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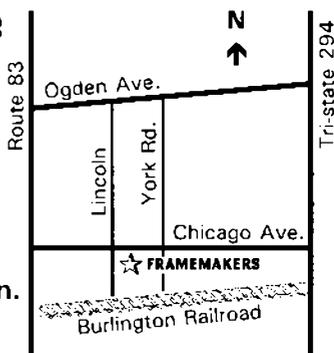
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As Heard on *Those Were The Days* Every Saturday

Not RAINmakers! **FRAMEMAKERS!**

Good-bye WMAQ Radio

BY CHUCK SCHADEN

I grew up listening to WMAQ, Chicago. The station didn't get much of my attention in the late afternoon, 'cause I was listening to the kids' shows on WGN and WENR. The only time I listened to the daytime soap operas on WMAQ was when I might have been home with a head cold or sore throat and unable to go to school.

But WMAQ certainly got my attention during the evening when so many of the great NBC network shows were carried on the station: Jack Benny, Charlie McCarthy, Fred Allen on Sundays; *Fibber McGee and Molly*, Bob Hope and Red Skelton on Tuesdays; *Duffy's Tavern*, Kay Kyser's *Kollege of Musical Knowledge* and *Mr. District Attorney* on Wednesdays; *Life of Riley* and *Truth or Consequences* on Saturday. These and so many other great shows came to our family on WMAQ during radio's Golden Age.

We didn't think about it at the time, but WMAQ was probably the most profes-

A major portion of this article appeared in the Chicago Sun-Times on July 30, 2000 and is reproduced with permission.

Tune in to Those Were The Days October 7 for a salute to radio station WMAQ.

sional station in Chicago. The network programs were wrapped in the glorious setting of first-class staff announcers and quality local programming.

But now, Chicago's oldest broadcast institution has been forced into early retirement, another victim of merger, consolidation and downsizing. With the stroke of a pen and the stroke of a clock, radio station WMAQ closed down



on August 1.

WMAQ was big-time radio in Chicago.

Comedian Ed Wynn made his radio debut on WMAQ, as did band leaders Wayne King and Vincent Lopez, along with Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians. The station even had its own "house band," the 44-piece NBC Chicago Orchestra, under the baton of Joseph Gallichio.

It was the first Chicago station to carry play-by-play baseball when, in 1925, program director Judith Waller convinced William Wrigley that America's favorite pastime had a future on radio. The first Cubs' game was broadcast on WMAQ on April 20 (The Cubs beat the Pittsburgh Pirates 2-1.) Later in the year, WMAQ added college football to its schedule and listeners heard an exciting game between the University of Chicago and the University of Kentucky (Chicago won, 9-0). → →

GOOD-BYE WMAQ RADIO

Throughout radio's "golden age" WMAQ contributed mightily to NBC's network programming, providing listeners from coast-to-coast with such Chicago-originated programs as *Amos 'n' Andy*, *Fiber McGee and Molly*, *First Nighter*, *Lights Out*, *Curtain Time*, and *Grand Hotel*. *Vic and Sade*, the *Quiz Kids*, the *Contented Hour*, and Red Skelton's *Avalon Time* were other nationally broadcast programs beaming from WMAQ's Merchandise Mart studios.

Those state-of-the-art studios were also the broadcast home for a bevy of daytime dramas or soap operas: *Ma Perkins*, *Story of Mary Marlin*, *Backstage Wife*, *The Guiding Light*, *Today's Children*.

Like most radio stations in the early years, news was not a priority at WMAQ until the beginnings of World War II. Then, with the national and international resources of NBC, and a growing local news department, the station became a major source of news for listeners in the Middle West.

Among the most popular of the locally produced programs over the years was *The 400 Hour*, sponsored by the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad and featuring Norman Ross (Sr.) with an hour of classical music and friendly commentary each morning at 7. The show ran for more than 20 years.

All of the local voices heard on WMAQ

WHAT HAPPENED TO 'WHEN RADIO WAS'?

When WMAQ went off the air on August 1st, *When Radio Was* went with it. But the old-time radio series hosted by Stan Freberg moved to WBBM 780AM and is now heard Monday thru Friday at Midnight. See schedule on page 25.

were of network caliber. Listeners tuned in and enjoyed such local stars as Clifton Utley, Alex Drier, Len O'Connor, Art Hellyer, Dave Garroway, Jim Hurlbut, Everett Mitchell, and Tom Duggan.

Anyone applying for a staff announcer's job at the station had to have a good deal of experience at a "lesser" station and they had to possess a "network sounding" voice, which included "a great set of pipes," before they were even considered for the job.

Candidates for announcers' positions at WMAQ had to pass a difficult audition, fighting their way —without error— through dramatic scenes, commercials, comedy sketches, classical music introductions, and a pronunciation test that began: *An egregious envoy with a lugubrious and dour countenance and a proboscis of lamentable length is the narrator of our story.*

A WMAQ staff announcer was much envied and respected by his peers at every radio station in town. The Announcers' Lounge at the Merchandise Mart, over the years, was home to a virtual Who's Who of great voices: Hugh Downs, Myron (Mike) Wallace, Harlow Wilcox, Truman Bradley, Bill Griskey, Henry Cooke, Norman Barry, Ed Grennan, Jim Hill, George Stone, and so many others.

All of this quality was evident on the air. Listeners who tuned to WMAQ were rewarded with first class radio from the very beginning.

In the late 1940s and early '50s the sound of radio was changing in America, in Chicago and, in particular, at WMAQ.

Network originated programming — drama, comedy, variety shows— was fading away as NBC turned its attention to television.

WMAQ was rarely asked to produce "live" shows for the network, but the station continued to provide quality local programming with such personalities as Dave

WMAQ

RADIO HISTORY

The station was originally called WGU, and was owned by the Fair Store (formerly on State at Adams and Dearborn). The license was issued March 29, 1922 by the Radio Division of the Bureau of Navigation, United States Department of Commerce. WGU's first broadcast was April 12, 1922. Later that year, the *Chicago Daily News* took an interest in radio and September 29, 1922, became co-owners of WGU with the Fair Store. They applied for and received new, sequentially-issued call letters for the station.

On October 2, 1922, WMAQ went on the air.

By the next year the *Daily News* had acquired full ownership of the station, increased power from 100 to 1000 watts, moved from studios in the Fair Store to the LaSalle Hotel, and switched from 833 to 760 to 670 kilocycles on the radio dial.

In 1927 WMAQ became an affiliate of the National Broadcasting Company in a relationship that lasted for only eight months, when the station joined the Columbia Broadcasting System as a charter member of the network. By 1930, WMAQ had moved to studios in the newly opened Merchandise Mart.

In 1931 the National Broadcasting Company purchased a half-ownership in WMAQ and the station switched its affiliation from CBS to NBC. The next year NBC purchased the remaining half-interest and WMAQ became an owned and operated station of the National Broadcasting Company.

The FCC authorized an increase in transmitter power to 50,000 watts and NBC operated WMAQ as its Midwest Flagship Station.

Garroway (with his *11:60 Club*) and Jack Eigan (who broadcast a late-night celebrity interview program from the Chez Paree night club and Bob Arbogast (who did a five-nights-a-week comedy satire show live from the Merchandise Mart).

By the middle 1960s WMAQ had basically departed from their modified "golden age" programming and moved into a middle-of-the-road music format until the early 1970s when on-air personalities started playing fewer records and became talk show hosts.

WMAQ adopted a country music programming format in 1975 and stayed with it until 1984 when the station devoted its talents to talk radio.

News and news analysis had been an important part of the WMAQ schedule throughout the years and the station adopted its final format of "all-news" in 1988.

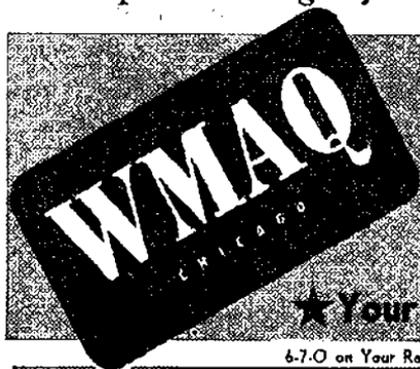
In 1985 RCA, the parent company of the National Broadcasting Company, was sold to General Electric and in 1988 GE sold WMAQ to Westinghouse. Purchases, mergers and ownership management changes have taken place since that time.

As a result, after 78 years, the historic WMAQ call letters have been retired, along with the legacy of the thousands of people who gave voice to one of the nation's great radio stations.

'Tis a pity.



Complete Listings of All WMAQ Radio Programs!



★ 1953
Radio Program
Schedule & Guide

★ Your NBC Station in Chicago

6-7.0 on Your Radio

Sunday, December 28, 1952

Souvenir Issue

Tell Mother to
save this lift-out
for reference, Kathy!

★ Robert Young
and his radio daughter
heard on
"Fisher Knows Best"
(WMAQ, Thursdays,
7:30 P. M.)

★ 8
FULL PAGES
of Your
Favorite
Radio Stars
and
Shows!



★ 100
Pictures of
WMAQ—NBC
Radio Personalities!

★ Your 1953
Who's Who
on Radio!

★ Save This Souvenir!
Keep Near Your Radio!

DIAL 6-7.0 on your R.A.D-I-O for a Happy New Year!

CHICAGO RADIO STATION WMAQ inserted this eight-page supplement in the Chicago Herald-American on Sunday, December 28, 1952. It offered readers a look at the NBC station's complete program schedule for the new year 1953. This interesting and nostalgic marketing

WMAQ

Sunday's Top Highlights

(Note: WMAQ Opens Sunday Broadcasting at 8 A. M.)

10:00 A. M.**IT'S A SMALL WORLD**

• Foreign travelers interviewed by Mrs. Louise Leonard Wright of Institute for International Education

11:00 A. M.**DOWNTOWN WITH HELLYER**

• Why charter and recorded music with Art Hellyer for Downtown Natl.

1:30 P. M.**AMERICAN FORUM OF THE AIR**

• Theodore Grant moderates a panel of well-known personalities

2:30 P. M.**ON THE LINE WITH CONSIDING**

• Bob Corndine fleshes you out, listing features customary for Mutual Benefit of Omaha

4:00 P. M.**HOLLYWOOD STAR PLAYHOUSE**

• A dramatic showcase of stars and new stories for the Bakers of America

4:30 P. M.**COUNTERSPY**

• Being tales of the undercover spooks at war with America's enemies presented by Gulf Oil

5:00 P. M.**ADVENTURES OF THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL**

• Marjorie Garing plays the London dandy during French revolutionary days

7:00 P. M.**PHIL HARRIS... ALICE FAYE SHOW**

• A couple with funny friends and crazy situations sponsored by RCA Victor

7:30 P. M.**THEATER GUILD ON THE AIR**

• U. S. Street's hour-long dramatic series with top Hollywood stars

8:30 P. M.**DRAGNET**

• Chesterfields bring authentic stories of police in action starring Jack Webb

9:00 P. M.**BARRIE CRAIG, CONF. INVESTIGATOR**

• William Gargan dives into mystery and murder—as Emerson Drug's private eye

10:00 P. M.**CLIFTON UTLEY AND THE NEWS**

• Latest news and commentary for Ches. A. Stevens & Co.

Here's Other Enjoyable Sunday Shows!

- 8:25 A. M.—WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS
- 9:00 A. M.—NATIONAL RADIO PULPIT
- 9:30 A. M.—ART OF LIVING
- 9:45 A. M.—RADIO PARADE
- 10:15 A. M.—YOUTH BRINGS YOU MUSIC
- 12:00 Noon—THE ETERNAL LIGHT
- 12:30 P. M.—UNIV. OF CHGO. BOUND TABLE
- 1:00 P. M.—THE CATHOLIC HOUR
- 2:00 P. M.—CITY DESK
- 2:45 P. M.—CRITIC-AT-LARGE
- 3:00 P. M.—THE CHASE
- 5:30 P. M.—YOUTH WANTS TO KNOW
- 6:00 P. M.—MEET YOUR MATCH
- 6:30 P. M.—THE ALDRICH FAMILY
- 7:30 P. M.—MEET THE PRES
- 10:15 P. M.—PUBLIC AFFAIRS
- 10:30 P. M.—BACK PAGE KILLSTMS
- 10:45 P. M.—DAY'S END

★ N-E-W-S

(In addition to those above)

- 8:00 A. M.
- 10:25 A. M.
- 11:25 A. M.
- 11:50 P. M.
- 1:00 A. M. (Monday)

★ NBC IN CHICAGO

2—Sun., Dec. 16, 1951

Chicago Herald-American

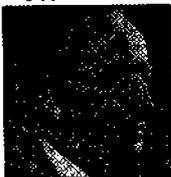
gem came to us courtesy of ART HELLYER, one of Chicago's busiest radio personalities. Art did two, one-hour shows each week on WMAQ from 1951-1956. He's now in his 53rd year on the air and can be heard Saturday mornings on WJOL, 1340 AM.

WMAQ

Monday Night Highlights

7:00 P. M.**RAILROAD HOUR**

- Gordon MacRae and his guests sing operettas

7:30 P. M.**VOICE OF FIRESTONE**

- Howard Barlow's orchestra and singing guests

8:00 P. M.**TELEPHONE HOUR**

- Donald Vanliet and his Bill Telephonics Orchestra and guest artists

8:30 P. M.**BAND OF AMERICA**

- Paul Lynde conducts a 40-piece brass band and quartet for Citrus Service

9:00 P. M.**ENCORE**

- Music starring Robert Merrill, Marguerite Flinn and Marshall W330

11:15 P. M.**PROMENADE CONCERT**

- George Jessel emcees great outdoor music for an hour and forty-five minutes

9:35 P. M.**AL GOODMAN'S MUSICAL ALBUM**

- Composer-conductor Al Goodman conducts National Radio City Orchestra

★ **Monday's**
the
Night For
MUSIC
at
6-7-0
on your
RADIO!

WMAQ

Tuesday Night Highlights

7:00 P. M.**CAVALCADE OF AMERICA**

- Top dramatic stars—like Thomas Mitchell—for DuPont

7:30 P. M.**RED SKELTON**

- Comedy with the clown and his sketches of odd characters

8:00 P. M.**MARTIN & LEWIS**

- Screened team of large writing for Chesterfields

8:30 P. M.**FIBBER MCGEE & MOLLY**

- Reynolds Maize brings you laughs from Wistful York

9:00 P. M.**TWO FOR THE MONEY**

- Herb Stober with Ted Tate and quiz for Old Gold cigarettes

9:35 P. M.**FIRST NIGHTER**

- Milton's High Life brings scenes from the "Belle Straker of Time Square"

11:15 P. M.**THE CHEZ SHOW**

- Monday, Mrs. Sunday, "Jack the Rabbit" take over at the mike and the telephone booth from the Chat Room mites

★ **Tuesday's**
TOPS
for
COMEDY
and
DRAMA
on
WMAQ-NBCI

Chicago Herald-American

Sun., Dec. 10, 1962-3

WMAQ

Mondays thru Fridays

WMAQ

(Note: WMAQ Open House/Casting at 1:10 A.M. Weekdays)

MORNINGS

7:30 A.M.



400 HOUR—NORMAN ROSS
 • Chicago's most popular musician with the old masters for CBSW R&B-why

7:55 A.M.



WILLIAM RAY & THE NEWS
 • WMAQ's own chief with latest news and commentary for Tabasco Federal Savings

8:00 A.M.



YOUR NEIGHBOR
 • Jans Marlowe and Kay Lena with music, news, temperatures and weather for Wabald's

8:30 A.M.



MUSIC THAT SINGS
 • Oscar Meyer brings you Norman Ross with the top in semi-classical music

8:45 A.M.



NORMAN F. BARRY and THE NEWS
 • Metropolitan Life brings you latest news and a roundup of local events

9:00 A.M.



WELCOME TRAVELERS
 • Procter & Gamble's Tommy Bartlett greets travelers at the Hotel Sherman

9:30 A.M.



DOUBLE OR NOTHING
 • Campbell Soup's Walter O'Keeffe plays quizmaster for his Soapbox contest

10:00 A.M.



STRIKE IT RICH
 • Colgate's Warren Hall plays Casho Club every day to needy contestants

10:30 A.M.



BOB and RAY
 • Squirrels prefer these nuts 2 to 1... presented by Colgate-Palmolive Peet

10:45 A.M.



BOB HOPE
 • Ladies' Special with Mr. Ski Moss, Bill Goodwin and Jack-O's guest editor

11:15 A.M.



LISTEN to LINDLAH
 • Victor Lindahl—Red's top authority on nutrition—tells how to keep healthy with Serolan

11:55 A.M.



JACK ANGELL and the NEWS
 • Top local and national news coverage with a newsmen who knows

★ **AND MORNING NEWSCASTS EVERY HALF HOUR!**

(In addition to those pictured above)

- 5:55—EYE OPENER—NEWS
- 6:25—STERLING DRUG NEWS
- 6:55—STEWARTS COFFEE NEWS
- 7:25—LAWN SAVINGS NEWS
- 8:25—TODAY'S HEADLINES
- 11:00—ROBERT HALL NEWS

★ **Other Norman Ross Morning Programs**

- 6:00—The Early Norman Ross
- 6:30—The Early Norman Ross
- 7:00—Norman Ross Hour
- 11:30—Here's Norman Ross



WMAQ

Mondays thru Fridays

WMAQ

(News WMAQ 11:00am Programming at 1:30 P.M. W. 11:00am)

AFTERNOON'S

12:00 NOON



MARY MERRYFIELD

• Her Journal for Women and stories about Webster County, Iowa, are popular features

12:15 P.M.



THE TRAVELERS

• Larry Wellington and his gang make music and noontime chatter

12:30 P.M.



LUNCH at the CONRAD HILTON

• Famous celebrities passing thru Chicago are interviewed at the popular P.A. Row Room

1:30 P.M.



DIAL DAY GARROWAY

• Man at work with records for Actrow and he doesn't seem try

1:45 P.M.



KURLA FRAN and OLLIE

• Delightful adventures of the Kurla's partners with Blue Ribbon and Fran AFM

1:55 P.M.



INSIDE NEWS From HOLLYWOOD

• Jay Sims has the latest from film capital for Hazel Bishop

2:00 P.M.



LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL

• Life as it revolves around Pope Dand and Chickie for Doctor & Gamble

3:15 P.M.



STELLA DALLAS

• A mother's love for her daughter — presented by Smoking Drug

3:45 P.M.



WOMAN IN MY HOUSE

• Skeletons revealed in the Carter household — presented by Sweetheart Soap

4:00 P.M.



JUST PLAIN BILL

• Small town philosopher who has time to relax — promoted by Whitehall Pharnacal

4:15 P.M.



FRONT PAGE FARRELL

• Intimate life of a man who writes headlines — presented by Whitehall Pharnacal

4:45 P.M.



THE DOCTOR'S WIFE

• The happy marriage of Jole and Dr. Dan Palmer — presented by Ex-Lax

★ **PLUS THESE TOPNOTCH AFTERNOON STORIES!**

• **2:15—ROAD OF LIFE**

Presented by Crisco

• **3:00—BACKSTAGE WIFE**

Presented by Swift

• **2:30—PEPPER YOUNG'S FAMILY**

Presented by Gandy Soap

• **3:30—YOUNG WIDDER BROWN**

Presented by Sterling Drug

• **2:45—RIGHT TO HAPPINESS**

Presented by Merry Soap and Swift

• **4:30—LORENZO JONES**

Presented by Colgate Dental Cream & P&G

Chicago Herald-American

Sun., Dec. 28, 1953-8

WMAO

Monday thru Friday Nights

★ FOR NEWS AND MUSIC!

5:00 P. M.



CLIFTON UTLEY
and THE NEWS

• One of America's top commentators brings you the best news as of the moment

5:05 P. M.



LEN O'CONNOR'S
NEWS ON THE SPOT

• Chicago's only on-the-spot tape-recorded show of news as it happened

5:15 P. M.



WED HOWARD'S
MELODY MAGAZINE

• Editor Howard reports tidbits from his magazine of the week and Edorable music

5:45 P. M.



GEORGE STONE
and THE NEWS

• Latest news and weather reported clearly and concisely for Peter Paul Goody and Realtime

6:00 P. M.



PURE OIL NEWS TIME

• H. V. Matzenborn & Richard Marlowe bring you commentary from the Nation's capital

6:30 P. M.



NEWS OF THE WORLD

• Will Muzge really reporting news recorded and direct for A&S Salow

9:30 P. M.



JOHN CAMERON SWATZE

• Most-decorated commentator brings you five minutes of News for News

10:00 P. M.



JOHN HOLTMAN
and THE NEWS

• Here's what they said today reported clearly and concisely for Robert Paul Goody

10:15 P. M.



ARBOGAST

• Listeners are talking about early comic Arbo & Pats Robinson—banded their backs!

10:45 P. M.



CLINT YOULE—
WEATHERMAN

• Capsule roundup of tomorrow's weather and temperatures all over

10:50 P. M.



TOM DUGGAN'S
SPORTS SPECIAL

• Chicago's most-listened-to sports commentator—and the most-liked about

11:00 P. M.



REPORTER-AT-LARGE

• Joe Marshall with his own colorful reports of Chicago's news and feature stories

★ Also Late News at 1:00 A.M.—following "The Chez Show" (11:15 P.M., Tues. thru Sun.)

★ AND THESE TOP-NOTCHERS NIGHTLY, TOO!

6:15 P. M.—LONGINES
SYMPHONETTE

• Longines-Withness Watches bring you the men who played before the Tour—Mikhal Piatre

6:45 P. M.—ONE MAN'S
FAMILY

• The Barbours—like the folk who live up the street—invite you into their home, courtesy of Miss Leberchies



WMAQ

Friday Night Highlights

7:00 P. M.**YOUR HIT PARADE**

• This week's top songs played by Guy Lombardo, brought to you by Lucky Strike Cigarettes

7:30 P. M.**NAME THAT TUNE**

• Red Benson tests tunes to be named by studio carterists—with NBC Hollywood Orchestra

9:00 P. M.**MEANING OF AMERICA**

• Martin Mahoney explores Americans in literature of today and yesterday with typical belated

★ **Plus These Interesting WMAQ-NBC SHOWS!**

- **8:00 P. M. BEST PLAYS**
—Hour-long dramatizations of top plays with John Chapman
- **9:35 P. M. RADIO CITY PREVIEWS**
—Behind the scenes with Radio stars and shows
- **9:45 P. M. PRO & CON**
—Leading Americans discuss Nelson's problems

WMAQ

Saturday Highlights

7:00 A. M.**THIS FARMING BUSINESS**

• Alex Dzira & Lloyd Burlington team up for Selsky OS news-reports and farm highlights

7:15-8:00-8:30**NORMAN ROSS**

• Three top shows—the last devoted to children's music—sponsored by Otton Travel, John M. Smyth & Oscar Mayer

8:45 A. M.**CARNIVAL OF BOOKS**

• Ruth Harlowe discusses latest children's books. Also author's interviews. Features Jack Lelief, as narrator

9:00 A. M.**UNCLE NED'S Squadron**

• Uncle Ned with visiting aviation stars, awards prizes to youngsters in the studio and at home

9:30 A. M.**MARY LEE TAYLOR**

• Your favorite crochets with Pet Mink's Litchie-knitted recipes. Plus Story of the Week

12:00 NOON**NATIONAL FARM and HOME HOUR**

• Profitable farm facts with Everett Mitchell presented by Allis-Chalmers

5:30 P. M.**NBC SYMPHONY**

• A name that means music at its finest with Arturo Toscanini and guest conductors

8:30 P. M.**GRAND OLE OPRY**

• Pioneers Alvin Karpis bring you Red Foley & Gussie at the old Barn Dance

SATURDAY N-E-W-S

- 5:55 A. M.
- 6:25 A. M.
- 6:55 A. M.
- 7:55 A. M.
- 11:25 A. M.
- 12:45 P. M.
- 2:35 P. M.
- 3:55 P. M.
- 4:55 P. M.
- 10:00 P. M.
- 11:00 P. M.
- 1:00 A. M. 15c.



- 5:30 A. M.—EYE OPENER
- 6:00 A. M.—EARLY NORMAN ROSS
- 6:30 A. M.—EARLY NORMAN ROSS
- 8:15 A. M.—TUNES & TIPS
- 10:00 A. M.—MY SECRET STORY
- 10:30 A. M.—HOLLYWOOD LOVE STORY
- 11:00 A. M.—ELIZABETH HART PRESENTS—
- 11:30 A. M.—TUNES & TIPS
- 11:45 A. M.—BACKYARD GARDENER
- 12:30 P. M.—HUGH DOWNS—MUSIC
- 1:00 P. M.—DOWNTOWN WITH HELLER



- 2:00 P. M.—HOUSE OF MUSIC
- 3:00 P. M.—HOUSE OF MUSIC
- 4:00 P. M.—HOUSE OF MUSIC
- 4:30 P. M.—BIG RHYTHMS—CHAS. CHAM
- 5:00 P. M.—HOLIDAY FROM HEADLINES
- 5:15 P. M.—YOUR SYMPHONY SCRAPBOOK
- 6:30 P. M.—THE 40 MILLION
- 7:00 P. M.—INSIDE BOB & RAY
- 7:30 P. M.—REHEARSAL REHEARSAL—OPERA
- 8:00 P. M.—THE WEBB KING SHOW
- 9:00 P. M.—DUDE RANCH JAMBOREE
- 10:35 P. M.—RECORDS FOR DANCING



We Want Cantor!

BY ELIZABETH MC LEOD

At the close of the 1920s, Eddie Cantor was one of Broadway's top attractions, the star of a continuing series of top-rank musical comedies. Beginning in 1910 with vaudeville amateur night shows, the former Israel Iskowitz had climbed to the top of his profession — the *Ziegfeld Follies*, *Broadway Brevities*, *The Midnight Rounders*, *Make It Snappy*, *Kid Boots*, and *Whoopee* had succeeded each other as Cantor star vehicles, and the performer had amassed a fortune.

When September 1929 began, Eddie Cantor was a millionaire five times over. By the end of October, he was \$285,000 in debt.

And by the end of 1933, he was a millionaire again.

Radio made it happen.



Elizabeth McLeod is a radio journalist and broadcast historian who lives in Rockland, Maine. She has specialized in the documentation of early 1930s radio for more than 20 years, and is currently co-writer of the CBS Radio Network program Sound-Bytes.

Many stage performers turned to broadcasting during the Depression years, as a hedge against the uncertainties of Broad-

way, but none made a more spectacular success than Eddie Cantor. He had dabbled in the medium during the late twenties, but it wasn't until 1931 that Cantor made a serious plunge into the aural medium. In February of that year, he made two important guest appearances: an appearance on the *CBS Radio Follies* series in which he performed in a broadcast adaptation of *Whoopee*, and a spot the fol-

lowing night on Rudy Vallee's *Fleischmann's Yeast Hour*. This double dose of Cantor made an impression on the audience — and on Vallee's sponsor.

Standard Brands was looking for a new attraction for its Sunday night NBC feature for Chase and Sanborn Coffee. The series had been a success earlier in the year under the Paris boulevardier Maurice Chevalier, but the French star saw broadcasting only as a fill-in chore between movie jobs, and wasn't interested in mak-

ing the arrangement permanent. Chase and Sanborn wanted a performer with panache — with charisma — with magnetism. A performer who could really seize the attention of the listening audience.

And after hearing Eddie's performance with Vallee, Standard Brands wanted Cantor.

A deal was signed that summer — and on September 13, 1931, the new *Chase and Sanborn Hour* made its debut with a bang. Eddie Cantor bounced out onto the stage at NBC's Times Square Studio in the New Amsterdam Theatre and announced that he was running for President.

The "Cantor for President" theme — and its memorable "We Want Can-tor, We Want Can-tor" chant — ran thruout the 1931-32 season, and in that grim Depression winter, something about Eddie Cantor's unapologetically anti-authoritarian message struck a note in the listening audience. Within weeks, Cantor was the focus of a nationwide craze. And no one loved him more than his studio audience.

That live audience was a critical component in the success of the show. Cantor's first several Chase and Sanborn shows were broadcast with the audience isolated behind a huge glass curtain, and in a surviving 1931 broadcast, Cantor's timing seems off. His delivery depended on audience response for best effect — and without those laughs, he seems to be talking to himself.

Cantor himself understood this problem, and finally convinced NBC to allow the glass curtain to be raised. Surviving 1933 recordings show the result — revealing Cantor as a performer who fully involved his audience in his performances. He usually appeared at the microphone in outlandish costume — in one broadcast, announcer Jimmy Wallington describes the comedian as being garbed in a full-length fur coat, a bra and girdle, silk stockings, and high heels, and the hysterical reaction of the stu-



PHOTOFEST

dio audience makes it clear that Cantor is sashaying about the stage in precisely that outfit. Cantor frequently appeared in drag during these broadcasts, and his sketches with Wallington often verged into what was then known as "nance" comedy, giving the show a well-earned reputation for outrageous innuendoes.

But it wasn't all nudge-nudge. Cantor used every trick in the comedy textbook to keep his audience laughing — broad slapstick, heavy insult comedy directed at orchestra leader David Rubinoff, and — most interestingly — frequent acknowledgement of his Jewish heritage.

Cantor's references to matzoh balls and potato pancakes and even occasional Yiddishisms are a refreshing break from the completely de-ethnicized personae favored by most radio comics, and gave Cantor's show a Lower East Side flavor absent from most other programs of the day. Conventional industry wisdom would have suggested that such an approach would have alienated rural audiences — especially in an era in which heartland anti-Semitism was on the rise — but Cantor's ratings told a different story. Eventually, Conventional Wisdom did win out — and the Cantor of the later 1930s and 1940s

WE WANT CANTOR!

became a distinctly less ethnic personality.

Cantor was obviously out to entertain the studio audience. After a lifetime on the stage, he could hardly avoid it. But did listeners at home get the full effect of his broadcasts? This is a point which was debated quite vigorously during the era of these programs, and several critics took Cantor to task for his stacy antics. The actual ratings of the program, however, seem to emphasize that listeners didn't much care what the critics thought — no other program in the history of radio ever exceeded the 58.6 Crossley rating logged by Cantor in early 1933. Clearly, Cantor was speaking to Depression America in language it could understand — falling right in line with the manic style then popular in movies. The times were desperate — and so also was the comedy. That in a sentence is the best way to explain the extraordinary popularity such performers enjoyed.

In the fall of 1934, after a wildly successful run, Cantor and Chase and Sanborn parted company. His next series, beginning in 1935 for Pebecco Toothpaste, would be streamlined to a half hour — and would set the pattern for the rest of his radio career.



Deanna Durbin and Eddie Cantor



Eddie Cantor and Dinah Shore

PHOTOFFST

The stage antics would be toned down, and increasingly, the emphasis would be on Eddie Cantor as a father figure to a parade of new young talent. By 1936, when Cantor moved on to the Texaco program, this image was crystallized — and Cantor shared the spotlight with such youthful stars as boy soprano Bobby Breen, the exquisitely-voiced Deanna Durbin, and later the torchy young jazz singer Dinah Shore. There was no shortage of comedy — although increasingly, Cantor turned the laughs over to stooges, such dialect personalities as Harry “Parkyakarkus” Einstein and Bert “The Mad Russian” Gordon.

From Texaco, Cantor moved on to Camel cigarettes — and it was during this series that his radio career hit its first major crisis — a crisis precipitated by Cantor’s unflinching sense of right and justice.

In November 1938, the popular “radio priest,” Father Charles E. Coughlin, began to make a series of broadcasts that took on an increasingly anti-Semitic, pro-German point of view. Eddie Cantor had been outspokenly opposed to the Nazi movement from the beginning — and he took

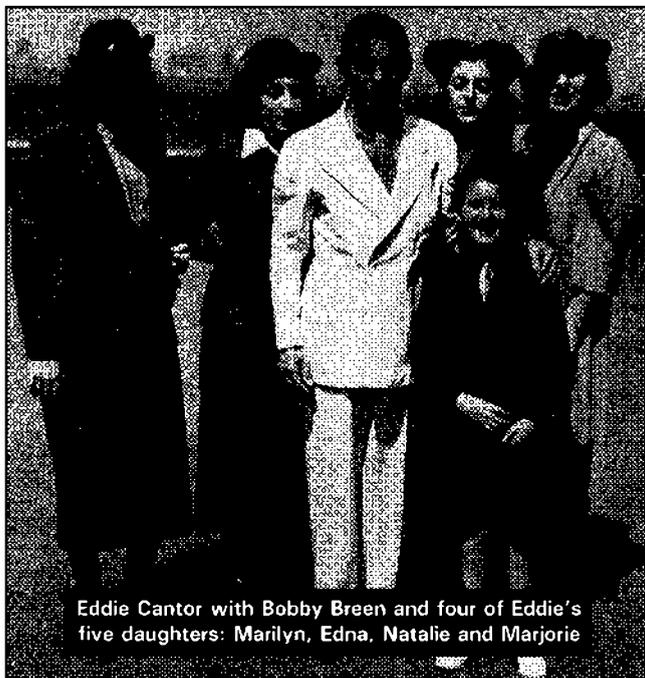
Coughlin's remarks personally. On June 13, 1939, in a speech at the New York World's Fair, Cantor took on Father Coughlin — denouncing him in a fiery address as “not only an enemy of Jews — but of all Americans!”

Coughlin's followers were extremely active, especially in New York, where there had been numerous street skirmishes in which bands of Coughlinites were charged with trying to incite violence against Jews. Against this backdrop, Cantor's comments were bound to ignite a

furor. Enraged Coughlinites flooded R. J. Reynolds Company with telegrams, and Cantor was ordered to publicly retract his comments. His response shines out as one of the gutsiest public stands ever taken by any radio performer. He absolutely refused to retract his criticism of Coughlin, or to back down in any way from his opposition to Nazism, Fascism or anti-Semitism. “Before I'm a performer,” he declared, “I'm an American — before I'm an American, I'm a Jew — and before I'm a Jew, I'm a man.”

Cantor was fired, and didn't work in radio for nearly a year. When Bristol-Myers picked him up in the fall of 1940, the agency, Young and Rubicam, circulated a memo specifically warning against any activity that would portray Cantor as “ever being guilty of having a serious thought or being capable of a serious deed.”

But Eddie Cantor's social conscience continued to shape his broadcasts, thru his commitment to charity work. In 1938, Can-



Eddie Cantor with Bobby Breen and four of Eddie's five daughters: Marilyn, Edna, Natalie and Marjorie

PHOTOFEET

tor had teamed with President Roosevelt to inaugurate the March of Dimes — a nationwide campaign against infantile paralysis, which Cantor tirelessly promoted on the air and in personal appearances. Thru the 1940s, as his radio series coasted along, Cantor became closely associated with charitable causes and good works of all kinds — taking on a sort of elder-statesman role in show business.

It was a role he would fill for the rest of his life — thru the end of his radio career and thru his years on television. When he died in 1964, Americans mourned not just a great entertainer, but a great humanitarian.

A humanitarian, yes — but one who could also be side-splittingly funny leaping around a theatre stage in women's underwear. ■

NOTE— Tune in TWTID November 18 for a four-hour salute to Eddie Cantor, who will be posthumously inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame that same date.

The Noisy, Glory Days of AM Radio

BY ED KNAPP

Today, while we listen contentedly to flawless stereo sound emerging from our television sets and FM receivers, there is little to remind us of those earlier days of only AM receivers. At best, though a wonderful invention, it failed to afford us such audio clarity.

Waiting impatiently for the expectant arrival of my teen years (I was born in 1924, about the time of radio's inception as a mass media of entertainment in the home), I became an avid radio listener of daytime and evening programming.

By the time I was six, I was particularly enthralled with the exciting daily line-up of children's late afternoon high adventure programs. These colorful fifteen-minute serial episodes were my "sweetener" for many years, happily balancing out my days of boredom behind a grade school desk.

During those golden years of early radio's amplitude modulation (AM), the media's single band claim to fame, I welcomed it wholeheartedly to our parlor, in spite of a few shortcomings.

Prior to its arrival, the only sounds heard at home were mom or dad's disciplinary orders, the piano, or scratchy records playing on the old Edison phonograph. It didn't seem to matter whether you owned a large wood console Crosley radio with "screen grid speaker," an American midget six tube All Wave cathedral-style set, or an inexpensive Emerson five-tube A.C. Heterodyne tombstone-style wooden chassis; one

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

All receivers are quoted less tubes

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ED KNAPP COLLECTION

universal problem plagued them all: loud "static" interference.

Planning my patterns of daytime and evening radio selection in advance was an exciting experience. I dialed my wave-length favorites from daily habit. Others were picked from the large format *Radio Guide* magazine, my yardstick to programs

of interests. All consuming as radio attraction was in its infancy, the amazing instrument was wrought with unseen perils cloaked in many various forms, resulting in annoying static.

Quite often, with my AM radio, I became intensely involved in the story on a serial program. Then, on the day when the plot reached a crucial point of climax, a booming thunderstorm would move into the area. The sound re-

ception of the set snapped, crackled, and popped with ceaseless static interference, as rain, wind and lightning worked their wrath. I could strain my ears, catching a single word every now and then amid the noise. The few audible words when strung together made no particular sense. Listening was a waste of time. On such occasions, I sat crestfallen, almost in tears, before my radio.

Frequent thunderstorms in the Midwest were an airwaves plague in spring, summer and sometimes in the fall. For that reason alone, I looked forward to the coming of winter when radio signals would be free of those nasty rainstorms. I dreamed with hopeful anticipation of clean, crisp sounding airwave channels that I would enjoy to the fullest measure.

Wrong!

As snow began falling, I sat before the radio in rapt attention as the tubes were warming up. About the time the sound ushered forth with bell-like clarity, mom turned on the fluorescent light fixture in the kitchen and the buzz coming out of the radio speaker was deafening.

And that was only the beginning of a string of aggravating broadcast "static" invasions.

On the days or nights when no threat was

FREE Aerial Eliminator



WITH NEW NOISE ELIMINATOR

Now . . . by simply attaching your WONDER-TONE NOISE ELIMINATOR to your radio (long or short wave) practically all distracting buzzes and ticks will vanish. Entirely different, this amazing new invention insures thrilling, clear-tone reception on local and distant stations! **SEND NO**



MONEY. Pay postman \$1.00 plus few cents postage or we will send postpaid for \$1.00 (stamps or coin) with Aerial Eliminator included **FREE**—ends the need for aerial wires! Return merchandise after 5 days' trial, if not delighted.

ED KNAPP COLLECTION

forthcoming from thunderstorms or the fluorescent light being turned on, I was ecstatic with the prospect of quiet, easy radio listening.

Next thing you know, mom got wind of friends coming over to visit. Immediately she would busy herself around the house with the vacuum cleaner. Well, if you ever tried to make any sense from an AM radio program while the vacuum is running, you know just how impossible that can be with all the static ruckus.

Such were my experiences with AM radio exasperation.

On the rare occasions when my moments of listening were free of summer storms, the kitchen fluorescent light, and the whirring vacuum cleaner, dad was using his electric shaver, with similar "crackling" results.

Adding to the noisy turmoil while I tried to listen to my radio programs, were faint station signals drifting "in" and "out;" programs overlapping or "bleeding" into one another; an annoying clickety-clack as a car with a defective ignition running while parked next to our house.

There were also incidents when children playing outside would get their feet tangled in the radio aerial wire hanging out the window and pull it loose, dropping the

strong sound signal of my program down to a faint whisper.

There seemed to be few solutions to the bug-a-boos that bedeviled AM radio receivers (interference-free FM radio broadcasting did not come into general public use until much later).

Several enterprising advertisers took out ads in *Radio Guide* in hopes of interesting perplexed radio fans, fed up with radio sound interference. The small ads read,

The new WONDER-TONE noise eliminator eradicates practically all distracting buzzes and clicks. This amazing new device insures thrilling, clear tone reception on local and distant stations, for only one dollar.

To save up for this "fix-it-all" device, I didn't go to the Saturday afternoon movie matinees for over ten weeks.

At the approach of the very next summer thunderstorm, I excitedly attached the WONDER-TONE to my radio cord. Waiting in breathless anticipation, I turned on the set, expecting my program to come in with bell-like clarity.

Wrong!

My experience with the little wonder gadget was devastating. Rather than eliminating the static caused by the storm, the kitchen fluorescent, the vacuum cleaner, dad's shaver, or any other type of noise interference, the heralded eliminator only increased the noise level to deafening proportions. So much for product science.

AM radio's days were indeed memorable to say the least. "Static" pestilence, however, took some of the joy out of listening to the wide range of marvelous entertainment made available. We folks from that period in time learned early on to just grin and bare it.

Such were the "noisy," glory days of AM radio. ■

Confessions of a Radio Lover

BY MARK WUELLNER

I've always doubted that most old time radio aficionados are able to remember the very first show they heard, or even the show that caused their lifelong love of radio. For many, their attraction towards radio didn't start because of a specific episode, but rather because radio has been a lifetime companion. I, on the other hand, can remember the exact time and place where I was when the radio bug hit me.

I think this is probably because I didn't grow up in the era of radio. I did not scurry home from school to hear the latest adventures of the Lone Ranger and his faithful companion, Tonto. In fact, if there was anything I scampered home for it was He-Man. You see, I was born in 1980—a good forty years after the heyday of radio. "Old Time" radio, as it was known by then, was a foreign term to me. It was not until I was nine years old that I first experienced old time radio.

My dad and I were driving north that evening on I-294, coming home from a long Saturday at my grandparents' house. His little, dull-red Ford Escort was keeping up with traffic, but it wasn't going fast enough for me. I wanted to get home so I could go to sleep.

As always, my dad had WBBM-AM playing on the radio, so we were getting a steady dose of news, weather and traffic. Visiting Grandma and Grandpa had worn

Mark Wuellner attends Butler University in Indianapolis and collects old time radio shows in his free time.



me out, and I was about ready to doze off. My eyes became slits, and soon the headlights from the oncoming traffic blurred together.

The voices on the radio even started to blend and become a monotonous drone, when all of a sudden, a shout roared over the speakers: "THE SEALED BOOK!!!!"

I clutched my seatbelt and looked up at my dad, who had a bemused look in his eyes. "It's just an old radio show, Mark. They're pretty neat. I think you'll like it. If you don't, go to sleep."

Normally, I trusted my dad, but in this case I wasn't so sure.

A shrill organ blast roared from the speakers and I knew that even if I wanted to sleep, I wouldn't be able to. I was a little frightened, so I said, "let's listen to some music, Dad." (This was not something I usually requested of my dad, because more often than not, I'd have to listen to him sing "Stairway to Heaven." But that night in the car, I would have picked

anything over this *Sealed Book* business.)

For some reason, my dad seemed to interpret my plea as, "Gosh, Dad, sounds cool!! Can you turn the radio up?" It looked like I had no choice but to listen to *The Sealed Book*.

As I tried to figure out how much longer it would take to get us home, the voice of an old, insane-sounding man came crackling over the air. "Let me see," he muttered ominously over the sound of pages turning. "Yes, yes... here's a tale for you. The strange tale of an old woman and three heirs, greedy for her millions. A tale I call 'Death Spins a Web'." Hmm, I thought, this might be as neat as one of my Hardy Boys books. So, with the promise of at least some treachery, my fear vanished, and I sat at full attention, waiting for the action to begin.

The program did not disappoint me. In only a half-hour, and in the privacy of my dad's car, I had born witness to a series of murders, double-crosses, and plot twists. I felt like I stood beside the characters as they plotted against one another. My imagination had been set free. I was in love with something that only half an hour ago I would have done anything to avoid.

From that on, my nine-year-old life changed drastically. No longer did I care about staying up late because my friends were allowed to. Instead, I made sure to be in bed by 8 p.m., so I would be sure not to miss another exciting night's worth of old time radio.

To this day, old time radio still fascinates me. There are times when I listen to shows and wish that I had been alive when radio was in its prime. But then I remember that special drive back from Grandma and Grandpa's house, and I know that I wouldn't trade my first experience with radio for anything. ■

NOTE— Tune in TWTD October 28 to hear an episode of The Sealed Book.



Chuck Schaden's

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

OCTOBER 2000

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7
GOOD-BYE, WMAQ CHICAGO**

After 78 years, Chicago's pioneering radio station signed off August 1 leaving behind a rich legacy that includes these programs and personalities:

CHEZ SHOW (5-15-52) *Excerpt.* Jack Eigan, "your Chicago, Broadway and Hollywood reporter" broadcasting from the Chez Lounge of Chicago's world-famous Chez Paree night club. Jack surveys the room, mentions celebrities, talks with his "mail girl," responds to listener comments, and takes a few phone calls. WMAQ, Chicago. (31 min)

NEWS ON THE SPOT (3-22-56) *Excerpt.* Newsman Len O'Connor reports on additional Chicago police patrols for the city and gets details from Police Commissioner Tim O'Connor and Mayor Richard J. Daley. WMAQ, Chicago. (7 min)

JUDITH WALLER (3-6-48) A broadcaster (Mr. Philbrook) from a radio station in Cedar Rap-



ids, Iowa interviews Judith Waller, the first station manager of radio station WMAQ, who talks about the early days of the station. (13 min)

11:60 CLUB (10-13-48) *Excerpt.* Dave Garroway plays recorded music and offers low-key comments to listeners who tune in at midnight (11:60 am). Features records by Lionel Hampton, Frank Sinatra, Kay Kyser, Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington. Multiple sponsors, WMAQ, Chicago. (32 min)

JIM HURLBUT (9-27-49) Newsman Hurlbut, a "reporter-at-large," presents a report on the local and national scene. Richmond Brothers Clothes, WMAQ. (15 min)

ARBOGAST (11-1-51) Bob Arbogast and his pal Pete Robinson present late-night comedy, satire and recorded music, along with a spoof of radio amateur hours. Sustaining, WMAQ, Chicago. (29 min)

NIGHT DESK (7-6-55) Caren Walsh, City Editor of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, presides over this "on-the-spot summary of the day's local news plus direct and transcribed reports by short wave and telephone of late-breaking news just as it happens." Covering a man-hunt in Chicago for a teen-ager who shot a policeman are mobile unit reporter John Chancellor and newsman Len O'Connor. Bill Griskey announces. Multiple sponsors. WMAQ, Chicago.

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**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14
RADIO'S FRENCH CONNECTION**

Part 1

MY FAVORITE HUSBAND (1950s) Lucille Ball and Richard Denning star as Liz and George Cooper, with Gale Gordon and Bea Benaderet as Rudolph and Iris Atterberry. A new French restaurant opens in town and Liz is worried about a menu written in French so she and Iris decide to take French lessons. AFRTS rebroadcast. (24 min)

RAILROAD HOUR (7-16-51) "Springtime in Paris" starring Gordon MacRae and Dorothy Warrenskjold offering "the great music of the City of Paris in a brand new musical play" by Lawrence and Lee. A romantic boy-meets-girl story set in the City of Lights. Association of American Railroads, NBC. (30 min)

THE WHISTLER (1940s) "Ticket To Paris" featuring Bill Forman as the Whistler. After World War II, a French woman in the U.S. lives in terror of a man who has sworn to kill her. Marvin Miller announces. Signal Oil Co., CBS. (28 min)

PHIL HARRIS-ALICE FAYE SHOW (6-12-49) Phil and Frankie Remley (Elliott Lewis) try to teach English to Frankie's adopted French orphan. First of two consecutive shows; part two next week on *TWTD*. Rexall, NBC. (29 min)

CBS RADIO WORKSHOP (7-6-56) "Portrait of Paris," a "city of contradictions." A word-picture of the French capitol, beautifully written and narrated by David Schoenbrun, veteran CBS foreign correspondent. Program includes interviews with Parisians and clips featuring Edith Piaf and Maurice Chevalier. Sustaining, CBS. (28 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (12-7-52) Jack and the gang, using French accents, present their version of Charles Boyer's 1952 picture, "The Happy Time," set in French Canada in the 1920s. Jack, naturally, plays the Boyer role. AFRTS rebroadcast. (25 min)

NOTE— Ken Alexander is guest host for this program while Chuck Schaden and a group of *TWTD* listeners are on vacation in France.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21
RADIO'S FRENCH CONNECTION**

Part 2

BURNS AND ALLEN SHOW (12-4-47) George and Gracie star with Bill Goodwin, Bea Benaderet, Howard McNear, Hal March, Harry Lubin and the orchestra. After Gracie returns from a trip to Paris, she wishes George would be more romantic. Ammident Tooth Paste, ABC. (32 min)

BIG TOWN (9-23-42) "Escape From Paris" starring Edward G. Robinson as Steve Wilson, crusading editor of the *Illustrated Press*, with Ona Munson as Lorelei Kilbourne. They're in war torn Europe, searching for an American correspondent in the French Underground. Rinso, CBS. (29 min)

PHIL HARRIS-ALICE FAYE SHOW (6-19-49) Frankie decides he needs a wife to help him care for the French orphan he has adopted. So he places an ad in the *Police Gazette*. Elliott Lewis, Walter Tetley in the second of two consecutive shows. Rexall, NBC. (29 min)

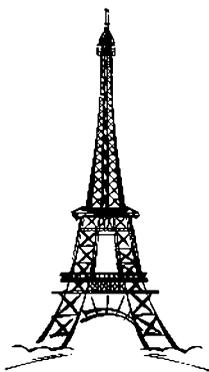
SUSPENSE (6-2-57) "Crossing Paris" starring Hans Conried in a story about the City of Paris during the Nazi occupation. Cast includes John Dehner, Ted deCorsia, Joe DiSantis, Paul Dubov. Sustaining, CBS. (28 min)

BING CROSBY SHOW (5-21-53)

From Paris, France, Bing stars with his son Lindsay Crosby, Ken Carpenter, John Scott Trotter and the orchestra, violinist Joe Venuti, and pianist Buddy Cole. Bing sings "Mademoiselle de Patee" and Lindsay sings "My Truly Fair" in French. General Electric, CBS. (30 min)

OUR MISS BROOKS (1940s) Eve Arden stars as Miss Brooks with Richard Crenna as Walter Denton, Gale Gordon as Mr. Conklin, Jeff Chandler as Mr. Boynton. Miss Brooks and Mr. Boynton have visions of teaching in Paris when an educator from France comes to town to recruit teachers for his country. AFRTS rebroadcast. (25 min)

NOTE— Ken Alexander is guest host for this program while Chuck Schaden and some *TWTD* listeners continue vacationing in France.



Those Were The Days may now be heard world wide on the Internet at www.wnib.com

Click on and tune in Saturday 1 - 5 pm Chicago (Central) time.



Chuck Schaden's

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2000

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28
ANNUAL HALLOWEEN SHOW**

SUSPENSE (6-24-42) "Wet Saturday," the story of an English family who spends a rainy Saturday thinking of ways to cover up the murder of their daughter's boyfriend. This is the second show in the *Suspense* series. Clarence Derwent stars. Sustaining, CBS. (29 min)

ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET (10-31-48) On Halloween, Ozzie decides to stay at the old McAdams house to prove to his sons that it isn't haunted. Cast includes John Brown, Jack Kirkwood, and Tommy Bernard and Henry Blair as David and Ricky. International Silver Co., NBC. (29 min)



Ozzie Nelson

CRIME CLUB (4-10-47) "Grey Mist Murders," the story of a pleasure cruise that became a floating horror. Cast features Chet Stratton, Sidney Smith, Helen Shields, Joan Alexander. Sustaining, MBS. (29 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (10-31-48) On Halloween, Jack and the Beverly Hills Beavers go trick-or-treating. Cast features Mary Livingstone, Dennis Day, Phil Harris, Don Wilson, Artie Auerbach, Mel Blanc, Verna Felton. Jack and the Sportsmen do a Halloween commercial. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (27 min)

THE SEALED BOOK (3-12-45) "The Hands of Death" is the story told by the "Keeper of the Book." It's a tale of two brothers, one of whom believes the other to be the "phantom strangler!" Syndicated, MBS. (24 min)

NOTE— Ken Alexander will join Chuck for today's program to help us reminisce about Halloween in the good old days Don't miss it if you can.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4
VOTING FOR OLD TIME RADIO**

FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (11-5-40) Jim and Marian Jordan star. The Good Government Club has offered \$250 to the election officials who bring out 100 per cent of the voters in their precinct... and the McGees have a polling place in their home at 79 Wistful Vista. Cast includes Harold Peary, Isabel Randolph, Bill Thompson, Harlow Wilcox, King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. The program is interrupted for the latest election results (Roosevelt vs. Willke) on this Election Night broadcast. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (30 min)

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (11-7-40) *Excerpt.* Hugh Conover, Reg Allen and Arthur Godfrey report on the "Presidential Special" which has just arrived at Union Station with President Roosevelt and his party, "returning to Washington from his successful Third Term campaign. All Washington has turned out at a rather early hour... to give the President a welcome..." CBS. (20 min)



Pres. Roosevelt

GREEN HORNET (10-2-40) "Votes For Sale" starring Al Hodge as Britt Reid, newspaper publisher who fights crime as the Green Hornet. In this episode, the Hornet smashes a political racket. Cast includes Paul Hughes and Ed Begley. Syndicated. (28 min)

1948 ELECTION RETURNS (11-3-48) From NBC Election Headquarters in New York, on the morning after President Harry Truman defeated Thomas E. Dewey, newsman Bob Trout, Morgan Beatty, H. V. Kaltenborn, Richard Harkness, Ray Henley and Ned Brooks (after a sleepless night) try to analyze the reasons for the upset. NBC. (30 min)

ROBERT TROUT AND THE NEWS (11-7-48)



Pres. Truman

President Truman gets a victor's welcome in Key West, Florida after his surprise election. Trout talks about Truman's plans for the future and his new Cabinet. Plus other news of the day. Pillsbury, NBC. (5 min)

LIVING, 1948 (11-7-48)

"What Happened?" is the jackpot question of the 20th Century: What happened during the 1948 Presidential Election when the Gallup Poll and other polls predicted the defeat of Truman by Dewey. Ben Grauer narrates and George Gallup, Director of the Institute of Public Opinion, is guest. Sustaining, NBC. (25 min)

GREAT GILDERSLEEVE (11-5-44) Harold Peary stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve, with Lillian Randolph, Walter Tetley, Lurene Tuttle, Earle Ross, Arthur Q. Brian, Richard LeGrand, Bea Benaderet. On the eve of the National Election, the hottest topic of conversation in Summerfield is the Mayoral race. Gildy and Judge Hooker bet on the election. Kraft Foods, NBC. (27 min)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11 REMEMBERING SPENCER TRACY

LEO IS ON THE AIR (1936) A radio movie promo for MGM's "Lilied Lady," a romantic comedy starring William Powell, Myrna Loy, Jean Harlow and **Spencer Tracy**. Transcribed. (14 min)

SCREEN GUILD THEATRE (4-21-40)

"Ninotchka" starring **Spencer Tracy** and Rosalind Russell in the radio version of Ernst Lubitch's 1939 screen comedy about a Russian agent in Paris who falls in love with a Capitalist despite their different political backgrounds. Roger Pryor hosts. Oscar Bradley and the orchestra. Gulf Oil Co., CBS. (30 min)



Spencer Tracy

YARNS FOR YANKS (1942) "Extra! Extra!" starring **Spencer Tracy** in a story by Robert E. Sherwood. AFRS. (15 min)

CHASE AND SANBORN HOUR (7-24-38) Edward Arnold hosts this variety series starring Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Dorothy Lamour, Metropolitan Opera singer John Carter, comics Claude and Clarence Stroud, and special guest **Spencer Tracy**. Music by Robert Armbruster and the orchestra. Wendell Niles announces. Tracy appears with Edward Arnold in a mini-version of the 1931 film "Five Star Final" and later joins Charlie McCarthy for a comedy bit. Chase and Sanborn Coffee, NBC. (15 min & 12 min & 31 min)

COMMAND PERFORMANCE (12-23-44) *Excerpt.* **Spencer Tracy** stars in a Christmas drama, "The Small One" featuring Lee J. Cobb, Skippy Homier, Griff Barnett, Howard Duff, Harry Bartell, Elliott Lewis. AFRS. (14 min)

OUR SPECIAL GUEST will be movie historian **BOB KOLOSOSKI** who will be on hand to talk about the film career of **Spencer Tracy** who died in 1967 after completing work on the film "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?"

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18 REMEMBERING EDDIE CANTOR

LEGEND OF EDDIE CANTOR (1971) George Jessell narrates a tribute to the legendary entertainer, featuring numerous excerpts from Cantor radio broadcasts. (16 min & 19 min)

EDDIE CANTOR SHOW (1-31-45) Eddie welcomes guests George Burns and Gracie Allen who arrive to help cheer him up on his 53rd birthday. Cast features Harry Von Zell, Leonard Seuss, Nora Martin, Bert Gordon, the Mad Russian. Bristol Myers, NBC. (28 min)

SUSPENSE (12-22-49) "Double Entry" starring **Eddie Cantor** in "an unusual story of clerical crime at Christmas time." Eddie helps his co-worker get money so he can return embezzled funds. Cast includes Sidney Miller. Harlow Wilcox announces. AutoLite, CBS. (29 min)

EDDIE CANTOR'S SHOW BUSINESS (1950s) Eddie plays disc jockey and offers nostalgic stories about his contemporaries: Sophie Tucker, Ted Lewis, Fanny Brice, Al Jolson, Will Rogers, Jimmy Durante. AFRS rebroadcast. (23 min)

→ → →

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NOVEMBER 2000

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18 REMEMBERING EDDIE CANTOR

(continued)

RAILROAD HOUR (1-3-49) "Whoopie" starring Eddie Cantor with Gordon MacRae and Eileen Wilson in a radio version of Cantor's 1928 musical, produced on Broadway by Florenz Ziegfeld. AFRS rebroadcast. (30 min)

EDDIE CANTOR SHOW (3-6-47) Eddie welcomes guest Al Jolson to exchange stories about how they first met and imitate each other's style in songs. Harry Von Zell announces. Edgar "Cookie" Fairchild and the orchestra. Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer, NBC. (30 min)

Read the cover story about Eddie Cantor on page 12.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25 RADIO TO GET INTO THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT BY

BOB HOPE SHOW (12-9-48) Guest Bing Crosby joins regulars Doris Day, Four Hits and a Miss, Jack Kirkwood, Les Brown and his band of Renown, and announcer Hy Averback. Comedy and early Christmas shopping are on the agenda. Swan Soap, NBC. (28 min)

THIS IS MY BEST (12-19-44) "The Plot to Overthrow Christmas" by Norman Corwin.

Orson Welles stars as Nero, who proposes "jazzing up" Christmas carols to do away with goodwill at Christmastime. All the baddies in Hell vote to poison Santa Claus (Ray Collins) and Nero is elected to travel to the North Pole to do the deed! John Brown appears as the Devil. Cresta Blanca Wine, CBS. (29 min)

CASEY, CRIME PHOTOGRAPHER (12-19-46) Staats Cotsworth stars as Casey, with Leslie Woods as Ann and John Gibson as Ethelbert. Tony Marvin announces. While Christmas shopping in a department store, Casey witnesses a pickpocket in action. Anchor-Hocking Glasswear, CBS. (30 min)

STARS OVER HOLLYWOOD (12-12-53) "Time For Christmas" starring Anita Louise. A young girl tries desperately to get her mother a cuckoo clock for Christmas. Carnation Milk, CBS. (28 min)

GREAT GILDERSLEEVE (12-10-47) Harold Peary stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve who decides to do his Christmas shopping early this year. Cast features Walter Tetley as Leroy, Louise Erickson as Marjorie, Lillian Randolph as Birdie. Kraft Foods, NBC. (31 min)

OUR SPECIAL GUEST will be Jim Benes, morning news editor of WBBM Newsradio, author of "Chicago Christmas, One Hundred Years of Christmas Memories." Published by Cornerstone Press, it's a decade-by-decade look at Chicago's Yuletide seasons of the past.

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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 53rd year on the air! *WJOL, 1340 AM, Saturday, 11am-2 pm.*

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.*

SATURDAY SWING SHIFT-- Bruce Oscar is host for this two-hour show featuring swing music on record performed by the big bands, pop singers and small groups. *WDCB, 90.9 FM, Saturday, 10 am-Noon.*

METRO GOLDEN MEMORIES-- John Sebert and Bob Greenberg host a program of old time radio broadcasts. *WNDZ, 750 AM, Saturday and Sunday, 6:30-7 am.*

"When Radio Was" -- WBBM-AM 780

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

October, 2000 Schedule

MON/10-2 Tarzan (1-11-51) *Decoy*; Lum & Abner (11-14-48) *Abner the Advice-Giver* Pt 1
TUES/10-3 Lum & Abner Pt 2; Pat Novak, For Hire (4-23-49) *Rita Malloy*
WED/10-4 Screen Guild Theatre (3-6-44) *Gay Divorcee*; Abbott & Costello (7-14-48) Pt 1
THU/10-5 Abbott & Costello Pt 2; Philo Vance, Detective (7-5-49) *White Murder Case*
FRI/10-6 The Shadow (11-23-41) *Ring of Light*; Sgt. Preston (8-7-43) *King's Ransom*

MON/10-9 Dagnet (8-17-50) *Big Youngster*; Burns & Allen (4-6-43) *Letter to Big Jake* Pt 1
TUES/10-10 Burns & Allen Pt 2; Escape (9-6-53) *Train From Olbiefelde*
WED/10-11 Gangbusters (1930s) *Horsrace Hijackers*; Charlie McCarthy (9-21-47) Pt 1
THU/10-12 Charlie McCarthy Pt 2; Green Hornet (9-16-41) *Hot Guns For Sale*
FRI/10-13 Suspense (7-20-43) *Murder Goes for a Swim*; Unexpected (1950s) *Birthday Present*

MON/10-16 Gunsmoke (7-15-56) *Letter of the Law*; Aldrich Family (11-7-40) *Furnaces* Pt 1
TUES/10-17 Aldrich Family Pt 2; Nick Carter, Master Detective (6-13-48) *Unexpected Corpse*
WED/10-18 Lone Ranger (12-29-48) *Poncho Blanca*; Jack Benny (3-10-46) Ray Milland Pt 1
THU/10-19 Jack Benny Pt 2; Frontier Town (11-7-52) *The Seminole Strip* Jeff Chandler
FRI/10-20 The Shadow (2-1-42) *Return of Anatole Chevanic*; Vic and Sade (11-29-45)

MON/10-23 Pat Novak, For Hire (4-9-49) *Sam Tolliver*; Day in Life of Dennis Day (1-28-48)
TUE/10-24 Dennis Day Pt 2; Have Gun, Will Travel (2-7-60) *The Boss* John Dehner
WED/10-25 X Minus One (1-4-56) *Roads Must Roll*; Phil Harris-Alice Faye (11-14-48) Pt 1
THU/10-26 Phil Harris-Alice Faye Pt 2; Hermit's Cave (1940) *The Nameless Day*
FRI/10-27 Suspense (5-8-48) *Life Ends at Midnight*; Strange Dr. Weird (5-8-45)

MON/10-30 Lights Out (4-20-43) *Kill*; My Favorite Husband (10-28-49) *Halloween Party* Pt 1
TUES/10-31 My Favorite Husband Pt 2; The Whistler (10-30-44) *Beloved Fraud*

November, 2000 Schedule

WED/11-1 Frontier Gentleman (7-6-58) *Kid Yancy*; Great Gildersleeve (9-19-51) Pt 1
THU/11-2 Great Gildersleeve Pt 2; Boston Blackie (7-30-47) *Harry Johnson Murdered*
FRI/11-3 The Shadow (3-1-42) *Dead Men Tell*; Sgt. Preston (8-14-43) *Murder on Train Time*

MON/11-6 Crime Photographer (6-2-46) *The Reunion*; Abbott & Costello (7-28-48) Pt 1
TUE/11-7 Abbott & Costello Pt 2; Richard Diamond (8-2-53) *Levinson Kidnapping*
WED/11-8 Lone Ranger (1-3-49) *Lawman's Legacy*; Burns & Allen (8-5-40) Pt 1
THU/11-9 Burns & Allen Pt 2; Sam Spade (2-23-51) *Shot in the Dark Caper*
FRI/11-10 Suspense (8-28-43) *King's Birthday*; The Unexpected (1950s) *Fool's Silver*

MON/11-13 Dagnet (8-31-50) *The Big Check*; Fibber McGee (12-30-41) *Fix-It McGee* Pt 1
TUE/11-14 Fibber McGee Pt 2; Green Hornet (1-31-42) *Reservoir for Murder*
WED/11-15 Crime Classics (12-16-53) *John and Judith*; Jack Benny (12-23-45) Pt 1
THU/11-16 Jack Benny Pt 2; The Falcon (11-26-50) *Case of the Stoooge's Errand*
FRI/11-17 The Shadow (10-5-47) *Curse of the Gypsies*; Vic & Sade (12-3-45) *Dull Evening*

MON/11-20 Cavalcade of America (3-15-43) *A Case for the FBI*; Life of Riley (3-2-51) Pt 1
TUE/11-21 Life of Riley Pt 2; Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons (8-17-51) *Poisoned Sandwich*
WED/11-22 Murder at Midnight (10-21-46) *Death's Goblet*; My Friend Irma (5-10-48) Pt 1
THU/11-23 My Friend Irma Pt 2; Nick Carter, Master Detective (6-20-48) *Flowery Farewell*
FRI/11-24 Suspense (9-9-43) *Marry for Murder*; Strange Dr. Weird (4-10-45) *Killers Meet*

MON/11-27 Gunsmoke (7-22-56) *Lynching Man*; Duffy's Tavern (12-14-51) Pt 1
TUE/11-28 Duffy's Tavern Pt 2; Mr. District Attorney (1950s) *The Blackmail Killer*
WED/11-29 Philip Marlowe (6-18-49) *Busy Body*; Phil Harris-Alice Faye (11-21-48) Pt 1
THU/11-30 Phil Harris-Alice Faye Pt 2; Lights Out (1-5-43) *Fast One*

WHAT A GIRL, WHAT A LIFE!

BY CLAIR SCHULZ

Late in life when Fanny Brice surveyed the field for an actress to play her on the screen, she had an impressive list to choose from including Judy Canova, Lucille Ball, Martha Raye, Eve Arden, Cass Daley, and Betty Hutton. Brice skipped over all those qualified candidates to select Joan Davis, an entertainer who, like herself, had started early on the bumpy road of show business and who had the bruises to prove it.

For Joan, born Madonna Josephine Davis, life in the performing arts began in 1910 when, at the age of three, she assumed the part of Cupid and similar angelic roles in tableaux and amateur shows in her home state of Minnesota. At the tender age of six she learned that audiences can be fickle when she dodged tomatoes tossed her way after a dramatic recitation bombed. The following week when she returned to the same stage with a comedy routine and a novelty song she received praise instead of produce. Shortly afterward when offered a spot in a vaudeville tour, Joan decided that, for her, the path of comedy leads but to the gravy.

She became a spotlight act on the Pantages Circuit billed as The Toy Comedienne. During her fourteen-minute non-stop routine she acted like a singing-dancing-joking dynamo that was wound up and wouldn't stop until she collapsed at the end of the act as if her mainspring had run down.

Clair Schulz is a free-lance writer, movie historian and collector from Trevor, Wisconsin.



Joan Davis

PHOTOFEST

No one ever doubted that, for all the clowning, Joan Davis had brainpower to spare and possessed a shrewd head for business. She gave early evidence of her intelligence when she graduated at the top of her class at St. Paul's Mechanics Arts High School, a remarkable feat considering that she had been on the road until the age of sixteen.

But a diploma, even with a valedictorian's medal thrown in, meant dollar-a-day jobs, and Joan, having fallen victim to the show business bug, became "once bitten, no longer shy." She would take any booking, from one-nighters at local lodge halls to parodying the hootchy-kootchy dancers on carnival stages for the chuckles she craved and the bucks she needed to pay her rent.

In 1931 she married Sereus Wills, a member of what might be called the Pinky Lee school of baggy-pants comics, and toured the country as Wills and Davis. By 1934, with baby Beverly in tow, the team reached California and three conclusions at the same time: vaudeville belonged to the past; movies represented the future;

Joan alone had the talent needed to succeed in the present.

Davis recruited a coterie of vaudevillians to react favorably to her "impromptu" act done at a party to impress Mack Sennett. When the producer-director invited her for an audition, Davis, apprehensive that she might appear to be too old for the part, showed up in a Shirley Temple outfit complete with a short skirt and a bow in her hair.

Perhaps her risible getup impressed Sennett for he cast her as Jenny Kirk in *Way Up Thar*, a comedy short about a hill-billy family wanting to break into radio. Davis sang "That Why I Stutter" and two other numbers and unveiled one of the staples of her stage act, the Leaning Tower of Teasa, in which she would race back and forth with a constantly-shifting stack of dishes.

Her appearance in *Way Up Thar* led to bit parts in two pictures and, eventually, a contract with Twentieth Century-Fox in 1936. In two of the Fox films, *The Holy Terror* and *Time Out for Romance*, she demonstrated her "anything for a laugh" style by punching herself in the jaw as routinely as other actresses might slap themselves on the forehead for forgetting some detail.

She earned more sercentime as secretaries in two Alice Faye musicals, *On the Avenue* and *Wake Up and Live*. Whether running in and out of offices carrying messages or flailing her arms as a dancer seemingly infected with hives, her small parts, ostensibly thrown in for comic relief, increasingly

became more of an object of lobby chatter than the syrupy romantic story lines or the songs as moviegoers began to wonder, "Who is that funny woman? When are we going to see more of her?"

The answer to both questions came quickly as she moved up to fifth billing in *The Great Hospital Mystery*: Sliding down corridors as if on skates and juggling bed pans like bean bags, Joan lived down to her name of Flossie Duff by landing on her backside several times. Davis later claimed with only mild exaggeration that she had taken 20,000 pratfalls in her career.

That her parts in films were allowing her more to say indicated that producers at Fox realized that Davis had a rare way of delivering lines with just the right touch of sarcasm, self-doubt, or whimsy which yielded the maximum humor out of the minimum number of words. Joan, like Eve Arden, could draw bigger guffaws from a question than many comics could squeeze out of a punch line.

Though her rubbery legs continued to be featured in pictures, she began to be given novelty numbers like "I'm Olga from the Volga" in *Thin Ice* and "Help Wanted—Male" in *Sally, Irene and Mary*. Fox kingpin Darryl Zanuck, hoping that a little



The Great Hospital Mystery (1937)

William Demarest, Sig Ruman, Sally Blane, Joan Davis

PHOTOFEST

WHAT A GIRL, WHAT A LIFE!

hoopla might go nicely with Joan's fatter parts, boldly predicted in publicity releases that Joan Davis would be the top comedienne in the country by the end of 1938.

Perhaps her best chance to live up to Zanuck's boast came as an accomplished kicker in *Hold That Co-Ed* who won the critical football game for good ol' State University not with her foot but with her supple body as she scored the winning touchdown after battling winds that must have blown in from the Goldwyn set for *The Hurricane*. One critic aptly described her as taking off "into space in an array of limbs and arms resembling nothing other than an octopus taking a flying test and ends by falling on her caboose with a crash that... shakes the stadium."

Although each role now given to her allowed Davis to toss in snappy comebacks, physical comedy remained her bread and butter whether it involved disrupting office routine by fumbling with envelopes in *Day-Time Wife* or turning a house into a hovel in *Too Busy to Work*. Even when taking a break between films to perform in night-clubs, she continued to sock it to herself both on the chin and on her derriere to complement her singing and dancing because she believed audiences expected such antics and, as she often averred, "A good fall always gets a good laugh."

After being used in only two films for Fox in 1941, Davis refused to renew her contract in hopes of finding better roles as a free-lancer, and she rarely landed a better one than her first part

as radio screamer Camille Brewster who helped Abbott and Costello *Hold That Ghost*. Whether jesting with Costello by the car, dancing clumsily with him in the haunted house, or taking part in the moving candle routine by the window, Davis proved convincingly that she was the screen's top comedienne and that she deserved starring roles even if she had to step down to Columbia and Republic to get them.

Movies like *Two Latins from Manhattan*, *Two Señoritas from Chicago*, *Yokel Boy*, *Beautiful But Broke*, and *Kansas City Kitty* do not play revival houses, earn spots on the syllabi of college film courses, or form the core of museum retrospectives, but these B pictures filled the bottom half of double bills nicely, provided a pleasant hour of jokes and songs at theatres, and added \$50,000 per film to Joan's bank account.

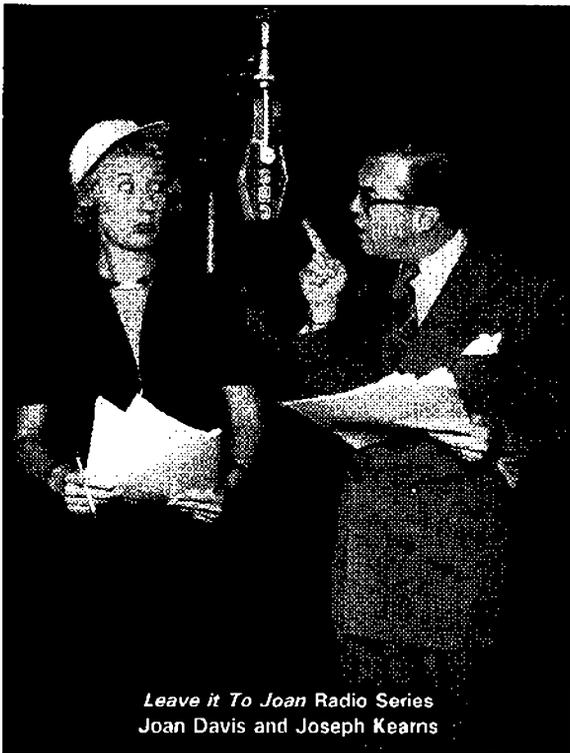
In the 1943 comedy *Around the World* Davis played a man-chaser which was a carry over from the character given to her on *The Rudy Vallee Show* and *The Sealtest Village Store*. She quickly proved wrong the doubters who wondered if a performer who relied heavily on slapstick could succeed on radio with routines such as taking the songs "Hey, Daddy" and "My Jim" and



Hold That Ghost (1941)

Lou Costello, Joan Davis, Bud Abbott

PHC.TOFFST



Leave it To Joan Radio Series
Joan Davis and Joseph Kearns

developing the lyrics into a monologue. That year she was voted radio's top comedienne in a poll conducted by the Scripps-Howard newspapers.

Davis starred on her own show on CBS which ran at various times from 1946 to 1950 under the titles *Joanie's Tea Room*, *Joan Davis Time*, and *Leave It to Joan*, sometimes rising as high as third in the ratings behind *The Bob Hope Show* and *Fibber McGee and Molly*. As in the movies, both the song and the malady lingered on: "Joan ain't got nobody."

What Joan did have were top flight announcers in Harry Von Zell and Bob LeMond, a premiere bandleader in Paul Weston, a popular singer in Andy Russell, and the able support of Shirley Mitchell, Verna Felton, and Willard Waterman. And, of course, she had a talent for treating a line with just the right inflection to milk the gag for all it was worth. Joan possessed

a distinctive voice, a sort of cross between a quiver and a squeal that sometimes left her lips as a squawk

Unfortunately, her writers often saddled her with jokes that might have been rejected as being too corny for *The National Barn Dance*. Upon being told she should admit the obvious Joan said, "Harry, open the door. Obvious wants to get in." When asked if she knew what a rift is she answered, "Oh, sure. When two rats get married, they have a little rift." Listeners at home who had seen Davis on the screen knew that she spoke such wheezes with a straight face, which may have mirrored their own expressions.

That Davis overcame weak dialogue and plots that hung on

tenuous premises such as a wrong phone number by assuming various guises and bringing moribund lines to life by sheer will should have surprised no one for in almost every movie she made after 1941 she rose above the level of her material to repeatedly win top comedienne honors in polls conducted by *Motion Picture Daily*. In two comedies for Universal, *She Gets Her Man* and *She Wrote the Book*, Davis carried the threadbare whodunit and mistaken identity plots on her back for seventy-minute rides that left co-stars Leon Errol and Jack Oakie breathless.

Joan teamed with Eddie Cantor in a pair of musical comedies for RKO, *Show Business* and *If You Knew Susie*, that remain enjoyable for the persiflage between the stars, the familiar Cantor standards, the show business milieu, and casts brimming with wonderful supporting players like Fritz Feld, Ellen Corby, George Chandler,

WHAT A GIRL, WHAT A LIFE!

Sheldon Leonard, Isabel Randolph, and Sig Ruman.

Character actors comprised her only support in *Traveling Saleswoman* (1950) and *Harem Girl* (1952) Joan's final movies. At the age of forty-five she seemed more than a trifle old to be masquerading as a harem girl, though she still had a knack for losing her balance on any shiny floor and for getting in more chase scenes than a Keystone Cop.

Realizing her opportunities in motion pictures would continue to diminish, Davis turned her attention to television. In *I Married Joan*, a series owned by Joan Davis Productions, she played Joan Stevens who, though married and in no need to run after men, found herself up to her elbows in crisis no less involved or hilarious than the ones she confronted in films.

Jim Backus played her husband, Judge Bradley Stevens, whose respectable standing in the community was constantly jeopardized by the embarrassing predicaments Joan waded through every week. In a unique bit of casting Joan's daughter acted



I Married Joan TV Series
Starring Joan Davis

PHOTOFEST

as her younger sister in the series, prompting Davis to tell the press, "I always promised Beverly a sister, but neither of us ever imagined it would be me."

During those early years of television it might have been difficult to determine if Joan was doing a Lucy or vice versa for what harebrained schemes Mrs. Stevens hatched on Wednesdays on NBC seemed no less misguided or amusing than the havoc wrecked by Señora Ricardo Mondays on CBS. If Lucy could disrupt the routine of a candy factory, Joan would adopt the philosophy of "anything you can louse up, I can mess up more" by filling her kitchen with popcorn.

Knowing how Joan threw her body into her work, the writers for the show fre-



Show Business (1944)

Joan Davis, Eddie Cantor, Constance Moore, George Murphy

PHOTOFEST

quently placed Davis in slapstick situations where she would be dashing back and forth serving diners in different rooms or battling a dryer which seemed intent on sucking her inside or inadvertently dismantling a roomful of furniture more efficiently than a demolition crew.

If *I Married Joan* achieved some success (the program became the third most popular network comedy show during its second season), the credit belonged chiefly to Joan Davis. Claiming "I never worked as hard in my life," she outlined a frantic schedule that had her virtually living at the General Services Studio where, as executive producer and star, she worked "on three programs at the same time, making the first study of the script to be shot next week, looking at the rushes of the film shot yesterday, and sitting in on the final cutting of the show before that."

Although Davis claimed at the time that the breakneck pace and the demands of knockabout comedy relieved her of anxieties that might have led to ulcers, she didn't calculate the damage that vigorous lifestyle was doing to her heart and the rest of her body.

Perhaps what motivated Davis to keep going was the fear that her work in films would be forgotten and that her only claim to fame would be her work on television. She believed that the shows had to be good "because they are my legacy both as a comedienne and as a businesswoman."

One legacy of *I Married Joan* is a theme song that was one of the most infectious of the 1950s. All people who have not even seen the program in decades have to do is hear the first four notes of the catchy mu-



PHOTOFFEST

sic and they begin singing. "I married Joan, what a girl, what a whirl, what a life/Oh, I married Joan, what a mind, love is blind, what a wife."

After *I Married Joan* left the air in April of 1955, Davis made a pilot for a proposed ABC series about a woman astronaut, but the show didn't get off the ground. She retired in 1958 after the pilot for *Joan of Arkansas* never made it to the air, confessing "I've been afraid all along that I just wouldn't be funny or pretty enough for the long-time bigtime. I've kept going on a mixture of gall, guts, and gumption." And, she might have added, a gift of making people laugh.

Joan Davis died of a heart attack on May 24, 1961 at the age of fifty-three, never coming close to playing Fanny Brice in a movie. No matter. Every time we see Joan Davis on big screen or small we know who the funny girl really is. ■

When Two Heads Were Better Than One

BY WAYNE KLATT

Who knows how many people would have been scared by Orson Welles' 1938 "War of the Worlds" broadcast if Edgar Bergen's show had not been running against it? Just the week before, *The Chase and Sanborn Hour* featuring Bergen and Charlie McCarthy drew 34.7 per cent of the possible market while Welles' *Mercury Theatre* reached only 3.6 per cent.

That a ventriloquist should be one of the most popular stars of radio is no more of a contradiction than that Bergen wanted to become a leading man on stage rather than a comedian.

Edgar whose family name was Berggren was born to Swedish immigrants in 1903 and grew up on a Michigan dairy farm with his brother. Since he used humor to hide his shyness, Edgar thought of some day becoming a vaudeville ventriloquist as a way of hiding his personality behind another person.

As his daughter, actress Candice Bergen, recalls in her book *Knock on Wood*, her father first "threw his voice" into an apple pie his mother was taking from the stove, startling her with a high-pitched voice crying out. "Help, help, let me out!"

His father died when Edgar was 16, and the family moved to Illinois. Still fairly good-looking, he enjoyed fantasies of becoming a star in musicals or dramas, but thought ventriloquism might be a way of breaking into the business. Edgar decided to pattern his dummy after a somewhat obnoxious neighborhood paperboy in Decatur, named Charlie. Edgar gave his



sketches to a bartender named Mack, who then carved the head from wood and lent his name to their creation.

After giving up the magic part of his act, the still-Edgar Berggren went on the road during the summers, then attended pre-med classes at Northwestern University in Evanston. But Edgar soon discovered something: he himself was still shy and unnoticed, but Charlie McCarthy was beloved, and so a new career opened to him.

What made Edgar Bergen a phenomenon was not technical skill, since in terms of keeping his lips still he was possibly the worst professional "vent" in the world? Instead, his uniqueness came from the fact that at each performance he was exposing the duality of his nature. Marjorie Taylor, a psychology professor at the University of Oregon, explained in a recent study of ventriloquism that Charlie was to Edgar the

Wayne Klatt is an editor at New City News Service, Chicago and a free-lance writer.

imaginary friend he once wished he had.

Bergen's daughter confirms that he was not fully aware that he was the voice and mind of Charlie, it was as if Charlie were talking by himself. Fans can still fondly hear that dry voice of his saying without a hint of menace, "*Bergen, you old dog, I'll kill ya, so help me, I'll mow you down.*" Bergen even conducted conversations with his dummies at home, and sometimes set the six-year-old Candice on his knee to speak through her.

The illusion was so complete that the boom man (microphone operator) on the set of one of Bergen's 10 pictures found himself turning the microphone from Bergen to McCarthy and back again throughout their dialogue, not thinking that the voices were coming from the same source.

Bergen was so successful on radio since 1936 that thousands of boys and girls across the country wanted to become ventriloquists. Any one of them might have been better at keeping his lips still as he practiced in front of a mirror, but no one could match the charming contrast of Bergen's shy warmth and Charlie's brash one-liners.

By the 1950s, Bergen was becoming tired from playing both straight man and comedian at every performance, and sometimes providing not only the voice of Charlie but of the delightfully slow-witted Mortimer Snerd (the dummy was created for Bergen by California puppeteer Virginia Austin Curtis) and spinster Effie Klinker.

The new medium of television was great for ventriloquists because the single live camera could cover both faces. But Bergen never tried very hard to make it big on those early shows, although he and his



Paul Winchell with Jerry Mahoney

PHOTOFFEST

characters started the daytime quiz show *Do you Trust Your Wife?* He, or they, drew into semi-retirement and let unknown jokester Johnny Carson take over. After that, Bergen appeared in Las Vegas shows and made a few guest appearances until his death at age 75.

Just as Gene Kelly rose to stardom while Fred Astaire was gradually taking it easy, Paul Winchell (original name, Wilchen) became the top television ventriloquist. Winchell has a sharp intelligence and a good sense of fun, and he could perform virtually without any trace of lip movement, even if his Jerry Mahoney lacked the audaciousness of Charlie McCarthy.

Winchell was born in New York in 1922 and started "venting" with Jerry at the age of 14, when he appeared on radio's *Major Bowes' Amateur Hour* in 1936. Winchell went on to TV in 1948 in *The Bigelow Show* with popular mentalist, Duninger.

Still imitating Bergen, Winchell created the moronic Knucklehead Smiff, who addressed his partner as a "ventrikolist." By

TWO HEADS

1956, the thin but good-looking Winchell was hosting *Circus Time* in a ringmaster's costume and with Mahoney looking like — well, like a bland imitation of Charlie McCarthy.

Probably the third-best ventriloquist of those years was Winchell's friend Jimmy Nelson, a rather likable slender young man who would appear dressed as a gas station attendant with his wooden co-worker, Danny O'Day, on Milton Berle's ratings-clobbering *Texaco Star Theatre* on NBC-TV. Nelson's flop-eared Farfel the dog might not have been as big a hit as Charlie, Jerry, and Mortimer, but the character was the start of a trend toward less smart-alecky, warmer dummies, such as the late Shari Lewis did so well with Lambchop and others.

Nelson — and not Bergen or Winchell — inspired numerous ventriloquists in the 1950s, largely because of his dozen appearances on the CBS *Ed Sullivan Show*. It was said you couldn't take two steps down Broadway in New York without bumping into one. They played every entertainment circuit across the country and helped turn the art into a bore, and by the 1960s the

craze was largely over.

Although a great talent, Winchell dabbled in inventing and lent his voice to some commercials and to Tigger in Walt Disney's *Winnie the Pooh* series, using a voice similar to Knucklehead's. But Winchell also taped color episodes of the children's program *Winchell-Mahoney Time* between 1965 and 1968 for Los Angeles station KTTV, owned by Metromedia.

Winchell was told ventriloquism was dead, but he thought otherwise. He discussed with executives the possibility of scheduling reruns of the program in 1972. When Winchell refused to give in during a contract dispute, someone out of spite erased all 288 episodes. Winchell sued, and a jury awarded him an astounding \$17.8 million for breach of contract in 1986. The amount was later upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Jerry Mahoney's farewell performance was in 1998's annual convention of the International Society of Ventriloquists at its headquarters in Las Vegas. By then the original Charlie McCarthy was at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. and a second Charlie, along with Mortimer and Effie, is at the Museum of



Jimmy Nelson
with Farfel, Danny O'Day and Humphrey Higsby

PHOTO:LSI

Broadcast Communications in downtown Chicago. But you will find 750 other ventriloquist dummies from around the country on permanent display at Vent Haven, a little-known museum in Fort Mitchell, Kentucky. They seem to be sitting there and waiting for a voice to give them life once again. ■

The Dummy That Saved America

BY RICHARD W. O'DONNELL

If Edgar Bergen was alive today, he would be bursting with pride at his daughter Candice's comedic success as *Murphy Brown* on television. There can be little doubt about that.

But Edgar Bergen was into comedy too. He was the star, with "friend" Charlie McCarthy, of one of the most popular shows on radio during the golden era of the 1930s and '40s.

Charlie McCarthy, of course, was the dummy that gifted ventriloquist Bergen brought to life.

Ironically, the wooden Charlie was so funny that a fair share of the invisible audience out there in Radioland forgot it was Bergen who gave him a sense of humor. Thus it was that the hour-long program on NBC on Sunday nights became known as *The Charlie McCarthy Show*.

Originally, when the show started out on May 9, 1937, it was billed as *The Chase and Sanborn Hour*, in honor of the coffee company that sponsored it. That name didn't last too long. The nation was swept

by a Charlie McCarthy craze. It became the dummy's show. Bergen may have been slighted somewhat, but Charlie's salary was zilch, so the ventriloquist did not complain too much.

What a cast that show had! Don Ameche, a Hollywood legend, was Bergen's or should we say Charlie's—foil. The beautiful Dorothy Lamour, at the height of her sarrong popularity, was the songstress, and the fabulous W. C. Fields was a frequent guest.



Charlie McCarthy

And there were countless big names who dropped by for a visit, Mae West, Gary Cooper, Irene Dunne, Claudette Colbert, and William Powell to name a few.

With such a lineup the show was bound to be a success. And it was! In fact, it was much more than that. Edgar Bergen and his wooden sidekick leapfrogged over all the top shows on the air, and that included *The Jack Benny Program*, *The Kraft Music Hall* starring Bing Crosby, *Fibber McGee and Molly*, Fred Allen's *Town Hall Tonight*, and many other long-running favorites.

In 1948 Edgar Bergen had the top-rated

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DUMMY THAT SAVED AMERICA

show in the land — by a wide margin. His NBC domination of the Sunday at eight time slot was so outstanding that rival networks Mutual and CBS offered up sacrificial lambs.

CBS had 151 stations in the United States and Canada. But not all of them were tuned to the network at 8 pm Sunday, October 30, 1938. Many of those stations chose to carry local programs. The number of stations actually carrying the CBS network show is not known.

At eight o'clock on that night, CBS sent out a weekly hour of drama known as the *Mercury Theatre On the Air*, starring Orson Welles, show business' boy wonder at the time. The program's weekly listening audience was tiny, but *Mercury Theatre* oozed culture, and the "prestige" was great for the network.

On that memorable night Welles, who was in his early twenties, decided to play "a harmless Halloween prank" on the nation. The *Mercury Theatre* did a realistic performance of H. G. Wells' vintage science fiction yarn, "The War of the Worlds." It was an updated account.

During an early part of the drama, actors played radio reporters and they scurried around interviewing Washington officials who had tough decisions to make and just plain folk who had witnessed the arrival of a series of space ships from the planet Mars. The great Martian invasion was under way.

Everybody knows what happened that night. It was the greatest UFO scare ever. Panic gripped our terrified nation. The radio drama scared the bejeebers out of many of the two or three million Americans who were listening to the show. By 9 pm, though, when the next CBS show came on, the panic was under control and by midnight everyone had gone to bed.

Over on NBC, Bergen and McCarthy did a skit about pumpkin carving, Ameche sang a song, and so did Dorothy Lamour. It was a typical Sunday night broadcast for the most popular radio program in the land.

That's the key! And it is an important one. Consider this! The *Mercury Theatre* that night had a rating of about 3.6 points, according to the Crossley people, who handled ratings back then.

Bergen and McCarthy had a rating of 34.7 points, about ten times the listening audience of the Welles' show. More than 30 million people were tuned to NBC that night.

Now consider this! What would have happened that night if the ratings had been reversed? Supposing the *Mercury Theatre* had those 30 million listeners. There would have been ten times the panic, ten times the terror. The nation would have had a nervous breakdown.

Orson Welles became famous that night and went on to make *Citizen Kane*, now rated as the greatest of all movies. His "War of the Worlds," though few heard it the first time around, has been called the most famous radio show ever. Recordings of the historic broadcast are readily available and a recording of the Bergen and McCarthy show for that night has recently been uncovered.

Yet, of that night of nights in radio history — some 62 years ago — it can honestly be stated the dynamic Charlie McCarthy was the dummy that saved America. Indeed he did!

As New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia put it the next day, "Thank God for Charlie McCarthy!"

And Edgar Bergen, too! ■

NOTE-- Tune in TWTD November 11 to hear a Chase and Sanborn Hour from July 24, 1938 featuring Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy and their guest, actor Spencer Tracy.

A Thanksgiving Memory

BY BOB PERLONGO

The annual Abraham Lincoln School Thanksgiving Pageant turns out to be a flat-out disaster that doesn't help my already sketchy overall performance record — the scene of the crime being the school auditorium, where the pageant is being performed by a group of students before an audience of parents, teachers and school-mates.

As usual with such lofty cultural events at Lincoln, it quickly becomes an occasion for raucous boys to outdo one another in both quality and quantity of mischief.

Of course, as a mere "background pilgrim," there's only so much foolery I personally can devise — for instance, sticking a feather in Nancy Pastoral's ear just before she steps out on the stage. But other mischief-makers are there to take up the slack.

The main culprit is Jack Kerris — the classy horror-movie fanatic — woefully miscast as a pious pilgrim by Miss McCoy, the music teacher and pageant director. Kerris, his cardboard pilgrim hat cocked far to the right, clumps his way on stage like Frankenstein's monster, holding his shoulders humpy and askew, his left hand claw-like against his chest, as he drags his right foot sideways behind him, grunting and drooling as he

goes, and casting hideous grimaces in every direction as he reaches center stage.

My best friend Larry Binderman, nearby, is the Good Indian Squanto — red-rouge paint and feathers, multi-tiered necklace of corn kernels — but he decides instead to play Tonto to an imaginary Lone Ranger, repeating over and over, "Yes, Kimo Sabe... Ugh-ugh, Kimo Sabe... Me not know, Kimo Sabe!"

Gasps, harrumphs and murmurs of outrage wash up from the audience. Even my beautifully decorous,

secretly admired dream girl Alice Neininger — daughter of the local pastor — can't seem to keep her giggles in.

Miss McCoy, of course, is furious — as is Miss Hannan, the principal, a great rhino of a woman whose ball-bearing eyes are saying, clear as any words, that very, very soon many will *pay* for this. And we all know full well the form the payment is going to take: extra homework, canceled recesses, notes home... the whole naughty-boy rigmarole.

But for now, for the current errant moment, we can at least give silent thanks for the sight of so much delightfully messy mayhem — for the mental snapshots that, in the years ahead, will live on as treasured memories. ■



Bob Perlongo is an Evanston-based writer/editor. This nostalgic vignette is from his novel-in-progress about growing up in Chicago during World War II.



OUR READERS/LISTENERS WRITE

WE GET LETTERS

MT. PROSPECT, IL-- We first became aware of your various programs starting in the 1970s with the Chrysler Airtemp seven-days-of-the-week "review" you did with Jim Jordan (as Fibber McGee). We recorded it on reel-to-reel from the radio speaker without an electronic hook-up to our microphone -- a bit primitive, but it worked. Still enjoy getting "stuff" at Metro Golden Memories (like a kid in a candy store!). --**BOB KRUCKMEYER**

CHICAGO-- I have enjoyed your show for the past year and a half. I just renewed my subscription for two years. I especially enjoyed your show about the Dorsey Brothers [7-1-00]. The only person who is "upset" with you is my wife because she knows that on Saturdays between 1 and 5 I don't get much done while listening to you. Thanks again for keeping history alive. --**ROD FONTAINE**

CHICAGO-- Gerry Swetsky correctly noted that my article about the Howdy Doody show in the June/July issue omitted mention of Judy Tyler (Judith Hess) as Princess Summerfall Winterspring. But before the character was transformed, she was a puppet that debuted in October, 1950. Tyler became the princess a year later in the hope of selling more merchandise, according to Stephen Davis' "Say Kids! What Time is It? Notes from the Peanut Gallery." --**WAYNE KLATT**

ELMHURST, IL-- Congratulations on your fine work in helping preserve the rich part of our American culture which is old-time radio. What you have done over these past 30 years is a wonderful gift to Chicagoland. --**MARILYN BRIGGS**

BERWYN, IL-- Enjoyed your 30th Anniversary broadcast [4-29-00]. I liked the recreation of the "Maltese Falcon." --**JOHN J. PITELKA**

CHICAGO-- Your 30th anniversary show clearly revealed that your interest and pursuit have made many happy listeners.

I thoroughly enjoyed the "remake" of the "Maltese Falcon." --**EDWARD BEYER**

CHICAGO-- I am so glad you're finally on the web. Welcome! As I type, I am listening to your show from my office in the Loop-- what a surprise to hear this is your "maiden voyage!" While I am a regular listener from home every weekend, I've had trouble with the reception in the Loop when I've had to work on the occasional Saturday. How wonderful that I can get crystal-clear audio of your show through the web. It's sublimely ironic that the latest technology helps me appreciate one of the technologies that paved the way. --**ROSS FORTINI**

MAYSVILLE, GEORGIA-- I was delighted to hear about *TWTD* becoming available on the Internet! As I write this, I am listening to your program for the first time since April, 1982! At last my 18-year wait is over! While I was living in Wheaton, Illinois, I would schedule a "work session" every Saturday afternoon in my garage/workshop just so I could listen to your program. Your years of effort, enthusiasm, research, and obvious love of old-time radio are to be greatly commended. --**LINDSAY CLEVELAND**

HONG KONG, CHINA-- I just listened to my first *TWTD* on the Internet, from Hong Kong at 2 am to 6 am, Sunday morning. You just celebrated a 30th Anniversary playing 70-year old radio programs. What a world! Thanks for "keeping the faith" for 30 years. --**CHARLIE CHAMBERLIN**

MONROE, WISCONSIN-- I have been nearly four years without *TWTD* since moving here. I could not get your program via my radio. Now I have tuned in to the live streaming audio and I love it! --**MARY ANN FLOYD**

PEORIA, ARIZONA-- Greetings from where the weather is hot and sunny. Peoria is a suburb of Phoenix. We have lived here for eight years, moving from the Chicago suburb of Crestwood in 1992. We became

faithful listeners way back in 1970, and missed your broadcasts. We are so pleased that WNIB went on the web so we can once again hear all the programs of bygone days. You can be sure that we will be glued to the computer every Saturday from now on.

--RICHARD & CLYDEAN BENZ

SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN-- Hallelujah! I have been subscribing to your magazine for years and always wished I could hear the Saturday edition from the Chicago FM station. Now I have access to the programming. Thank you. --TOM LA BOUVE

HOCKESSIN, DELAWARE-- It's so great to be able to listen to the Internet for *TWTD* on Saturday afternoons. I've told all my old geezer friends about this wonderful opportunity and they will be tuning in, too.

--J. GLASOW

EUSTIS, FLORIDA-- I'm so excited listening here in Florida. It's been ten years since I left Chicago, but I still get the *Digest* and keep informed about what is happening with *TWTD* through my sister. Keep up the good --I mean great--work. --KATHI SMITH

DALLAS, TEXAS-- Eureka! It's been 21 years since I moved from Chicago and once again I'm able to enjoy *TWTD*, thanks to your Internet connection. --GENE RANDOLPH

WOODSTOCK, ONTARIO, CANADA-- For the past several years, since subscribing to the *Digest*, and particularly since your *Radio Classics* left WBBM, I've felt like the proverbial kid outside the candy store with his face pressed against the window pane. I could read about the sweet pleasures presented on *TWTD*; the Letters column let me know how much the show was appreciated, but that was as close as I could expect to get. The postcard in my mailbox a couple of weeks ago was one of the best surprises in my life. The door to the candy store was unlocked and the welcome mat dusted off. I am delighted that your program lives up to the superlatives your fans have written. Now, I too have strictly reserved Saturday afternoons for the radio program which is undoubtedly the best I've heard in presenting the spirit of the golden age. Even better, it's like finding a long-lost friend because of the way your personal

touch comes through. There is definitely a more intimate style in your *TWTD* format than could be afforded with the constraints of WBBM. Now I feel like one of the fraternity. Of course, one of the best benefits of webcasting is that I am no longer at the mercy of the capriciousness of AM radio reception (in my neck of the woods both WBBM and WMAQ are subject to local and Cuban interference). My thanks to WNIB for taking on the expense of webcasting. In addition to *TWTD*, I do listen to some WNIB programming, as this station is one of the better classical stations I've encountered. --RICK SUPRGEON

WASHINGTON ISLAND, WISCONSIN-- I live about 300 miles or so north of the Chicago area. I caught your *TWTD* show on June 24 for the first time in almost seven years by the wonderful world wide web. I used to live in Northlake and caught your shows on both WNIB and WBBM all the time. Your show is one of the things I miss most about living in the Chicago area. It's not just the old time radio shows that I like to hear -- it's your insights on and enthusiasm (and obvious affection) for old-time radio that makes your show so much fun to listen to. I've heard the Jack Benny show [played on 6-24-00] before but never really thought about the connection to the Korean war or the support that Jack Benny showed for the servicemen before last Saturday. --CHUCK OLSON

GLEN ELLYN, IL-- I enjoyed your program on the Korean War. I was touched by the "Korean Christmas Carol" on *Suspense*. And I was interested to hear a young Russ Reed as Spike Gibson, the reporter on *Destination Freedom*. When I was growing up in Wheaton, Russ was a member of the church which my family attended. I used to be able to pick out his voice in commercials. I was surprised recently to see him in a short part as a Wisconsin bartender toward the end of the movie "The Straight Story." --DAVID CONDON

OLYMPIA FIELDS, IL-- You are so right, Chuck, when you said that the Korean War period was a very worrisome one for the young people. We had been married one year in 1951 and my husband had been in the National Guard since high school and had just graduated from the University of



MORE LETTERS

Illinois. Fortunately, his Guard unit was not called up or we might not have celebrated our 50th anniversary in July. Also, the 1952 election was my first voting experience and I was very excited. You surely are bringing back a lot of memories. --PAT MENEES

CHICAGO-- As a faithful listener to your program since the days of WLTD, today was no different than most Saturdays for me. While my wife is out shopping, I can be found taping your show for later in the week evening listening. At 1 and 3 pm, I am in the house starting the tape recorder. I never listen in so that the thrill won't be spoiled during the week. But today, for some reason, I started the tape and a couple of minutes later decided to "check the level" and came in on Bing Crosby singing "White Christmas" and found myself crying like a baby as it stirred up old memories of time long ago. As many times as I have heard what has been credited as the most popular song in history, this time it was special.

I was one of those who were drafted and sent off the the "land of the morning calm," Korea, when it wasn't so calm. I find myself now as an old veteran of a war commonly known as "The Forgotten War." A war that was to be referred to as a "conflict" because Congress had not declared it a war.

Bing Crosby's singing brought to my mind a Christmas Eve that won't be forgotten by me. I was an artillery forward observer assigned to an observation post near Outpost Harry, in the 3rd Infantry Division sector near Chorwon. Tightly enclosed in a bunker looking out a six inch space between some logs, I kept my eyes and ears open for enemy movement. Near midnight came the familiar strains of Bing Crosby singing his most famous "White Christmas" over a loud speaker. After the song, a voice in broken English came on and spoke a few words of anti-American rhetoric. The Chorwon valley was soon lighted up by flares looking for the mystery voice. The song and voice never came back.

During the days of the three-year Korean war, Armed Forces Radio was by our side. Once, while I was at IX Corps Artillery Headquarters, about five miles rear of the Main Line of Resistance. I noticed an unmarked army trailer. I noticed an open door and I looked in. The wall was filled with shelves of large records, all neatly catalogued, and sitting at a table with a microphone was a GI we knew on the airwaves as "The Rice Paddy Ranger." He was a disc jockey whose duty in Korea in the Signal Corps was to man the emergency radio system and offer entertainment to the troops with recordings of music and radio programs.

At night, if you had an AM radio, you could tune in to recordings of *The Jack Benny Program*, *Sam Spade*, Perry Como, band remotes, and all the other old time radio programs that were put on disc for later broadcast. It was a link to home in the off-duty hours. Thanks to those recordings, we have your programs into the next century. They were the same recordings that Howard Duff and others prepared during World War II being used again, in another war. Those discs certainly got the mileage.

Thank you for your presentation in June of the Korean war years on radio. It reminds me and others who were there that we were NOT forgotten.

And it gave us the opportunity to hear a few programs that we couldn't tune in to because we were away from home during the Korean "conflict." --JIM L. CLARK

NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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← **JOAN DAVIS**

was America's female comedy cut-up for over two decades. Clair Schulz takes a look at her movie-radio-television career beginning on page 26.

GOOD-BYE WMAQ RADIO

By Chuck Schaden
Page 1

NOISY, GLORY DAYS OF AM RADIO

By Ed Knapp
Page 16

THE DUMMY THAT SAVED AMERICA

By Richard W. O'Donnell
Page 35

WMAQ PROGRAM GUIDE

The 1952 Schedule
Page 4

CONFESSIONS OF A RADIO LOVER

By Mark Wuellner
Page 18

A THANKSGIVING MEMORY

By Bob Perlongo
Page 37

WE WANT CANTOR

By Elizabeth McLeod
Page 12

TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

By Wayne Klatt
Page 32

WE GET LETTERS

Our Readers/Listeners Write
Page 38

PLUS WNIB *THOSE WERE THE DAYS* LISTINGS. . . Pages 20-24
WBBM-AM *WHEN RADIO WAS* CALENDAR. . . Page 25

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