

CHUCK SCHADEN'S
NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND
RADIO GUIDE ©

APRIL/MAY, 1999



Bernardine Flynn and Art Van Harvey

VIC AND SADE

COMEDY ON SALE!

One Dozen of the Greatest Comedy Shows Ever Broadcast!

AMOS 'N' ANDY (10/24/48) Sapphire and the Kingfish prepare to celebrate their 20th Anniversary!

BOB HOPE (3-16-48) Guest Fred Astaire joins Bob to recreate their days as starving Vaudevillians.

CHARLIE MC CARTHY (9-21-41) Edgar Bergen tries to help Charlie write an apology to guest W.C. Fields.

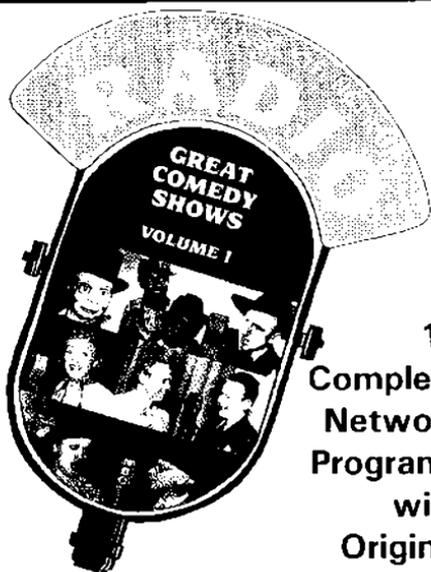
FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (4-6-48) Fibber decides to fix Doc Gamble's car.

FRED ALLEN (10-21-45) Frank Sinatra and Fred sing hillbilly-style in a spoof of the Barn Dance.

GREAT GILDERSLEEVE (1-18-50) Gildy devises a scheme to get his girlfriend to fix an intimate dinner.

JACK BENNY (10-20-46) Jack and the gang present their version of "The Whistler."

JIMMY DURANTE (12/10/47) Guest Boris Karloff portrays Happy Sam the disc jockey.



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LIFE WITH LUIGI (3/4/52) Pasquale, threatens to sell the building that houses Luigi's antique business.

OUR MISS BROOKS (10/24/48) It's a complicated "keep Miss Brooks from buying an alligator bag so we can give it to her for her birthday" scheme.

ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET (3/27/49) Ozzie begins giving compliments to Harriet, but they're not received in the spirit in which they're given.

RED SKELTON (3/19/46) Clem gets a driver's license and Junior joins the Junior Police Force.

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CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

BOOK TWENTY-FIVE

CHAPTER THREE

APRIL/MAY 1999

Hello, Out There in Radioland!

Twenty-nine years ago, on May 2, 1970 we began our *Those Were The Days* program.

Almost from the beginning, we felt that your enjoyment of the old-time radio shows would be enhanced if we could talk with some of the people who starred in and helped put together the broadcasts from radio's golden age.

In the early 1970s, many people with connections to the Radio Days we celebrate were appearing at regional theatres in and around Chicago. And, there were quite a number of radio people still living and/or working in the area.

So we started to make some contacts and we were able to meet and talk with such Chicago area visitors as Jack Benny, Don Ameche, Hans Conried, Eve Arden, Mercedes McCambridge, Vincent Price, Agnes Moorehead, and others.

Among those we found residing in the Chicago area were Paul Barnes (*Captain Midnight*), Harry Elders (*Curtain Time*), Rita Ascot (*Faye on Ma Perkins*), John Gannon and Sarajane Welles (Billy and Betty on *Jack Armstrong*), Shirley Bell Cole (*Little Orphan Annie*) and many more.

As time went on, we went to the West Coast where we took our tape recorder and chatted with the likes of Edgar Bergen, Art Linkletter, Norman Corwin, Ezra Stone, Harry Von Zell, Jim Jordan, Alan Reed, Carlton E. Morse, Howard Duff, Elliott Lewis, Les Tremayne, and quite a number of others.

Last year we traveled East to speak with, among others, Mason Adams, Arthur Anderson, Dick Beals, Toni Gilman and Ken Roberts.

Over the years listener response to our interviews with these radio people has been very gratifying.

Now, during our *Old Time Radio in the Twentieth Century* series, we're repeating many of the conversations we've had with these folks since we began in 1970.

Their recollections are as important as the vintage shows.

So, as we observe our twenty-ninth year on the air, we honor these talented broadcasters for the excellent job they did to make the middle years of the Twentieth Century the Golden Age of Radio.

Thanks for listening.

-Chuck Schaden



The Small House Halfway Up in the Next Block

BY ED KNAPP

The program's "Chanson Bohemienne" music theme fades and the announcer's soothing voice invites:

"Well, sir, shady tree-lined Virginia Avenue is placid this warm summer day as we join the Gook family at the small house halfway up in the next block..."



I so looked forward to those quaint visits with "radio's homefolks," Vic and Sade, now only a bright but faded memory.

The happily married couple resided in the mythical airwaves community of Crooper, Illinois. The opened-porch, wood framed house with a leisure porch swing was the hallowed domain of the master of the menage, Victor Gook and his somewhat whiney-voice spouse, Sade. Also living in the modest mid-American styled home was their always busy, but quite mannerly twelve-year-old adopted son, Rush.

The light-hearted weekday radio episodes embodied a regular series of family conversational exchanges between the three talkative householders, with only one exception. That exception being the most frequent, unannounced arrival of Sadie's elderly Uncle Fletcher, with his rambling, rather nasal reminiscences. The chit-chats between the Gooks bore a slant of good-

Edwin S. Knapp of Three Rivers, Michigan is a retired professional photographer who spends his free time writing and collecting.

RADIO'S HOMEFOLKS, VIC & SADE

Art Van Harvey as Vic
Clarence Hartzell as Uncle Fletcher
Bernardine Flynn as Sade
Billy Idelson as Rush



humored levity, encircling a variety of neighbors, friends and relatives as they sat side-by-side on the living room davenport.

The voices or presence of those being discussed were never heard or realized. These individuals were only talked about or heard from only on one-sided telephonic conversations. This group of panoramic slants of debated characters included Chuck and Dottie Brainfeble, Mr. Kneesuffer, close friends Fred and Ruthie Stembottom, Gus Plink (the town drunk), the Brick Mush Man, and Ray Delano, who

could rub his feet together, making a flame hot enough to light a cigar.

Other characters entering their dialogues were Willie Gutstop, divorcee Cora Bucksaddle, Sadie's Aunt Bess (who wrote hard-to-read "airy" letters on a frequent basis), R. J. Konk, and Godfrey Dimlock (who invented a bicycle that could say "ma-ma"). A vast assortment of unusual names, if nothing else, you will agree.

The lives of Vic and Sade and Rush were relatively simple and crisis-free. A major event of considerable speculation and decision contingency might be no more than deciding if a periodic sale of washcloths at Yamilton's Department Store was "really" a bargain; interrupting one of Aunt Bess' scribbly hard-to-read frequent postcards and letters; or what to do with a piece of mail they had opened in error, addressed to the Pastor of their church, dunning the good reverend for a bill he'd failed to pay.

Mr. Victor Gook was a veteran bookkeeper employee of Plant #14 at the Consolidated Kitchenware Company, run by J. K. Rubich, his boss, often referred to by Vic as "Old Rubbish." Vic was a proud dedicated charter member of the starchy lodge, "The Drowsy Venus Chapter of the Sacred Stars of the Milky Way." A quiet spoken gentleman with a witty sense of humor, Vic rarely showed a trace of temper. When he did, on rare occasion, it was hard to distinguish except for a carefully placed "drat" or two.

Sade's tiny world barely extended beyond their little open front porch: she was president of the local Thimble Club; she hungrily absorbed local news in Crooper's mini-newspaper; she re-told little tidbits of interesting gossip purveyed by friend Ruthie Stembottom while playing bridge;



Bernardine Flynn and Art Van Harvey

and spent time in the limited perimeter of her small kitchen while cooking up a batch of "beef bunkies" for supper.

The Gook's day together became more lively when Vic came home from work and discussed plans for his next lodge meeting; Rush relating the modest excitement stirred in the classroom with his old-maid teacher, Miss Applerot; reviewing past visits of Uncle Fletcher's strange-sounding acquaintances; or a discourse on watching Mr. Chinbunny slowly devour a rapidly melting ice cream cone on a summer day.

The short but sweet daily radio visits with Vic and Sade were richly embroidered with good-natured humor, slight differences of opinion between family members, and a minimum of attention being given over to son Rush's innocent happenings of the day.

Rush, like his foster parents, had a strange-sounding assortment of friends nearer his age with such names as Blue Tooth Johnson, Orville Wheanie, Rooster Davis, and Rotten Johnson. The young lads

VIC AND SADE

spent many happy times together watching the "fat men" play ball at the "Y," planning future business money-making schemes and inventions, or attending the town's Bijou movie theatre to catch the performances of the theater's frequent attraction of "Hearts of Flame" starring popular Gloria Golden and "Four-fisted" Frank Fuddleman.

Vic and Sade's discussions frequently centered on any number of other extremely colorful local characters: Mr. Jake Gumpox, the garbage man and his garbage wagon's swayback nag, Howard; the president of Vic's workplace who pulled his own teeth; Smelly Clark's Uncle Strap working as a clerk at the railroad station, and the many relatives of Rishigan Fishigan of Sishigan, Michigan who married Jane Payne from Bain, Maine.

Others who came into the Gook's daily chatter were twins Robert and Slobbert

Hink; the Missouri State Home for the Tall; Mr. Razorskum; Aunt Bess's husband Walter's knee-cap twinges; and Mervyn S. Spraul, who "loved them peanuts with chocolate smeared on the outside."

The harsh "bang" of the Gook's back screen door usually signalled the arrival of unannounced Uncle Fletcher on one of his frequent stopovers. "Vic honey, Sade honey," he'd quip aloud as he entered through the kitchen. The somewhat hard-of-hearing relative always brought a higher level of excitement to the life of the Gook homebodies with his rambling nasal reminiscences. Fletcher's colorful discourses were often spaced with the words "fine, fine" to remarks the Gooks answered to, but which he seldom ever heard.

Elderly, soft-spoken Uncle Fletcher was virtually a warehouse of trivial facts and information of his unusual acquaintance associations, none of which bore much importance: the merits of a marvelous, all-purpose concoction called "Hyena

Grease"; the strange "half-wit" disappearance of Harry Feeburn, inventor of Stringaberry Jam; B. B. Baugh, an old friend who moved to Dixon, Illinois and then to Dismal Seepage, Ohio by way of Sweet Ester, Wisconsin, and later died. Uncle Fletcher's limitless string of rambling stories were generally interspersed with his colorful slang expressions: "Fat-head," "Half-wit," "Numbskull," "Half-wit woman (his landlady)" and "If I'm not careful I'll get caught up in the frenzied flood waters of activity and be destroyed against the rocks."

When the repetitive old-timer wasn't bending the ears of those in the Gook household, he hung out at the Bright Kentucky Hotel. Likely many of his strange stories were born out of the free-talk about the



Paul Rhymer

Billy Idelson, Bernardine Flynn, Art Van Harvey



old hotel situated near the railroad station. Uncle Fletcher's tall tales of verbalization had him saying much and listening little.

I really miss the gentle satire and warm levity that showcased each charming visit with Vic and Sade: cleaning out the attic; Vic's plans for marching in the parade with full lodge regalia: the Tiny Pctit Pheasant Feather Tea Room; Uncle Fletcher's kindly landlady Mrs. Keeler; Smelly Clark's big date; Vic's new hat; Sadie's Wife Rule Book; Rush's job ushering at the Bijou and letting in all of his friends, free; or Sade trying to pronounce Vic's lodge Latin.

Also, I yearn for the things they said: the unnecessary retort when the phone rang— "Telephone's ringing, telephone's ringing" which it obviously was; Sadie's "Ish" expression to stifle talk in which she had no interest; Rush addressing Vic as "Guv" and Vic addressing Rush in fun-poking name terms as "Willie Walnut Stain," "Axel Grease Willie," or "Straight Edge"; Sade's "Yoo Hoo" to passers by; Vic's endearing terms to Sade: "Hello, Cupcake" or "Sadie" (Call me Sade, not

Sadie, Vic"); and Uncle Fletcher's "Fine, fine." What fun it was.

This wonderful vignette of small-town people, their thoughts and expressions were the down-home creation of the prolific and talented writer Paul Rhymer.

According to Rhymer's widow Mary Francis, "Each day, five days a week, Paul would roll a blank sheet of paper into his typewriter. Several hours later [his] workroom door would burst open and Paul would... race to the Merchandise Mart. There he would turn in the script he had written... and dash to the studio for the rehearsal and broadcast of that day's show."

In the mid-forties, when the radio announcer signed off *Vic and Sade* for the last time with the traditional ending to the daily shows, "Which concludes another brief interlude at the small house halfway up in the next block..." I felt as if I had lost something very American and very precious. ■

NOTE: Tune in TWTD May 1 and 15 to hear a two-part tribute to Vic and Sade from 1973.

All in the Family

BY BOB KOLOSOSKI

Ulee's Gold is a film that tells the story of a family torn apart by greed, drugs, and pride, and how that family manages to reunite. The director tells the story without car chases, special effects or brutal violence. The star of *Ulee's Gold* is Peter Fonda who is now approaching sixty years of age and has shed his motorcycle junkie image.

In this film Fonda plays a father and grandfather trying to pull his family together in spite of several major obstacles. The gentleness of Peter's character reminded me of another Fonda named Henry. At times, during *Ulee's Gold*, I noticed a mannerism or vocal expression that was more Henry than Peter. Peter, of course, has not reached the movie star status of his father, or of his sister Jane, but he came close with *Easy Rider*. Now his daughter Briget Fonda is making movies and is the third generation Fonda to carry on the family business.

The number of actors and actresses whose children have pursued movie careers is a diverse and interesting group. Some of the kids made it to the top while others were hindered by lack of talent or by a famous parent to whom they were compared.

For example, Alan Ladd was a star for nearly two decades, but his son David Ladd had only a brief career as a child actor. Ladd's other son, Alan Jr. became a successful movie producer.

Bob Crosby's sons (with his first wife

Bob Kolososki, an architect from Palatine, Illinois is a movie historian who contributes to frequently to the Digest and Those Were The Days.



Henry, Peter and Jane Fonda

PHOTOFEST

Dixie) all tried careers in show business with little success. Bing's daughter Mary Crosby (from his second wife Kathryn) appeared in a few films in the 1980s, but is more famous for her role on the TV series *Dallas*.

Even an actor with two famous parents can flop. Robert Walker Jr.'s parents were Jennifer Jones and Robert Walker, but his career faded faster than cheap blue jeans.

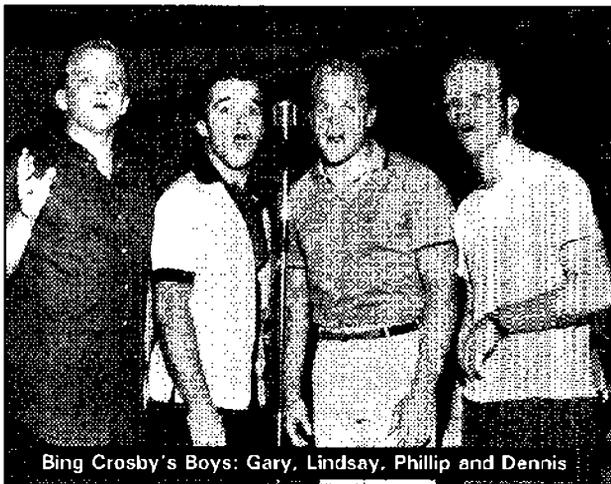
John Wayne and Robert Mitchum, two superstars, had sons who pursued movie stardom and failed. Lloyd Bridges was never a leading man movie star, but his son Jeff has successfully become a talented star in his own right. Jeff and his brother Beau both began acting as children. Beau's first

screen appearance was in the 1948 John Garfield movie *Force of Evil*. Jeff started out while still an infant and has been acting ever since, with two Academy Award nominations to his credit.

Tyrone Power, Sr. was a silent screen leading man in the 1920s and, when he died in 1931, his eighteen-year-old son Tyrone Jr. resolved that he would follow in his father's footsteps. His career began in 1932

with a bit part in *Tom Brown of Culver*; but by 1937 he was a star and considered one of the most handsome men in Hollywood. He became the most popular male star at Twentieth Century-Fox in the 1940s and was still a star in 1957 when he died of a heart attack. His last film was *Witness for the Prosecution*. Power's son Tyrone and his daughter Taryn have tried acting, but to date have remained part of the army of obscure hopefuls who roam the Los Angeles landscape.

Jason Robards Sr. was also a silent screen star of note. His son, Jason Robards Jr, has carved out a very distinguished career in the movies and on the stage. He has won several awards for his work on the Broadway stage and has won back-to-back Os-



Bing Crosby's Boys: Gary, Lindsay, Phillip and Dennis

cars for his finely tuned performance as Washington Post editor Ben Bradlee in *All the President's Men* and for his skillful interpretation of novelist Dashiell Hammett in the 1977 film *Julia*. His career has spanned four decades. He was once married to actress Lauren Bacall and their son Sam Robards has appeared in several films.

Matthew Broderick followed his father James in pursuing a career as a stage actor, but when young Matthew won a Tony award in 1983 for his role in *Brighton Beach Memories*, the movies beckoned him. He responded with solid performances in *Ladyhawk* and *Project X* and also the film that made him a movie star, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. He has matured into a competent leading man and serious actor, proving that even Ferris Bueller can grow up.

Kirk Douglas was a star whose confidence in himself led to producing and directing his own films and he was quite successful. His son Michael Douglas has far exceeded his father's ambitions. Like his father before him Michael has proven himself to be a true and talented professional movie star



Jason Robards, Sr.



Jason Robards, Jr.

PHOTOFEST

PHOTOFEST

ALL IN THE FAMILY

and producer. He produced *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and has played a Wall Street mogul and a U.S. President on the screen. The careers of both Kirk and Michael are exceptional in a profession where actors are as disposable as diapers.

Douglas Fairbanks was the ultimate hero of the silent screen. He played Zorro, Robin Hood and *The Thief of Bagdad*. He produced his own films, married Mary Pickford, started United Artists studios, and had a son, Douglas Fairbanks Jr. Doug Jr. never achieved the fame of his illustrious father, but his movie career spanned thirty years and he, too, tried his hand at producing his own films, in the 1930s, outside the studio system. On screen, Douglas Fairbanks Jr. is best remembered for his performance as Rupert of Hentzau, the

cold-blooded villain in the 1937 film *The Prisoner of Zenda*. His dashing swordplay and pencil-thin mustache reminded older moviegoers of his father and the two Fairbanks began to plan a film in which they could co-star, but it was never made because of the 1939 death of Doug Sr. Junior remained active on stage and television until the late 1970s. His last film to date was 1981's *Ghost Story* co-starring Fred Astaire, Melvyn Douglas and John Houseman.

Diane Ladd's career was less than spectacular until she made the 1937 film *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*. She earned an Academy Award nomination as the acid-tongued waitress Flo. Her daughter Laura, by her marriage to actor Bruce Dern, had a small role in the picture. Seventeen years later Laura Dern would star in *Rambling Rose* and her mother Diane Ladd was cast in a supporting role. They were both nominated for Academy Awards, marking the first time in history that a mother and daughter would earn simultaneous recognition. Both are still making films and hopefully they'll co-star in another movie and try again to win the double Oscar.

Although Jamie Lee Curtis has never appeared in a film with her mother Janet Leigh or her father Tony Curtis, her first big break was appearing in the TV series *Operation Petticoat* in 1977-78. Her father co-starred with Cary Grant in the 1959 film



Douglas Fairbanks Sr. and Jr.

PHOTOFEET



Janet Leigh and Jamie Lee Curtis

PHOTO:EST

of the same name. Her famous parents achieved stardom by working their way up the ladder in scores of "B" films and bit parts. Jamie Lee rode the same road appearing in several low-budget horror films until she won the part of the prostitute "with a heart of gold" in *Trading Places* with Eddie Murphy and Dan Aykroyd. Her biggest film to date was *True Lies* with Arnold Schwarzenegger. Perhaps one day she will have the chance to appear with her mother or father in a film that challenges the talent of a very talented family.

John Carradine and his sons David, Keith and Robert have all fallen into the low budget range of film acting. Before his death in 1988, John had finished working on *The Howling*. He had been credited with appearing in approximately 500 films, mostly in small supporting parts. But once in a while he would get star billing in a low-rent horror film. John's son David starred in the *Kung Fu* TV series, but big screen stardom has eluded him. Keith won an Oscar for writing the song

"I'm Easy" for the 1975 film *Nashville*, but has never really had a major success in the movies. Robert's claim to fame is his appearance in *The Revenge of the Nerds* series of movies. Keith's daughter Martha Plimton is an actress and has appeared in about a dozen films.

In some families tragedy has cut careers short. Brandon Lee, 27-year-old son of Bruce Lee, was accidentally killed on the set of *The Crow*. Bruce Lee had been on the threshold of international stardom at the age of 32 when he mysteriously died while working on a major Hollywood movie.

There are thousands of examples of Hollywood children trying to carry on the tradition of their movie star parent, and sometimes they do. But more often they come and go faster than you can say. "Isn't that's what's his name's son?" ■



PHOTO:EST



Old Time Radio Talk Shows

BY RICHARD W. O'DONNELL



Those TV talk shows have been getting a lot of bad publicity lately. Jerry Springer, Ricki Lake and Sally Jesse and all the gang haven't had an easy time of it. Only Rosie and Oprah, bless them, have been cheered.

The main complaint against the Springer-style shows is they glorify the low life. Also, that there is too much emphasis on matters sexual, and that rarely is anything pleasant talked about. One of these shows, a while back, actually set the stage for a murder.

Protest committees have been formed nationally to bring certain TV talkers under control. Whether these efforts will succeed remains to be seen. When all is said and done, the ratings will probably resolve the issue.

Vintage radio, in its day, had some shows that could compare to our modern day TV talkers. The guest stars on the radio shows could not be seen. But the voices told the story, and usually pretty well.

Radio talkmasters of today, it should be noted, have been known to carry tainted subject matter, but most of this stuff is put on the air by people who call in. The "issue" of the day, as designated by the radio host, also has a lot to do with what you

Richard W. O'Donnell is a free-lance writer from Port Richey, Florida.



A. L. Alexander
The Goodwill Court

PHOTOFEST

hear.

Be that as it may, the current shows are simply not as interesting as the ones featured years ago. Take the *Goodwill Court*. Do you remember that one? The one hour show went on the air nationally in 1936.

The idea was people with legal problems would tell the nation about them, and a panel of lawyers would give them some sound advice.

The host, or "mediator," was a chap named A. L. Alexander, a former newspaperman who hit it big on radio with his show. Often, both sides of the dispute would appear. No names were ever used; only initials.

Mrs. P. would say: "That monster I married has everything we have tied up in his

name, and he is always cheating on me. He's never home at night."

And Mr. P. would respond: "I give her plenty of money to run the house, and she's off playing bridge when she should be getting my meals ready. I go out at night because I want to get a decent meal at a restaurant."

At this point mediator Alexander might try to bring about a happy ending. "C'mon you two," he'd say, "kiss and make up. Think of the children. They need both of you."

If this attempt failed, a panel of lawyers got into the act and clarified the divorce laws in the state where Mr. and Mrs. P. resided, and told them how best to get their divorce or legal separation, as the case may be.

During its brief run on radio, the *Goodwill Court* handled cases involving loan sharks, bookies, neighborhood disputes, drinking problems, malpractice, and other subjects.

The show, which quickly got high ratings, did not last too long on the air, primarily because other lawyers, who were not panelists, objected to having so many cases handled on a radio program. They were losing business. It was estimated that more than 5,000 people also wrote to the show for advice and received such in reply mail from the radio lawyers. *Goodwill Court* lasted less than a year.

Alexander came back in the 1940s on the Mutual Network with a similar program. This one was called *Mediation Board*. Social workers and educators replaced the lawyers on the panel. It lasted until 1950.

Then there was the *Goodwill Hour*. That came on in 1937 and was popular for years. John J. Anthony was the host and he did not require a panel of experts. He was the one who advised his radio guests how they could solve their problems.



What right did Mr. Anthony, as he was known, have to tell people how to solve their sad situations? Well, Anthony insisted he had several university degrees and claimed, for a while, he was taught by Sigmund Freud. When all was said and done, and after the *Goodwill Hour* had become a regular on Mutual, it was discovered the wise man was actually a high school dropout. By then nobody cared. The show made for fascinating listening, first on Mutual, later on NBC.

"What is your problem, Mrs. Q?" Anthony would ask.

"The man upstairs keeps playing his records loud," responded the good woman. "I like music, but how much swing can you stand? He keeps playing the same songs over and over again."

"Have you spoken to him, ma'am?"

"I have. He just smiles and goes back to playing his records."

"Have you spoken to your landlord, ma'am?"

"I have, Mr. Anthony. The man just smiles at the landlord, too, and goes back to playing his records."

At this point Mr. Anthony might suggest

OLD TIME RADIO TALK SHOWS

the poor woman move, or buy car plugs, or some such thing. He always came up with a solution of some sort, but he was also willing to concede there were some problems that did not really have a simple solution.

Mr. Anthony also had the habit of telling his inexperienced radio guests not to speak too far from the microphone, or not to get too close to it.

"Don't touch the microphone," was another line he used quite a bit.

Sex, money, betrayal and all the usual things were chatted about on the *Goodwill Hour*. The conversation was laundered, but you did get the message.

Strike It Rich was another radio favorite that later made it to television. The show arrived on radio in 1947 and was on daily, Monday through Friday. Later this radio

show would be simulcast and, eventually end up on TV all by itself. Todd Russell and Warren Hull were the hosts during its run.

Basically, *Strike It Rich* was a quiz show with a sad song or two to sing. Guests always had a problem. A child might need an operation, or a wheelchair was needed, or fire had destroyed a new home a family had bought with its last penny.

All the contestants had to do was answer relatively simple questions. In most cases, they would collect a hefty sum, more than actually might be needed. And there was the "Heartline," a phone listeners, and others who were aware in advance, could use to call in with any extra help that might be needed. When a contestant failed to answer any questions, and did not get the money needed to ship home a long lost son to see his dying grandmother, "The Heartline" usually came ringing to the rescue.

Despite its quiz format, the sad stories were the prime reason *Strike It Rich* enjoyed a long run.

For the record, *Strike It Rich* and the *Goodwill* shows did have a fair share of critics when they were on the air.

But they never caused the uproar that is heard today over those TV and radio talk shows. ■

NOTE-- Tune in TWTD May 22 to hear John J. Anthony on the Goodwill Hour in a broadcast from 1944.



Warren Hull with guest Gypsy Rose Lee
Strike It Rich

A Half-Century of Design

The Shape of Television Sets

BY GARDNER KISSACK

Before we go *any* farther, let's be clear about one thing: As good as the good ol' days were—and they *were* good—and as bad as the bad new days are, very few of us would trade the late 1990s for the late 1940s. Oh, sure, *I* would (in a Manhattan minute), but most people much prefer the conveniences and pleasures and efficiency of the late twentieth century to the supposed drudgery of fifty years ago:

'40s "Drudgery"
vs.

'90s Efficiency

1. Waxing the '40s kitchen linoleum vs. a no-wax tile/floor covering
2. Lengthy preparation and cooking tasty meals vs. thawing, nuking in the microwave
3. Typing two carbon copies at a time vs. using copier, laser printer
4. Simonizing dark blue Ford DeLuxe all Saturday afternoon vs. running metallic blue pearl-coat Crown Vic through car wash, 3 minutes
5. Overnight train to New York City, 18 hours vs. flying to LaGuardia, 2 hours
6. Raking, burning autumn leaves vs. blowing them into neighbor's yard
7. Enduring P. J. HOFF's weather cartoons vs. state-of-the-art weather forecasting
8. Scratchy 78 rpms/static-filled radio vs. laser beam CDs/Bose radios
9. Tuning, fine tuning, re-tuning a '40s

Gardner Kissack of Chicago Heights, Illinois is a volunteer tour guide for the Museum of Broadcast Communications and a collector of vintage radio and television receivers.



1949 Zenith

TV vs. digital remote control

You get the idea... which sort of brings us to the subject *du jour*: the design of television sets.

As we prepare ourselves for the newest onslaught of modern technology's wonders on the electronic evolutionary scale (leaving those of us with unprogrammed, blinking VCRs even further behind), a brief review is in order to provide some perspective and an appreciation for all the new wave will bring.

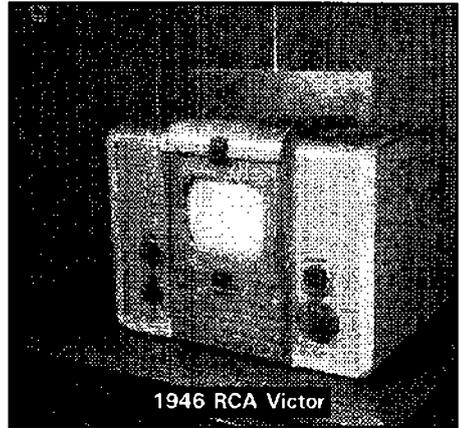
In a few years HDTV (High Definition Television) will be everywhere; screens, whatever their size, will be noticeably more horizontal than they are now; and picture quality will improve dramatically.

THE SHAPE OF TELEVISION SETS

This is not a here-we-go-again 8-track fad. This *is* the next generation of television. Stations gradually will cease analogue broadcasting and by the year 2006 the FCC will require all broadcasting to be digital, whatever that means. Can interactive programming be far behind?

Television didn't always have the sound and picture quality that we take for granted today. The few dozen TV receivers along the East Coast in the 1930s didn't have much to receive. But those dozens became hundreds of sets, in homes and labs, before the start of World War II, with excitingly primitive black and white pictures and sound.

Pre-WWII television broadcasts were limited and although RCA and other pioneers such as Philo Farnsworth had every right to be excited and proud of their research and development and achievements and innovations, those accomplishments

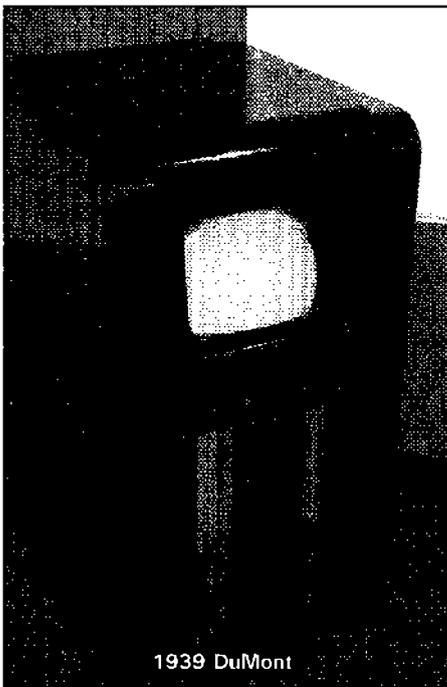


1946 RCA Victor

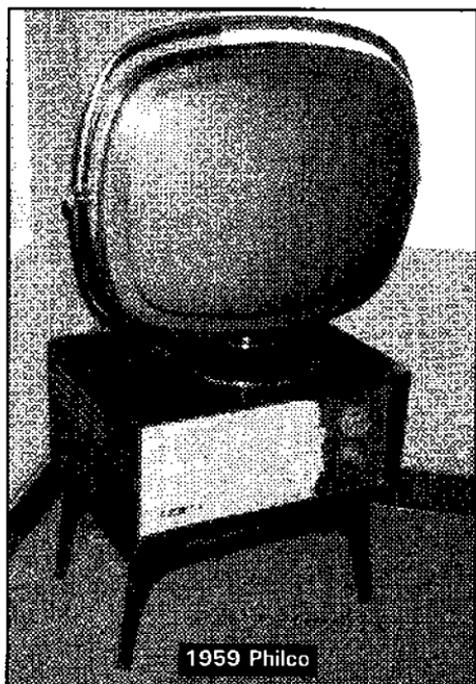
would be interrupted and delayed by the war.

Even though the war retarded TV's natural and deliberate development, the knowledge of technology gained from the war effort (especially from radar and its electronic cousins) actually accelerated the development of television. By 1948 TV sets were being manufactured steadily by an increasing number of good old radio companies such as Belmont, DuMont, Motorola, RCA, Zenith, Hallicrafters, Capehart, GE, Magnavox, Sonora, Bendix, Farnsworth, Emerson, Sylvania, Crosley, Stewart-Warner, Stromberg-Carlson, Raytheon, Westinghouse, and Admiral. Some, like Bendix, Sonora, Farnsworth had begun building TV sets as early as 1945. DuMont was even earlier, with a 1939 model.

In the late 1940s, specifically 1947, '48, and '49, most TV sets, especially those first-on-the-block sets, had seven, ten or twelve-inch screens. Table models typically were horizontally-rectangular wood cabinets, sometimes with three layers of solid wood for walls, measuring one to two inches thick ("...ya' never can tell about them rays — they might be harmful..."). Consoles were usually an upright wood cabinet very much resembling the console radios of the '30s. Many fine woods, sol-



1939 DuMont



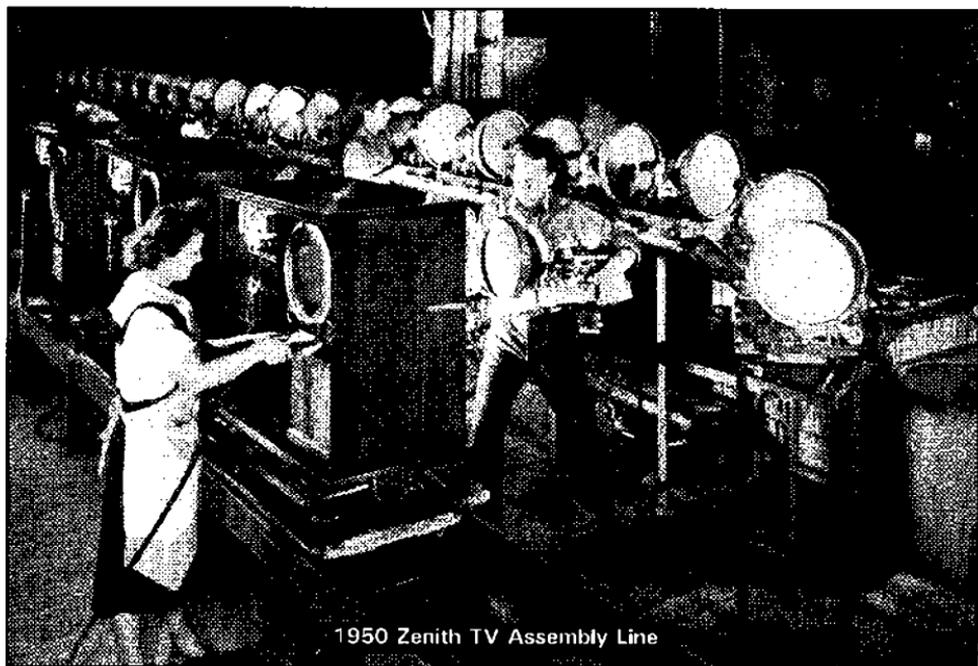
ids and veneers, were used: beautiful mahogany, burl cherry, rich walnut, bright maple.

These small screen-sized sets were per-

fect candidates for a popular after-market item, the magnifier, or magnifying glass, usually a large, plastic lens filled with mineral oil and attached to a bracket that fit over the top of the set and clamped on the back (but not before the kids put their faces and hands behind the glass for nifty special effects).

So when Vena and Louie and Irma and Al and Beth and Pete and Audrey came over to see the first set on the block, they saw not merely the seven-inch screen, but an exciting picture somewhat larger. They went for the chairs directly in front of the set because, with a magnifier, if they sat off to one side they saw either a partial or distorted picture, no matter the size of the screen.

It is perhaps difficult to comprehend now, but in 1950, at mid-century, with a population of 150 million, there were only about 200,000 TV sets in use in the United States. Today, almost a full half-century later, with a population of more than 260 million, it has been estimated that there are



THE SHAPE OF TELEVISION SETS

more than 200 million sets in 98 or 99 per cent of all households in the U.S.

As performance, cost and design of television receivers became major selling points, TV set design styles became homogenized, much as radio design had done a decade or more before. Sets now had less personality and were less distinctive. Over the years, TV sets had looked pretty much like TV sets, not like car dashboards, speedometers, space helmets or mini-refrigerators as did some radios. Although TV cabinet designs and screen shapes themselves varied with cabinets usually maintaining a functional, rectangular shape, complementing the usually rectangular screen, there were some variations on the theme.

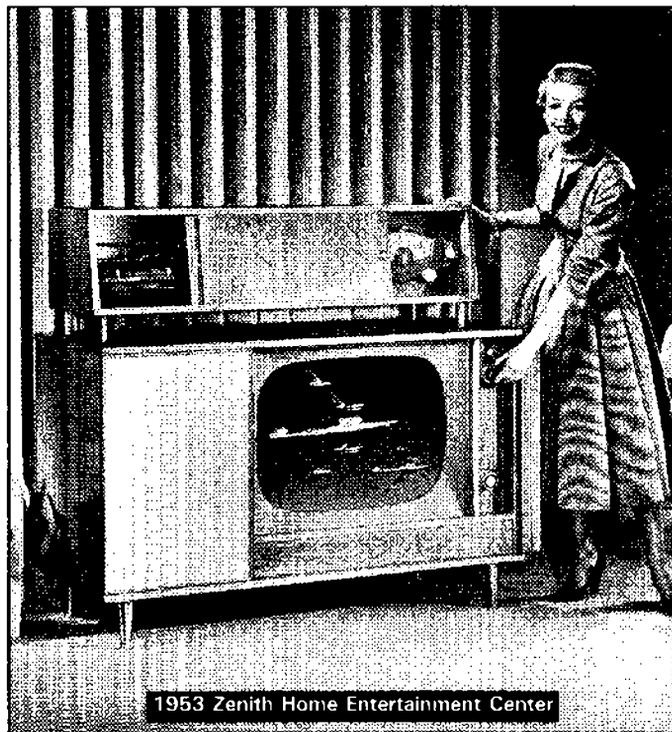
Zenith's round screens in the late '40s and early '50s offered viewers the chance

"to see the whole picture!" Zenith was not the sole perp; "Mad Man" Muntz also offered a round screen, as did a few others.

At least one company advertised a set with bamboo trim, apparently to harmonize with the new rattan furniture in the family's new rec-room with the South Pacific motif. And while RCA and others used painted grained metal early and often, usually for table models, two or three firms flirted with Heywood-Wakefield-type blonde cabinetry, some going so far as to gently round the edges in homage to the masters at H-W who *had* made wicker baby buggies in the '20s and '30s before their now highly regarded and sought after wheat, champagne, amber, and bleached modern furniture. But they never mass-produced a TV cabinet.

A few designers, influence by the Far East, tried gleaming lacquered cabinets, usually green or red, replete with a generic, oriental trim motif. RCA and DuMont, among others, concealed some of their screens beneath top-mounted folding doors and in the process created fashionable furniture that smartly enhanced any room or hall. Many companies made "complete" home entertainment centers combining AM-FM radio, phonograph, and TV set in one often large cabinet, complete with doors, drawers and storage compartments.

Philco's stunning "Martian Eye" Predicta and Invicta



1953 Zenith Home Entertainment Center

models from 1959-61 featured the picture tube suspended, barbecue-spit-like, apart and above the cabinet below. On some handled (a bright metal bar) sets, the picture tube could be lifted off the base and carried to any spot in the room (trailing a power-umbilical cord back to the console). Few other companies tried to be so daring.

As the 1960s began, the end of the golden age of TV set design started without notice. It was Danish Modern, usually a horizontal low-boy, that dominated designer and buyer hearts, often complementing the spare Scandinavian stick furniture of the '50s and after. Some Faux Spanish/Moorish rococo themes were offered and sold into the 1970s, but eventually all sets began to look very much alike



1955 Zenith Flash-Matic Remote Control

and domestic TV manufacturing was phased out.

Still, today's large screen television sets, whatever they lack in whimsical external design, individuality, and personality, are the finest performing, most durable, and sophisticated products that technology and industry have ever produced.

And the best is yet to come. Really! ■ *NOTE-- A number of vintage TV sets are on display at the Museum of Broadcast Communications in the Chicago Cultural Center. That's where you can also watch your choice of thousands of TV shows from the early days. Be sure to visit the MBC Archives for a trip to TV's past.*



1953 Zenith Color TV

Tales of the Yesteryear

The Threshing Machine

BY RUSS RENNAKER

One of my favorite memories when I was a kid growing up in Indiana is the old steam engine threshing machines. There was a monster for you.

The wood-burning steam engine stood on iron wheels as high as a man, spouting smoke and steam like a giant animal of prehistoric days.

And the separator. A mechanical miracle of the times, with wheels, belts, pulleys and a dozen other intriguing parts. It was usually painted red. The one I remember best had "Red River Special" painted on each side in letters more than a foot high. Somehow I always imagined the town where it was built might have been named Red River.

The straw from which the grain had been extracted was blown out of a ten-inch pipe that protruded from one end of the separator. It was usually "stacked" in the back barnyard to be used later for bedding for the livestock.

Farmers are noted as early risers and the men who ran the threshing machines were no different. There was usually two, an engineer and a fireman.

They would pull on to the new site the night before. Then by four or five o'clock

Russ Rennaker of Kokomo, Indiana was born in 1906 and is a retired broadcast engineer who worked at WBBM, Chicago and WJSV, Washington, D.C.

the next morning the fireman would arrive at the engine and prepare for the day's work. The farmer was expected to supply a large pile of wood to fuel the engine.

It took several minutes to get steam up. Then the separator was moved to the spot where the farmer wanted his straw stack and the engine was then backed up some sixty feet from the separator. On one side of the engine was a huge flywheel some two and one-half feet in diameter. The rim was about eight inches wide. A six-inch wide leather belt ran from that flywheel to a pulley on the separator. One of the men would roll out the belt between the two

machines and place it on the flywheel at the engine and on a smaller pulley at the separator. Then he stood back and waved to the engineer to back up until the belt was tight.

If it wasn't tight enough it would slip on the pulleys; if it was too tight— well, it had to be just right.

By this time the wagons had arrived. Men with pitchforks walked alongside the wagons and threw the sheaves of grain up to the man on the wagon. When he had his load he drove back to the threshing machine and pulled alongside one end of the separator. He tossed the sheaves into a hopper that carried the grain down into the

"Farmers are noted as early risers and the men who ran the threshing machines were no different."

bowels of the machine and came out as straw at one end and grain at the other.

When the last sheaf had been thrown in and the men and wagons were already returning to their homes the engineer idled the engine. Starting at the engine end he would catch one side of the belt in the crook of his elbow and run along with the belt, pulling outward as hard as he could. Usually the belt came off the flywheel before he got that far. If he didn't he would hastily withdraw his arm and start all over again.

Then he would back the engine up to the separator, hook them together, and noisily proceed to the next threshing site.

Each farm family at whose farm the threshing machine was working at noon-time was expected to supply food for the twenty or thirty men of the working force.

The women of the farm neighborhood would come together for these occasions. The menu for the dinner would be planned far ahead of the event.

The bulk of the farmers were grain farmers with some raising hogs as a second crop. Not many raised beef cattle. So beef was a luxury, and usually the first choice for a threshing dinner. I remember my mother going in to the meat-market the day before and ordering a huge beef roast. "Threshing crew tomorrow, eh?" the grocer would say, with a chuckle.

Threshing was a dirty job and the men came to dinner with perspiration mixed with grain dust streaking their faces and bare arms. There was always a large tub of water with soap and towels set out by the back door for them. When the steam engine tooted for dinner there was a mad rush for the tub and much friendly push-

ing and shoving around the washing place. While most of the men were in the middle age bracket there were usually a few younger men, but threshing time seemed to bring out the boy in all of them.

The dinner table usually consisted of two or more tables pushed together. Some times, if it was a clear day and there were shade trees in the yard the table would consist of planks laid across sawhorses in the

back yard, covered with tablecloths. There was much bantering at the dinner table. Dishes were handed from man to man around the table and seconds were called for

as needed. "Pass me the mashed," someone at the end of the table would shout, and the bowl of mashed potatoes would always come around to him the longest way, sometimes bypassing him entirely, until he shouted a second time.

The meal was served in two shifts. The threshing machine never stopped, nor did the wagons that brought in the grain from the fields. No evening meal was served even though sometimes the threshing went on until after dark if it was thought the job could be finished. Working late was better than having to come back the next day for an hour's work. If they could get finished, the threshing machine could be moved to the next farm yet that evening and be ready for an early start the next morning.

I don't envy the engineer who had to guide that monster through gates and down narrow dirt roads in the dark. Their only light was an oil-burning lantern hung out on the front of the steam engine. But that was part of the job. It was offset by the times they finished in the middle of the afternoon and the machine could be moved in daylight. ■

"I don't envy the engineer who had to guide that monster down narrow dirt roads in the dark."

**OLD TIME
RADIO****IN THE
20
TH****CENTURY****Chuck Schaden's****THOSE WERE THE DAYS****WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM****APRIL 1999****SATURDAY, APRIL 3rd**

OUR MISS BROOKS (1952) *Eve Arden* stars as the Madison High School English teacher who must work through the Easter Week vacation to get funds to purchase a new dress for the holiday. Colgate-Palmolive, CBS. (30 min)

RECOLLECTIONS AT THIRTY (8-1-56) Program 8 in the 33-part series marking the 30th anniversary of the National Broadcasting Company. Host Ed Herlihy presents the Happiness Boys; Herb Morrison and the Hindenberg crash; Frank Crumit and Julia Sanderson; Phil Baker; Snow Village Sketches; Tommy Dorsey. Sustaining, NBC. (25 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (1-31-75) Actress *Eve Arden* recalls her career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded at the Drury Lane Theatre in Evergreen Park, Illinois. She died in 1990 at the age of 78. (23 min)

**Eve Arden**

OUR MISS BROOKS (1-30-49) *Eve Arden* is Miss Brooks who has been entrusted by principal Osgood Conklin (Gale Gordon) with \$25 of high school students' money. Cast includes Jeff Chandler, Richard Crenna, Frank Nelson. Colgate, Lustre Creme, CBS. (29 min)

PARADE COVERAGE (8-20-38) Announcer Durward Kirby covers the activities in Chicago in honor of Douglas "Wrong Way" Corrigan, who set out to fly from New York to California but "made a wrong turn over Long Island" and landed in Ireland. He is welcomed at Chicago Municipal Airport by Mayor Edward J. Kelly. Kirby follows the Parade to City Hall. NBC. (8 min and 15 min)

RED SKELTON SHOW (4-9-50) Red appears as Willy Lump-Lump, Cauliflower McPugg, and Junior, the mean little kid. It's Easter Sunday

—and the day of the Skunk Patrol's Benefit Show. Cast includes Lurene Tuttle, Pat McGeehan, Martha Wentworth, Rod O'Connor, Four Knights, David Rose and the orchestra. Red sings "Scarlet Ribbons." Tide, CBS. (30 min)

SATURDAY, APRIL 10th

HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (5-12-49) "You Could Look It Up" starring William Frawley in James Thurber's comedy about a little person who helps cure a baseball team of its overconfidence. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (29 min)

COMEDY CARAVAN (3-31-44) Jimmy Durante and Garry Moore star with singer Georgia Gibbs, Howard Petrie, Roy Bary and the orchestra. Sketch: "The G-String Murder," a play about music! Produced and directed by Phil Cohan. AFRS rebroadcast. (30 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (6-18-88) Radio producer-director *Phil Cohan* talks about his broadcast career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded at Mr. Cohan's home in Pacific Palisades, California. (53 min)

JIMMY DURANTE SHOW (12-10-47) Guest Boris Karloff joins the Schnozzola. Jimmy visits disc jockey Happy Sam (Boris) to collect an award in a popularity poll. Produced and directed by *Phil Cohan*. Rexall, NBC. (29 min)

RECOLLECTIONS AT THIRTY (8-8-56) Program 9 of 33. Amos 'n' Andy; Cities Service Concert; West Coast flood report; Frank Munn; Jimmy Fidler; Blue Barron and the orchestra. Sustaining, NBC. (24 min)

SATURDAY, APRIL 17th**Happy Birthday, LES TREMAYNE**

FIRST NIGHTER (10-25-40) "Three Who Faced Death" starring *Les Tremayne* and Barbara Luddy in a drama about an apparent amnesia victim being followed by a criminal. Campana Products, NBC. (27 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (12-12-73) Actor **Les**



Tremayne reminisces about his radio career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded in Hollywood, California. Mr.

Tremayne was born April 16, 1913 and this year celebrates his 86th birthday. (44 min)

THIN MAN (7-6-48)

"Adventure of the Passionate Palooka" starring **Les Tremayne** and Claudia Morgan as Nick and Nora Charles who promise to find a prizefighter's pet pooch. Ed Herlihy announces. Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer, NBC. (28 min)

FIRST NIGHTER (3-25-41) "Love and Gazooza" stars **Les Tremayne** and Barbara Luddy. A well-to-do Mexican is in love with a reluctant senorita. Campana, CBS. (25 min)

THE BIG STORY (12-15-47) "The Case of the Final Curtain" stars **Les Tremayne** as Aburey Maddock, editor of the Hartford Daily Current, whose story is dramatized. Bob Sloan narrates. Pall Mall Cigarettes, NBC. (26 min)

RECOLLECTIONS AT THIRTY (8-15-56) Program 10 of 33. A&P Gypsies; Pick and Pat; Eddie Cantor; Father Charles Coughlin; Rudy Vallee; Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyon; Deanna Durbin. Sustaining, NBC. (24 min)

SATURDAY, APRIL 24th
29th ANNIVERSARY SHOW
"Thanks for Listening"

As we celebrate our twenty-ninth broadcast anniversary today, we salute two legendary Chicago broadcasters: Bob Elson and Jack Brickhouse:

SPEAKING OF RADIO (9-20-80) Announcer

Bob Elson talks about his career as a sports announcer and interviewer in a conversation with Chuck Schaden during a *Those Were The Days* broadcast. Includes brief play-by-play baseball clips and a complete 1945 "Bob Elson on the Twentieth Century Limited" program. Mr. Elson died in 1981 at the age of 76. (68 min)



CRIME FILES OF FLAMOND (4-25-48) "The Case of the Ruinous Report" starring Myron (Mike) Wallace as the detective trying to untangle a love triangle. Pierre Andre announces and **Bob Elson** does commercials for Brachs Candy Bars. WGN/MBS. (30 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (9-9-77) Broadcaster



Jack Brickhouse, who considers himself "an announcer, not a sports announcer" talks about the early days of his career in radio in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded in Mr. Brickhouse's office at WGN Radio, Chicago. He died in 1998 at the

age of 82. (22 min)

FOOTBALL (11-16-58) *Excerpt.* **Jack Brickhouse** describes the action during the final seven minutes of the game between the Chicago Bears and the Baltimore Colts at Wrigley Field in Chicago. Irv Kupcinet provides color commentary. Standard Oil, WGN. (21 min)

HUBBARD-BRICKHOUSE SHOW (11-24-61) *Excerpt.* Chicago radio personalities Eddie Hubbard and **Jack Brickhouse** in a late afternoon interview program. Guests are former Mousketeer Annette Funicello and singer-actress Monique Van Vooren. WGN. (15 min)

CHICAGO WHITE SOX BASEBALL CAMP (3-20-61) *Excerpt.* **Jack Brickhouse** talks with Sox manager Al Lopez and players Nelson Fox and Early Wynn from the Sox spring training camp in Sarasota, Florida. WGN. (13 min)

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Chuck Schaden's

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

May 1999

SATURDAY, MAY 1st

TRIBUTE TO VIC AND SADE (1973) First half of a two-hour salute to the radio series and its' creator Paul Rhymer. Narrated by Bob Arbogast and Gary Owens, this loving tribute features comments by Bernadine Flynn (Sade), Clarence Hartzell (Uncle Fletcher), Bill Idleson (Rush), Bob Brown (announcer), Johnny Coons (various characters) and artist Franklyn McMahon. Included are two Vic and Sade broadcasts: "Rush Plans a Party" and "Vic Goes on a Lunch Date." Documentary. (59 min) *Read the cover story on page 2.*

THE SHADOW (10-22-39) "House of Fun" starring Bill Johnstone as Lamont Cranston, wealthy young man-about-town, and Agnes Moorehead as the lovely Margo Lane, who go to an amusement park where they witness what they think is foul play in the Fun House. MBS. (25 min)



Arthur Godfrey

THE AVENGER (1945) "The Tunnel of Disaster" starring James Monks as Jim Brandon, famous biochemist, and Helen Adamson as his assistant, the beautiful Fern Collier, who go to the dedication of the new Riverford Tunnel where they find some things are amiss. Syndicated. (27 min) *Read the article about radio shows and pulp magazines on page 31.*

RECOLLECTIONS AT THIRTY (8-29-56) Program 11 of 33. Al Jolson and Bing Crosby; Ed Wynn; Nelson Eddy; President Roosevelt; Dr. Walter Damrosch; Sisters of the Skillet; Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street. Sustaining, NBC. (25 min)

ARTHUR GODFREY TIME (4-30-45) *Excerpt.* Godfrey's first network show. He can't play records on the network, so he introduces his "live" cast. Sustaining, CBS. (12 min)

ARTHUR GODFREY TIME (4-30-72) Godfrey's final broadcast as he recalls the events of the year 1945 (when he began "Arthur Godfrey Time") and plays his eyewitness account of the funeral of President Franklyn D. Roosevelt. Lipton Tea, CBS. (29 min)

SATURDAY, MAY 8th
REMEMBERING ALAN LADD

SUSPENSE (3-16-50) "Motive For Murder" starring **Alan Ladd** as a detective whose wife is arrested for the murder of a door-to-door salesman. Cast includes John Dehner, Ed Max, Howard McNear, Jeanette Nolan, Joseph Kearns. AutoLite, CBS. (30 min)

LUX RADIO THEATRE (9-22-47) "Two Years Before the Mast" starring **Alan Ladd**, Howard daSilva, Macdonald Carey and Wanda Hendrix in the radio version of the 1946 Paramount film. A ruthless captain bent on breaking a record drives his crew to the point of mutiny. Cast includes Jeff Chandler, Bill Johnstone, Louis Van Rooten. Lux Soap, CBS. (59 min)

BOX THIRTEEN (1948) **Alan Ladd** stars as writer Dan Holiday in "Hot Box." Holiday gets

SATURDAY, MAY 22nd

a letter advising him to bid on a teakwood box at an auction. He misses out on the bidding, but gets the box anyway. Syndicated. (26 min)

RUDY VALLEE SHOW (1-11-46) Guest **Alan Ladd** joins Rudy and regulars Pinky Lee, Betty Bradley, Eddie Marr, Benny Krueger and the orchestra. "Taxi Drivers" is the theme as Rudy composes special material for Ladd. AFRS rebroadcast. (30 min)

SCREEN DIRECTOR'S PLAYHOUSE (729-49) "Saigon" starring **Alan Ladd** in an adventure set in Indochina (Viet Nam) involving a black marketeer and a half-million dollars. Radio version of Ladd's 1948 Paramount film. Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer, NBC. (28 min)

Read the article about Alan Ladd on page 26.

SATURDAY, MAY 15th

INNER SANCTUM (1940s) "Ghosts Always Get the Last Laugh." A judge is confronted by the "ghost" of a man he condemned to death, but might have spared. AFRS rebroadcast. (24 min)

SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS (9-2-46) "Weekend for Three" starring Dennis O'Keefe, Lynn Bari and Harry Von Zell in a radio version of the 1941 screen comedy about a wife who tries to make her husband jealous but winds up with an unwanted house guest. Cast includes Frank Nelson, Truman Bradley announces. Lady Esther Products, CBS. (28 min)

RECOLLECTIONS AT THIRTY (9-5-56) Program 12 of 33. Host Ed Herlihy highlights a special tribute to King George VI and the Queen as they visited America in 1938. Excerpts from a special broadcast for the King and Queen of England, featuring Ray Noble; Vivian Leigh and Basil Rathbone; Greer Garson and Leslie Howard; Gertrude Lawrence; Brian Ahearne; Dennis King. Includes a toast to the visiting monarchs by George M. Cohan. Sustaining, NBC. (24 min)

BOSTON BLACKIE (1940s) "Murder at the Movies" starring Richard Kollmar as Blackie, with Leslie Woods as Mary Wesley, Maurice Tarplin as Inspector Faraday. Present during the shooting of a movie scene, Blackie and Mary witness a murder. Syndicated. (28 min)

TRIBUTE TO VIC AND SADE (1973) Second half of a two-hour salute featuring former cast members reminiscing about the beloved radio series. Includes two complete "Vic and Sade" episodes: "Sade wants to Visit the Cardberrys" and "Sade Plans a Gathering and Ice Cream Also." Documentary. (59 min)

ALDRICH FAMILY (10-10-39) **Ezra Stone** stars as Henry Aldrich, whose parents don't approve of his latest love interest and his old girlfriend tries to make him jealous. Guest is Betty Field who plays Henry's former girlfriend. House Jamison and Katharine Raht are Mr. and Mrs. Aldrich. Jell-O, NBC. (29 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (8-25-75) Actor **Ezra Stone** who played Henry Aldrich on stage, screen and radio talks about his career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded at Mr. Stone's Hollywood, California home. He died in 1994 at the age of 76. (34 min)



Ezra Stone

ALDRICH FAMILY (2-20-40) Henry Aldrich, portrayed by **Ezra Stone**, tries to devise a way to make money by raising animals, finally deciding to raise pigeons. Cast includes Alan Reed in a dual role, plus House Jamison and Katharine Raht. Harry Von Zell announces. Jell-O, NBC. (29 min)

GOODWILL HOUR (1944) John J. Anthony founder of the Marital Relations Institute, moderates a program "dedicated to solving the personal and family problems of those who need advice and guidance." Among the problems: a mother with a grown daughter who hates her and doesn't work; a husband who doesn't want the child his wife is going to have; an engaged girl who wonders if she should get married; a woman with a problem 9-year old boy. Clark Gum, MBS. (26 min) *See the article on page 10.*

RECOLLECTIONS AT THIRTY (9-19-56) Program 13 of 33. Ruth Etting; King Edward VIII abdicates; The Revelers; The Battle of the Sexes; Eddie Cantor spoofing advice-giver John J. Anthony; Cheerio. Sustaining, NBC. (24 min)

FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (10-30-45) Jim and Marian Jordan star as the McGees in this remote broadcast from the Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto, Canada on behalf of the 9th Canadian Victory Loan. McGee the sculptor has entered his work — A Self-portrait of a Common Man — in the Art Center competition. Cast features Arthur Q. Brian (Doc Gamble), Bea Benadaret (Mrs. Carstairs), Gale Gordon (Mayor LaTrivia), Harlow Wilcox, King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (30 min)



Chuck Schaden's

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

May 1999

SATURDAY, MAY 29th

CAVALCADE OF AMERICA (9-15-41) "City of Illusion" starring **Agnes Moorehead** in a story about Virginia City, "Ghost of the gutted Comstock lode, the biggest bonanza in history." Cast includes Frank Readick, Karl Swenson, Betty Gaard, Kenneth Delmar. DuPont, NBC. (29:00)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (7-17-71) Actress **Agnes Moorehead** talks about her radio career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded at the Marriott Motor Hotel in Chicago. She died in 1974 at the age of 67.

SUSPENSE (2-24-44) "Sorry Wrong Number" starring **Agnes Moorehead** in Lucille Fletcher's study in terror



Agnes Moorehead

about a woman who accidentally overhears a telephone conversation with death...and discovers too late that she is to be the victim. Miss Moorehead starred in this classic "Suspense" drama eight times during the series' twenty-year run. Roma Wine, CBS. (30 min)

THIS IS EDWARD R. MURROW (4-30-65) Newsman Robert Trout hosts a tribute to Edward R. Murrow who died on April 27, 1965 at the age of 57. This salute to the legendary broadcaster includes many clips of Murrow's World War II broadcasts; the beginnings of the "Hear It Now" and "See It Now" programs; "Person to Person." Sustaining, CBS. (43 min)

RECOLLECTIONS AT THIRTY (9-26-56) Program 14 of 33. Vincent Lopez; Lights Out; Buddy Clark; Col. Stoopnagle; Graham ManNamee; The Contented Hour. Sustaining, NBC. (24 min)

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Fibber McGee and the Good Old Days of Radio

Starring Jim Jordan with Chuck Schaden
7-part radio series from 1974

...and for more good listening...

ART HELLYER SHOW-- Music of the big bands and the big singers with lots of knowledgeable commentary and fun from one of radio's legendary personalities, now in his 52nd year on the air! *WJOL, 1340 AM, Saturday, 9 am-12 noon.*

DICK LAWRENCE REVUE-- A treasure trove of rare and vintage recordings with spoken memories from the never to be forgotten past. *WNIB, 97.1 FM, Saturday, 8-9 pm.*

REMEMBER WHEN-- Host Don Corey's "nostalgia fest" with the emphasis on old time radio variety shows, plus show tunes and interviews. *WAIT, 850 AM, Saturday, 9 am-12 noon.*

WHEN RADIO WAS-- Carl Amari hosts a weekend edition of the popular series featuring old time radio broadcasts and interviews. *WMAQ, 670 AM, Saturday and Sunday, 10pm-midnight.*

IMAGINATION THEATRE-- This series is heard occasionally on *Those Were The Days* in Chicago, but is broadcast weekly in many other cities across the country. For the station in your area, call Tim McDonald at TransMedia Productions at 1-800-229-7234. For a list of stations carrying the program and an **episode guide**, the Internet address is: tmedia@aimnet.com

"When Radio Was" -- WMAQ-AM 670

Monday thru Friday Midnight to 1 a.m. Host Stan Freberg

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
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| April 1999 Schedule | | | | |
| <p><i>WHEN RADIO WAS--Weekend Edition with host Carl Amari may be heard on WMAQ, 670 AM, Saturday and Sunday nights from 10 pm to Midnight.</i></p> | | | 1 Our Miss Brooks Pt 2 Green Hornet | 2 The Shadow Superman |
| 5 Directors' Playhouse Phil Harris-Alice Faye 1 | 6 Phil Harris-Alice Faye 2 Escape | 7 Richard Diamond Burns & Allen Pt 1 | 8 Burns & Allen Pt 2 Tales of Texas Rangers | 9 Suspense Superman |
| 12 Philo Vance Favorite Husband Pt 1 | 13 Favorite Husband Pt 2 Third Man | 14 Lona Ranger Duffy's Tavern Pt 1 | 15 Duffy's Tavern Pt 2 Gangbusters | 16 The Shadow Superman |
| 19 Gunsmoke Fibber McGee Pt 1 | 20 Fibber McGee Pt 2 Boston Blackie | 21 Dimension X Jack Benny Pt 1 | 22 Jack Benny Pt 2 The Falcon | 23 Suspense Superman |
| 26 Have Gun, Will Travel Great Gildersleeve Pt 1 | 27 Great Gildersleeve Pt 2 Philip Marlowe | 28 Dragnet Life of Riley Pt 1 | 29 Life of Riley Pt 2 This is My Best | 30 The Shadow Superman |
| May, 1999 Schedule | | | | |
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| 31 The Whistler Abbott & Castello Pt 1 | <p style="text-align: center;">OUT OF AREA LISTENERS PLEASE NOTE</p> <p>If WMAQ Chicago is out of your reception area, "When Radio Was" is heard on a great many other stations throughout the country. For a complete station listing, plus more detailed program information and a steady audio stream on the Internet visit www.radiospirits.com</p> | | | |

A Prisoner of Doubt

BY CLAIR SCHULZ

If William Shakespeare could have studied the life of Alan Ladd, he might have changed one of his most famous speeches to read, "The fault, dear fans, in our stars is not in the gossip columns, but in themselves, that they are unstable." The tragedy of Alan Ladd is that he was never able to overcome the feelings of insecurity which followed him from rocky cradle to premature grave.

The seeds of discord were planted not long after his birth on September

3, 1913 in Hot Springs, Arkansas. He spent much of his youth moving from place to place, first with his widowed mother and then with her and his stepfather. Not having any place to call a real home damaged his fragile psyche just as years of improper nourishment while on the road took a toll on his body. When his family settled in California and Alan started school, he had the embarrassing distinction of being both the oldest and shortest boy in his class. The students called him "Tiny" Ladd.

At North Hollywood High School he excelled in two activities for which size did

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not matter: swimming and dramatics. He won medals for his prowess in the pool and might have entered the 1932 Olympics had not his confidence been shattered by an errant dive that resulted in a head injury. Fortunately, his success in *The Mikado* and other productions had the opposite effect by bolstering his self-image.

He got up the nerve to enter the Universal Studios acting school and, even though he washed out after a few months, he learned more about



Alan Ladd
Blue Dahlia (1946)

PHOTO FET

using voice and manner. By working as a grip for Warner Brothers he observed how movies were made and became more convinced than ever that he wanted to step in front of the cameras. His chance came in a 1932 Paramount film, but he is not easy to find as one of the hairy "ani-men" Charles Laughton kept caged in *Island of Lost Souls*.

While waiting for his big break into pictures, Ladd found that practice at improving his diction paid off with small parts on *Lux Radio Theatre* and other dramatic radio programs. A talent agent, ex-actress Sue Carol, liked what she heard and, when the handsome blond visited her office, she liked what she saw. It was truly a labor of love for her to find work for this client who would become her husband in 1942.

Sue went out of her way to land parts



Alan Ladd and Veronica Lake
This Gun For Hire (1942)

for Alan, even to the point of keeping costumes on hand so if, for example, she learned that a studio was casting a western or a naval adventure, he could make a quick change and show up suitably garbed for that film.

Her resourcefulness paid off. Even if Ladd's name appeared far down in the credits at least he was working steadily in his medium of choice supporting Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Victor Mature, Clark Gable, and other stars. At this time Sue's strategy seemed to be "Don't worry about the size of the role. Just get your face seen often enough and good things will happen." To this day many people who watch two notable films of 1941, Laurel and Hardy's *Great Guns* and the magnificent *Citizen Kane*, are unaware that Alan Ladd appeared in both pictures.

It might have been a combination of his death scene in RKO's *Joan of Paris* and Sue's power of persuasion with director Frank Tuttle that earned Alan the part of a cold-blooded killer in *This Gun for Hire*. Even though fourth-billed, Ladd's performance as Raven clearly outshone the his-

trionics of Veronica Lake, Robert Preston, and Laird Cregar. He did have a moment of redemption at the end, but no romantic interludes with Veronica. (They would come later in *The Glass Key*, *The Blue Dahlia*, and *Saigon*.)

Ladd and Lake were barely speaking acquaintances in real life, yet on the screen they made a fine pair because at five feet two she was just three inches shorter than Alan and therefore camera crews did not have to resort to the gimmicks (deceptive angles, trenches for the women, or boxes for Ladd) employed when he played opposite taller actresses.

Paramount, pleased that *This Gun for Hire* made millions at the box office, gave Ladd a bonus, raised his salary, and rushed *The Glass Key* into theatres to take advantage of his sudden fame. One fight in this story of political corruption contains possibly the most realistic right hook ever thrown in a movie. William Bendix, playing his patented thick-skulled hood, accidentally knocked Ladd unconscious, but both men later came to regard it as a lucky punch because it marked the beginning of a close friendship between the two actors.

Ladd played lovable rogue *Lucky Jordan* who followed Nazi agents and then decided to join up with "an outfit that will pay me fifty a month and throw in a uniform free," a speech that coincidentally described his personal life because during most of 1943 he served in the Army.

Riding the crest of popularity, he seemed to be everywhere: his face on covers of movie magazines and on screens in theatres, his dulcet tones on radio shows when entertainers like Bob Hope broadcast from camps, and his name on the lips of a growing body of fans. Throughout his career Ladd regarded his admirers fondly and always honored requests for photos and autographs even though it cost him thousands of dollars a year in secretarial fees and

A PRISONER OF DOUBT

postage.

When he returned to the Paramount lot after his discharge, his star was still riding high. In *The Blue Dahlia* he reunited with Bendix and Lake in a tale of murder and dissimulation written by Raymond Chandler that was just what post-war audiences wanted to see. Ladd showed that he was capable of more sensitive portrayals outside of crime dramas as the lead in adaptations of two literary classics, *Two Years Before the Mast* and *The Great Gatsby*, but he had not escaped his low opinion of his own abilities. "I can't act," he would confide to friends. "I don't have the training those other guys do. What if I can't make pictures anymore?"

Sue provided the initiative that Alan lacked. She convinced him to take a "leave of absence" from Paramount until they paid him what other top revenue-producing actors were earning. It took considerable

prodding to get him to attend parties and ceremonies and, although she convinced him that they were a necessary part of a star's life, no one could make him comfortable in society. His shy taciturnity was so much a part of his personality that, had he been seated next to Gary Cooper at one of those functions, he might have responded to Coop's famous "Yep" with "You've stolen my dialogue for the rest of the night."

It would have been a stretch for Ladd to make such a comment because he seemed out of his element with humor. His sketches with funsters like Abbott and Costello, Burns and Allen, and Ed Gardner went over the airwaves like a lead vacuum tube. Even on his own show, *Box Thirteen*, the little bits of banter between his character, Dan Holiday, and Suzy, Holiday's adlepatated secretary, were painfully forced and uniformly witless. The rest of *Box Thirteen* made for good listening as Ladd's resonant voice recounted the

dangerous situations that confronted Holiday, a mystery writer who advertised for adventure and got all he could handle every week. In the movies he wisely steered clear of comedy except for cameos; he knew he belonged in the world of action and intrigue reflected in titles such as *Appointment With Danger*, *Chicago Deadline*, and *Thunder in the East*.

In the late forties and early fifties he starred in several westerns including *Whispering Smith* and *Branded* which were above average and in one that is an unqualified classic. His performance in *Shane*, especially in the scenes with Brandon deWilde, Jean Arthur, and Van Heflin in which he con-



Alan Ladd
Shane (1953)

PHOTOFEEST



Alan Ladd

vincingly registered compassion and anguish over a misspent life, vividly demonstrated that he was an actor and not a pretender. The sequence with Brandon that closed the picture is a strong contender for the most poignant moments in the history of cinema not only because of the boy's

plaintive cries but also because the heartfelt sincerity of Shane's advice and the remorse on Ladd's face were perfectly executed by a man who had learned his craft well.

It is ironic that by the time *Shane* was released and winning praise in 1953 Ladd was not even in the country to appreciate the upswing in his popularity. He left Paramount after completing *Botany Bay* for a more lucrative contract with Warner Brothers that allowed for some free-lancing. Money also motivated the Ladds to move to England where Alan could make films and avoid paying taxes providing he stayed at least eighteen months. Although Ladd later regretted leaving his old studio and disliked being away from home for such a long time, financial security became one of the driving forces in his life despite the fact that he had invested wisely in property and had plenty in the bank. The fear that his wealth would disappear in a moment kept pushing him on to make pictures even when infections and illnesses were telling his body to rest.



Barry Fitzgerald, Brian Donlevy, Alan Ladd
Two Years Before The Mast (1946)

A PRISONER OF DOUBT

When he returned to America, Ladd found that he was still in demand. The westerns produced by Warner Brothers and MGM (*Drumbeat*, *The Big Land*, *The Badlanders*, *Guns of the Timberland*) with the expectation that some of the magic of *Shane* would rub off on them turned out to be fairly routine. When given a change of pace, Ladd rose to the challenge. In *The Deep Six* (1958) he played a conscientious Naval Lieutenant during World War II who was torn between duty for his country and his Quaker beliefs of nonviolence. That same year he delivered a balanced performance in *Proud Rebel* as an ex-soldier embittered by his experiences in the Civil War yet softened by his love for his mute child (played by his real son, David). If he looked at home in the cockpit scenes of *The McConnell Story*, it is a testament to his acting ability because he had a pathological fear of flying.

Ladd could reel in some beauties, but the one that got away in 1956 tormented him the rest of his life. After he rejected an offer to play Jett Rink in *Giant*, George Stevens, the director of *Shane*, gave the part to James Dean. Stevens himself had cause for second-guessing because he did not go along with the headstrong Dean and would have preferred to work with Ladd who listened to rather than rebelled against advice, but he at least won an Oscar for directing *Giant* that helped him forget those skirmishes while Alan had to live with the thought that Dean's nomination for best actor might have been his.

By the time the war story *All the Young Men* appeared in theatres in 1960 the years of non-stop work and worry along with frequent sicknesses, irregular eating patterns, and a growing reliance on the bottle had left their marks on Ladd's face. The good scripts that once poured into his mail-

box were now being offered to Paul Newman, Gregory Peck, and Burt Lancaster. To get top billing he had to go to Europe in a sword-and-sandal turkey called *Duel of Champions* for which he almost didn't get paid. If that fiasco did not suggest to him that the curtain on his career was descending, his brief appearance in *The Carpetbaggers* would have convinced him that the end was near had not the end already come. On January 24, 1964, five months before the premiere of *The Carpetbaggers*, his butler found the actor in bed, a victim of a fatal and probably accidental combination of alcohol and chemical depressants.

It was a sad conclusion to a life that should have been a rags to riches story with a happy ending. Instead, memories of childhood poverty haunted him with suspicions that disaster waited around every corner. He proved that a leading man need not be tall and dark, yet remained sensitive about his height and could not escape the feeling that producers and other studio executives treated him like a boy. Despite the evidence of superior performances in *Shane* and at least four other pictures, he could not shake off the self-doubts about his talent.

Behind that talent was one of the nicest human beings who ever became a Hollywood star. Humble, conscientious on the set, gracious to interviewers, accessible to fans, honorable in business dealings, loyal to friends and family, he was almost too nice to survive in that jungle of inflated egos and deception. The bittersweet story of Alan Ladd is one of a good man who yearned to be up there on the screen but who didn't want to stand in the limelight and realized too late that he couldn't have one without the other. ■

NOTE-- Tune in TWTD May 8 for a four-hour Salute to Alan Ladd.

Street & Smith: FROM PULPS TO RADIO

BY MATTHEW J. MIDLOCK

ACTION!... THRILLS!... SUSPENSE!
This is what audiences craved. They wanted heroes larger than life, helpless heroines, and villains more evil than the devil. The pulp fiction magazines were the first place people looked for a dose of nail-biting adventure.

Many heroes were born out of these hastily-written and manufactured magazines. These magazines filled a void in peoples lives during the years of the Great Depression. Individuals sought an escape from the worries of the world. Monetary problems combined with the overshadowing horror of Nazi Germany made folks seek escape. This liter-

Matthew Midlock of Joliet, Illinois is a fan of old-time radio and pulp adventure stories.

ary escape was brought to its peak by the publishing company of Street & Smith.

Action, suspense, and intrigue could be found in the fantastic pulp adventures of *The Shadow*, *Doc Savage*, and *The Avenger*.

These pulp heroes had adventures both thrilling and preposterous. Their adventures took them around the world and into the lairs of some of the most despicable and terrifying super-villains ever known. Of course, these stories were perfectly suited for the radio. Many of these heroes made the cross-

over very successfully; some were not so successful.

The most famous and successful of these pulp/radio crossovers was *The Shadow*. Strangely enough, the Shadow's creation was unintentional. In 1930, Street & Smith attempted to boost sales by creating a radio show that featured stories adapted from



DAVE DENWOOD COLLECTION

FROM PULPS TO RADIO

their *Detective Story Magazine*. A "mysterious host" gimmick was added, and this host was named *The Shadow*. Instead of people buying *Detective Story Magazine*, folks asked about "that magazine with *The Shadow*." Street & Smith hired Walter B. Gibson to create a new series that featured a mysterious character called "The Shadow."

April of 1931 brought to newsstands *The Shadow Magazine*. The magazine started off monthly, but soon became bi-weekly with issue number fifteen because of the increased popularity. Some 325 *Shadow* stories were written by Gibson from April, 1931 to the Summer of 1949. For five seasons, the radio show used only

The Shadow characters an outside entity, narrating and commenting on the stories. In 1937, *The Shadow* became the crime-fighter everyone is familiar with today.

There were many inconsistencies between the radio *Shadow* and the pulp *Shadow*. The pulp *Shadow* was just that a shadow. Little evidence to his real identity is given. Lamont Cranston does appear in the pulps, but he is just a side character and *The Shadow* only "borrows" his identity at times. *The Shadow's* pulp alter-ego was Kent Allard, a WWI aviator.

This fact is given in *The Shadow Unmasks* (August 1, 1937). There is also indication that he was horribly disfigured in the war and that would account for his distance from society and his masterful disguise work. Also of note, it has been observed that *The Shadow* was the inspiration of Bob Kane's *Batman*.

The radio *Shadow* was Lamont Cranston, wealthy millionaire-playboy who seemed to stumble into problems and solved them with the *Shadow's* mysterious finesse! The "power to cloud men's minds" was never mentioned in the pulps! *The Shadow* of the pulps did seem to possess an uncanny knack for hiding in the shadows and escaping notice, but a simple flick of a light switch

could still reveal his identity. The radio and pulp *Shadows* were magnificent in their own rights, in spite of the many differences between them. Their success in both mediums assure longevity and everlasting popularity of this fictional character.

Another fantastic pulp hero was *Doc Savage*. He was created by Lester Dent, writing under the house name of Kenneth Robeson, with his first adventure being published in March, 1933. Doc is a supreme adventurer who travels around the world doing good and fighting evil along



DAVE DENWOOD COLLECTION

with his friends, "the Fabulous Five." Doc's father is killed in the freshman story *The Man of Bronze*, and while he and the Fabulous Five track down the killer, they find a Mayan city that offers Doc and unlimited supply of gold. Month after month, Doc and the Five traverse the globe, tracking down super-villains and stopping their evil plots to overthrow the world.

His headquarters, although not explicitly stated, are on the eighth floor of the Empire State Building. They consist of a complete informational library and a full scientific laboratory. The basement houses a complete fleet of vehicles at Doc's disposal. At the waterfront, a warehouse, called the Hildago Trading Company, houses sea and air vehicles.

Doc Savage is, essentially, a perfect specimen of manhood. Physically he resembles a person in good shape, but in reality he has the strength of ten men. He is continually described as having thick, muscular, corded arms, much like braided piano wire. His face is expressionless, even when in times of great stress; this contributes to Doc's great mental ability. These physical attributes were made possible by Doc's father who started a two-hour physical exercise regimen that Doc takes every day without fail.

His five companions are each wealthy

and crave adventure. Each is an expert in their respective fields. "Monk" is an expert chemist; "Ham" is a respected Harvard lawyer; "Renny" is a civil and mechanical engineer; "Johnny" is an archaeologist and geologist; and "Long Tom" is an electrical expert. Each, although experts, cannot top Doc's intelligence for he is an expert in each of their fields and beyond.

One would think that Doc's exploits would make for perfect radio show material, but that does not seem to be the case. Unfortunately, precious little information has survived on Doc's radio tenure, not even cast listings can be found; only logs remain.

The show was originally a 15-minute adventure serial that was nationally syndicated in October, 1934



Since the shows were just 15 minutes, the cast consisted only of Doc and two members of the Fabulous Five, Monk and Ham. The only surviving information are 26 photocopied scripts that Lester Dent himself had saved.

The scripts are action-packed and full of the adventure Doc fans are familiar with. Since apparently no recordings exist, and very little about the show is known, one can only wonder why the show did not match the success of *The Shadow*. Both of the characters were vying for popularity and had excellent writers behind them.

FROM PULPS TO RADIO

This lost show will always be one of radio's mysteries.

Doc was given another shot in 1943... sort of! Street & Smith started a *Doc Savage* comic book that turned Doc into a blue-blooded superhero with super-strength and hypnotic powers! Another radio show was based on this awful comic book. Many of the scripts do exist, but one can understand why that show met with failure. Still another radio series of 13 episodes, covering two of Doc's adventures, was broadcast on National Public Radio in 1985. This series was, without a doubt, the best adaptation of the original *Doc Savage* stories.

Doc Savage was given three chances at radio stardom but, unfortunately for his legion of fans, none of them succeeded. One can only wonder what that original 15-minute show must have sounded like, and what the circumstances surrounding its demise must have been.

After Street & Smith's success with *The Shadow* and *Doc Savage*, they were desperately trying to create another successful adventure magazine to finish off their triumvirate of thrills. They decided to attempt a creation that would combine the best aspects of both *Doc Savage* and *The Shadow*. This character would have Doc's lust for adventure, but still retain the crime-fighting aesthetic of *The Shadow*. They named the new character *The Avenger*.

The Avenger was Richard Henry Benson: a wealthy adventurer who was ready to retire and enjoy the rest of his life with his wife and children, when tragedy struck. His family, while on a flight over the Great Lakes, simply vanished without a trace. The shock of this sends him to the hospital where his black hair turns white and his face takes on a dead, expressionless appearance. His face is frozen in this death mask, but he finds that his skin is pliable and that

he can mold it like clay. This enables Benson to be a master of disguise.

The September, 1939 issue of *The Avenger* was written by Paul Erndst, also under the pseudonym Kenneth Robeson. Erndst was an outstanding writer who was seeking to get out of the pulps and into the "slicks" at the time Street & Smith approached him to helm *The Avenger*. Because the pay was good, Erndst took the job and approached the writing as just that — a job. This seems to be the reason why the series suffered. The plots were mechanical, some being incredibly similar to *Doc Savage* and *Shadow* plots. The slipshod character development led to a stagnant character, one who had the potential to lead as long and interesting of a life as Doc and *The Shadow*!

Believe it or not, *The Avenger* made it to radio on July 18, 1941 and lasted until November 3, 1942.

There was also a second *Avenger* series, syndicated in 1945-46. Few of the original recordings exist and the caliber of the show is best described by John Dunning: "It was a poor man's version of *The Shadow*." This is interesting because many of the scripts were written by Walter B. Gibson of *Shadow* fame!

In all, Street & Smith had a very illustrious run in both radio and print. They spawned a program that will forever be synonymous with vintage radio: *The Shadow*. They also created two characters that would define the genre of pulp adventure fiction: *Doc Savage* and, again, *The Shadow*.

The fact that these characters are still remembered and still live on in the hearts of fans is a testament to the writing talents of Street & Smith's authors. ■

NOTE-- Tune in to TWTD May 1 to hear radio episodes of The Shadow and The Avenger.

Remembering The Field Museum

BY C. MACKEY

Everyone has a childhood story that haunts them throughout their lives—you know, the one told by your relatives to embarrass you. I suppose, mine isn't as bad as many. It occurred when I was about three years old. At that time, Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History showed nature films for children every Saturday morning; my mom took me there to see my first movie. As the story goes, I was very disturbed because a baby bear was lost in the woods and couldn't find its mother. I watched and watched as long as I could; and finally, unable to contain my dismay any longer, I stood on my chair, pointed, and shouted for all to hear, "Go that way, Little Bear!"

I don't remember that particular visit to the Field Museum; I remember, however, lots of others—none of which were as traumatic.

Our museum day always began with an exciting train ride on the Illinois Central Commuter Railroad. A courageous trek on the shaky wooden trestle over the tracks and highway plus a short walk brought us to the front of the imposing museum building. Eagerly we would run up countless stairs, step through stately columns and a massive doorway, and enter an immense hall.

My spirit was immediately numbed as we entered the museum. I never felt so small or so insignificant as I did when I stood in the main hall of the Field Museum. It was an enormous room, one that stretched in each direction as far as I could see and seemed high enough to reach the sky. Walls and ceiling were painted white, further emphasizing its magnitude. Two enormous, stuffed elephants towered above us in the center of the hall. Signs invited us to touch the gigantic beasts, and we never failed to do so. They were supposed to feel like leather, but I remember they felt more like stone: stiff, rough, and very cold.

Our routine never varied. First we'd head for the exhibits on Native Americans, or Indians as we called them back then. I know now that the museum presented artifacts and information outlining the different lifestyles of Plains, Woodlands, Pacific Northwest,

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and other Indians. My perceptions, however, were shaped by the movies and remained firm. All Indians lived in teepees, dressed in animal skins and feathered headdresses, hunted with bows and arrows, corresponded with the white man through sign language, and scalped their enemies.

We would ignore numerous display cases filled with everyday items that would have dispelled the Hollywood myths and hurry to those housing stone weapons and tools. Rows and rows of hatchets, spears, bows, and arrows—each decorated with paint and feathers—reaffirmed my limited knowledge of the first Americans. I still remember the models of tall warriors poised to launch long spears or pointed arrows. I recall, too, my uneasiness as I stared up at them.

Our second stop was across the main hall where we'd wander

through the stuffed animal displays. Lions, bears, zebras, and every other imaginable beast were presented in glass cases for our examination. Some animals were positioned against painted backdrops depicting their habitats. Others stared at us from barren cases in the middle of the floor; these animals always looked terribly lonely but encouraged inspection from all angles. I remember discreetly searching for bullet holes and stitching. As a kid, it was especially entertaining to look for evidence as to how the animals had died or how they had been put back together. Sadly, I never found any indication of either.

The dinosaur hall was up the stairs and next on our agenda. The names of the different dinosaurs and their correct pronunciations were well known to every child in my school. It's funny how even today kids can easily rattle off those long, difficult titles: tyrannosaurus, triceratops, diplodocus, pterodactyl, and archaeopteryx. Once grown up, however, those same individuals stutter and stammer over the identical words.

Bones outlining massive shapes stood in the middle of the room. It was difficult to envision these forms as animals; they looked more like giant jigsaw puzzles created by someone with a vivid imagination. Painted on the walls were large colored murals picturing the colossal animals in the flesh against backgrounds of rocky soil, exotic plants, and vast swamps. Examining them, made it slightly easier to visualize the dinosaurs as real animals that once roamed our earth—but only slightly.

I was astonished to discover that the brains of the dinosaurs were tiny and also that vegetation was the sole diet for many of them. Translated to my young mind as



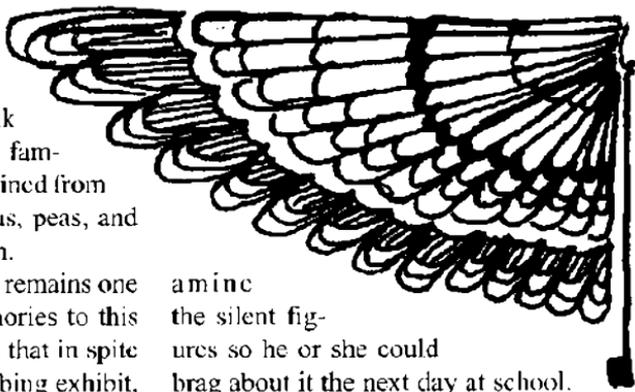
vegetables, this fact cinched the case against eating anything green. I'm not sure if I thought my brain would shrink or I'd outgrow my home and family. At any rate, I happily abstained from things like broccoli, asparagus, peas, and green beans from that time on.

Exploring the dinosaur hall remains one of my favorite museum memories to this day. I must confess, however, that in spite of this magnificent and absorbing exhibit, dinosaurs never seemed like true animals to me—at least, not like those on the floor below.

Lunch in front of the aquatic dioramas followed. I remember observing colorful fish in all sizes and shapes suspended against bright, blue backdrops as we ate our peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Mounted shark jaws and whale bones were especially fascinating and were more closely investigated when we finished eating.

After lunch came the high point of the day: mummies. I can still picture entering the dimly lit rooms which held the remains of Ancient Egypt. Quiet as a tomb—I know where that expression came from. It was always quiet—very, very quiet. No one ever spoke above a whisper in this section of the museum. I probably didn't understand how old things were; even now, it's difficult to fully comprehend the passage of 5,000 years. I did, however, understand about mummies. I knew those gray, shaggy bundles were once real people.

The mummies lay in a neat row across the back wall. It was eerie walking between the display cases of stone items and strange markings to see them, but that's where we headed first. Every kid was thrilled to ex-



amine the silent figures so he or she could brag about it the next day at school.

As I gazed at them, I always thought about a favorite radio program, *The Shadow*—an enigmatic character who was in reality Lamont Cranston. Years before in the Orient, Cranston had learned a strange and mysterious secret: the hypnotic power to cloud men's minds so they could not see him.

In an episode sometime during my childhood, he solved a crime in a local museum. I don't remember much about it except that the caretaker of the museum was a little crazy. He explained to Cranston that the mummies didn't like visitors and that when the museum closed, they came alive and talked to him.

I suppose I always suspected this was false, that it was merely "good radio." However, like all kids, it was great fun to gaze at those ancient figures and watch for signs of life. Our trip to the museum was doubly fun if we thought we saw one of them move.

I must admit that even today, I catch myself watching closely for a flicker of an eyelid or a slight movement of a wrapped limb and, just for a moment, wondering if indeed the mummies do come alive at night.

Who knows . . . ? The Shadow knows. ■



REMEMBERING HOPPY!

BY CHARLES CHAMBERLIN

A year or so in preparation for a move halfway around the world, I cleaned out the attic in a home I had lived in for 25-plus years. Tucked away in an uncleaned corner was the old family Motorola floor model radio.

As I dusted the cabinet, my memories of sitting on the floor on Saturday nights flooded my mind. When I tuned in (in my mind), the radio's hiss was slowly transformed into the narrative that I anxiously waited to hear.

The most famous hero of the all... Hopalong Cassidy... starring William Boyd. The ring of the silver spurs heralds the most amazing man ever to ride the prairies of the early west... Hopalong Cassidy! The same Hoppy you cheer in motion pictures...

I did cheer him in motion pictures and regularly listened on the radio. As a boy I could actually see him in my imagination, too. The tall, silver-haired cowboy with the infectious laugh, dressed in black, strode purposefully toward the bad guy. Guns holstered, ready to teach him a lesson. I visualized, too, the diminutive side-kick California (thank goodness he wasn't from Louisiana) Carlson, tagging along.

If you were a fan of western fiction anytime from the turn of the Twentieth Cen-

Charles Chamberlin, formerly of Chicago, lives in Hong Kong with his wife, a Hopalong Cassidy lunch box, Hopalong Cassidy wrist watch, Hopalong Cassidy camera, and a full set of Hopalong Cassidy milk glasses. He believes he is the only member of the Hopalong Cassidy Savings Club in China. Chamberlin also has a cat named Lucky Jenkins.



William Boyd

tury to the middle of the 1950s, the name Hopalong Cassidy was magic. From 1905 until 1935 he was Clarence Mulford's red-headed, hard-drinking, tobacco-chewing ranch hand who was the protagonist in a series of popular short stories and novels. But in 1935, the real (or was it reel) hero developed. It was Hoppy, in the person of William Boyd, the confident black-garbed children's hero who rode across America's movie screens on the great white horse Topper. Boyd was the star of 66 Hollywood Hopalong features. In the 1950s, he starred in another 106 Cassidy television shows.

But some less-remembered Hoppy stories are the radio dramas that played from 1948 to 1950. *My Hoppy*. During those years at least 52 transcribed episodes were broadcast on the Mutual network. Then CBS picked up the western series, broadcasting an estimated 52 more.

Between the movies, television and radio, William Boyd may have been the first entertainment superstar. Time Magazine said, "Boyd made Hoppy a veritable Galahad of the range, a soft-spoken paragon who did not smoke, drink, or kiss girls, who tried to capture the rustlers instead of shooting them and who always let the villain draw first if gunplay was inevitable."

His popularity was truly amazing.

In 1950, the TV shows were shown on 38 stations (remember how few TV stations there were in 1950), sponsored by Silvercup bread. Post Grape-Nuts cereal sponsored the man in black on an additional 500-plus radio stations. Every Sunday 70 newspapers featured a Cassidy comic strip, just in case you hadn't seen or heard enough of Hoppy during the week. Also, in 1950, over 14 million Hopalong Cassidy comic books were sold.

In the field of licensing, Boyd was the king! He had purchased the rights to the Hoppy character and, starting with the TV series, he authorized 73 separate manufacturers to create "Hoppywear" cap pistols, badges, buttons, watches, cameras, binocu-



lars, TVs, radios, costumes, foods, hair care products, glass and silver ware, and paper goods, all bearing the Hopalong logo.

Even today an Internet search will probably bring you 200 or 300 items if you are looking to purchase some youthful memories.

Time Magazine reported, in still another measure of his popularity, that there was a shortage of black dye because all the young Hoppy fans were buying it and coloring their pants and shirts black, to emulate their hero.

During his nearly 20 years in the spotlight Hoppy had many sidekicks, including Gabby Hayes, Lucky Jenkins, Jimmy Rogers, and, once, even his wife Grace Bradley. On the radio, Andy Clyde was his loyal and long-lasting deputy.

William Boyd modeled Hoppy's on-screen persona to match his own. By his own admission, Boyd was quite a "hellraiser" in his youthful, pre-Hoppy years. But the success of the cowboy hero's upstanding character influenced the actor's private post-Hoppy life.

He became known as a charitable man,

REMEMBERING HOPPY

donating a portion of the profits of his empire to children's hospitals and group homes for injured and sick youngsters. He had a big heart and felt an affinity for the underprivileged children, who adored him. Boyd once said, "The way I figure it, if it weren't for the kids, I'd be a bum today. They're the ones who made my success possible."

William Boyd retired in 1953, moved to Palm Springs, California with his wife Grace, and lived peacefully, always happy to greet the occasional fan and sign autographs. In 1968 he was discovered to have cancer and underwent a serious operation. He remained in seclusion after that until his death in 1972 at the age of 87.

For me, in that attic, and for the millions of Hoppy fans, he lives on in his movies, TV shows and radio broadcasts.

We still remember Hoppy's Creed: "The highest badge of human honor a person can wear is honesty. Be truthful at all times. Don't be lazy. Don't be a show-off. Be neat and clean. Practice thrift in all ways. Be glad and proud you are an American." Still good advice.

Boy, I wish that old Motorola still worked! ■

NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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Our Readers Write WE GET LETTERS

ADDISON, IL-- We rarely miss a Saturday. Your personal comments (and those of Ken Alexander) are enjoyable and bring back memories. We were at your 20th Anniversary party at River City and *that* seems long ago! --**ED ANDREWS**

LISLE, IL-- As a long time listener, since WLTD, Evanston days, a *Digest* subscriber and MGM shopper, I truly appreciate your efforts in keeping old time radio alive. Your recent airing of "Railroad Hour" was great. I wish you'd give us more such musical programming. "Bell Telephone Hour" and particularly "Chicago Theatre of the Air" would also be most welcome. I'm also glad to see you bringing back more "Speaking of Radio" interviews, too. Would love to hear your tapes of the "I Love A Mystery" crew again, especially the one with Jim Boles and Russell Thorsen. --**JOHN G. LASTOFKA**
(ED. NOTE-- The Boles and Thorsen interviews will be coming up later this year.)

CHICAGO-- My wife and I really enjoy the Saturday afternoon radio program you broadcast on WNIB. We particularly like the Jack Benny shows. In addition, I found the broadcasts you did from 1991 through 1995 on the weekly World War II news summary absolutely fascinating. The *Nostalgia Digest* is a joy to read. Ken Alexander's stories about the city and particularly about the West Side are just wonderful. Is there any chance that Mr. Alexander's stories could be compiled into a single book? I'd buy it! --**GEORGE SEARLES**

BARTLETT, IL-- I can't tell you how much I enjoy the *Digest*, but my Mom loves it more than me and that's why I'm renewing her gift subscription for another year. She loves all the stories, especially Ken Alexander's stories. They really take her back to the good old days of growing up in Chicago. --**SCOTT RANELLO**

CHICAGO-- I've been enjoying your program for the past 20 years and it has become an important part of my weekend. --**ROBERT KOSTICAK**

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PHOTOFEEST

← **ALAN LADD**

(shown with Veronica Lake in *The Blue Dahlia*) was an actor with doubts. The story, as told by Clair Schulz, begins on page 26.

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