, I told your story of how to listen to the radio and it made it seem like the talk was supposed to have been given in the dark in the first place. You really saved the day (and the talk itself was pretty well-received, too!)

— **SARA COLE**

(**ED. NOTE** — That must have been some party if the next morning no one could figure out how to turn on the lights!)

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