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JUNE/JULY 2001



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CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

BOOK TWENTY-SEVEN

CHAPTER FOUR

JUNE/JULY 2001

2/10/01: *The Last WNIB Saturday*

BY EVANNE MARIE CHRISTIAN

My favorite way to spend a Saturday afternoon is to listen to *Those Were The Days* on the radio as I do my weekly household chores. I get my noisy vacuuming done before 1 p.m., and then I don't even notice the rest of the housework I'm doing once I've crossed that sound gap between yesterday and today.

But sometimes, it's fun to go downtown to see *TWTD* broadcast live from the radio studio in the Museum of Broadcast Communications. A recent special occasion which warranted a trip to the Loop was the final WNIB broadcast of *TWTD* on Saturday, February 10th.

Since its founding 45 years ago, WNIB has offered a classical music format along with some very special programming including, for the last 25 years, *Those Were The Days*. In my humble opinion, it was the best radio station on the air. But very soon WNIB would be under new ownership which, sadly, did not plan to retain any of the legendary WNIB programming. Fortunately, *TWTD* would be broadcast by station WDCB in the future. But on this last WNIB Saturday, I didn't want to



GARDNER KISSACK PHOTO

experience the end of an era at home alone. I wanted to be where it was happening "live."

So I found myself sitting in the studio along with a small audience, listening to the four hours of Jack Benny Month programs, and waiting for the end. Most of the other listeners in the studio audience seemed to be simply old time radio (perhaps especially Jack Benny) fans. Perhaps the fact that *TWTD* had been rescued from homelessness by the College of DuPage's public radio station minimized the loss of WNIB for them. It was a Saturday not unlike any other Saturday. But the day meant a lot to me. And it was obvious that the day meant a great deal to *TWTD* producer/host Chuck Schaden and his colleague Ken Alexander. → →

Evanne Marie Christian is a TWTD listener and Nostalgia Digest subscriber from Chicago.

THE LAST WNIB SATURDAY

With the exception of the station's founders, Bill and Sonia Florian, Ken Alexander had been with WNIB longer than anyone else, having come to the station in 1960. Although there were years in the middle when he was not working at WNIB, he stayed involved with the station and later returned to it. Now he was bidding it a fond farewell for the last time. As for Chuck Schaden, a grand total of 1,328 *TWTD* programs had been broadcast by WNIB. It's not easy to leave a place that's been "home" for so many Saturdays over so many years.

After a visit to the Museum (always a delight!), I got to the studio at 12:45 p.m., and noticed that other early arrivals embodied quite a diversity— an American veteran of two wars, a college student, a young Hispanic woman, and two young black men. At three minutes to 1 p.m., a few more senior citizens arrived — singly and in couples — as well as more people who were probably thirtysomething.

Chuck Schaden was busy on the telephone, obviously receiving good wishes as well as expressing his own gratitude to callers. At one minute to 1 p.m., the studio became quiet. The audience was silent as Chuck and the sound engineer set the final wheels in motion. Ken Alexander took his seat, and both he and Chuck put on their headsets. With the familiar beginning of *Those Were The Days* there was an urge to sing aloud with the theme song, but I carefully watched the lights which signal "Applause" and "On the Air." The volume was turned up so that the studio listeners could hear the show comfortably. And it was time for Jack Benny! It was good to be able to laugh out loud

with kindred spirits. The gentleman sitting next to me had a tiny radio plugged into his ear so he could hear the show —and the laughter— in stereo.

It's a pretty safe bet that Ken Alexander wrote the clever script which he and Chuck read at the top of the show. In fact, as the day progressed, there were several of these skits. In each one, Ken portrayed a different radio character: Peavy from the *Great Gildersleeve*, Friday from *Dragnet*, Hollywood stars Peter Lorre, Humphrey Bogart, and Jimmy Stewart. The purpose of these skits was to share with the audience what was happening with *TWTD*— its final broadcast on WNIB and its future with WDCB. They were extremely witty and made the news especially entertaining. Once there was unexpected humor, even for Chuck and Ken I suspect, as Ken's Arthur Godfrey imitation was followed by a taped commercial for Metro Golden Memories which also featured a visit by "Godfrey"! But from all these amusing routines, the lines which stayed in my mind were bittersweet:

Ken (as Peavy): I will miss WNIB.

Chuck: Well, I guess that's progress.

Ken (as Peavy): Well, now, I wouldn't say that...

And the following Jack Benny program echoed those words as Dennis Day sang "I Love you for Sentimental Reasons." All of us who love old time radio are whole-heartedly grateful to WDCB for giving *TWTD* a new home, but we'll always remember "the WNIB that was" with great fondness, for sentimental reasons.

A photographer arrived in the studio, adding a touch of glamour to the occasion. Visitors to the station drifted in and were entranced by the fact that a live broadcast happens here. A young boy and his mom waited patiently to speak



Chuck Schaden and Ken Alexander
February 10, 2001 -- *The Last WNIB Saturday*

CHRIS BERNACCHI PHOTO

with Chuck in person, and it was a pleasure to see how Chuck's friendliness put the boy at ease. Afterwards, the smiling boy literally jumped off the small stage and ran back to his mom, glowing with joy. These are the kinds of things you can't "see" when you're at home listening! How wonderful that *TWTD* will still be broadcast live from the Chicago Cultural Center so that this magic can continue!

Between the old-time programs, Chuck and Ken reminisced about their years with WNIB. Their sincere feelings for the Florians and their WNIB colleagues was clear; so, too, the fun they had as shown by their stories of some WNIB April Fool's Day pranks played so successfully on the air.

During this afternoon's program, Chuck often needed to help answer the phone because so many people called with questions about the future of *TWTD*. Over and over we could hear Chuck

saying to somebody on the telephone, "It's sad to leave WNIB, but we're glad for our new home on WDCB." This was the theme for the day.

As the broadcast ended, the emotion Chuck and Ken felt was obvious. More than anything else, it reminded me of the final episode of the *Mary Tyler Moore* TV show when Mary, last to leave the newsroom office, looks back at the empty space, turns out the light, and shuts the door. The Museum's radio studio audience heard the final strains of the *TWTD* theme song played for the last time over the airwaves of WNIB, saw Chuck and Ken remove their headsets, watched the sound engineer shut down the equipment, and it was over.

The End.

And that's show business. Ken, coat on and briefcase in hand, was ready to leave. Chuck leaned back in his seat and there was an audible sigh. The end of an era, yes... but the memories linger on. ■

King of Spades

BY CLAIR SCHULZ

Although the most famous numbers in radio may have been the 39 of a parsimonious comedian and the 79 of the fun-loving couple who lived on and in Wistful Vista, another set of digits, usually spewed out in rapid succession by a detective as a

preface to the story of his latest adventure, also brings back the glow of yesterday to many people. When Samuel Spade dished out his license number 137596, listeners eagerly pulled up close for a big helping of capered caper served exquisitely by the man playing the private eye, Howard Duff.

Duff, who late in life declared that it seemed like he had always been in radio, actually didn't earn his first job in the medium until after graduating from a Seattle high school. By that time he had abandoned his early ambition of becoming a cartoonist and had turned his attention to acting in *Volpone*, *Private Lives*, and other Seattle Repertory Theatre productions.

Duff considered some of his early work on Seattle station KOMO to be that of a disc jockey because his duties consisted

mainly of playing records, reading commercials, and tossing in patter to fill time until the newscasts which he also read. Later he moved to KFRC in San Francisco where he served as relief announcer.

His first real acting on the air came as the *Phantom Pilot*, an airborne champion of justice who, with the help of a plane called Skyball, swooped down on crooks and captured them like a cowboy hero corralling outlaws with his trusty steed. A lasting benefit of working on the overblown series was that one of the cast members, Elliott Lewis, became a lifelong friend.



Howard Duff

After the *Phantom Pilot* had been grounded, Arch Oboler came to Duff's aid by putting him in some of his plays. Oboler certainly proved to be a friend in need then, but later, after America entered World War II and Duff received his induction notice, could not deliver on a promise quite in keeping with the power the author believed he wielded. Oboler told Duff he would have the draftee out of the army in 24 hours. Duff did indeed receive his discharge... four years later.

However, another radio contact, Ted Sherdeman, writer of *Latitude Zero*, a landmark but short-lived science fiction show

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

on which Duff had appeared, used his influence to find a spot for the actor with the Armed Forces Radio Service. Besides editing out commercials from the discs sent to stations for rebroadcast to the military, Duff tapped into his experience as a DJ by introducing musical numbers inserted to fill out "short" programs.

Howard tailored his dialogue to fit the program so that, for example, after Archie finished his weekly sign-off with his employer, Duff fractured a little more English in the same style: "Now, before we leave Duffy's Tavern, leave us put a couple nickels in Duffy's jukebox. Duffy's jukebox, where the feet meet the beat. Well, the platter is spinning, the needle's in the groove, and here's the foist number coming up."

After the war ended, he found work on radio both on dramatic shows and also on lighter fare. In a bit of fluff for *Hollywood Preview* called "Slightly Sixteen" Duff demonstrated that he could insert a little life in the old "man must marry in a hurry to inherit a fortune" plot by playing nicely off Jane Withers.

His appearances on *Suspense* acquainted him with William Spier, the program's producer-director, and may have given him an advantage when Spier held auditions for a series to be based on the exploits of Dashiell Hammett's famous sleuth. Rather than try to imitate Humphrey Bogart, who had starred as Sam Spade in the best-known film version of *The Maltese Falcon*, Duff decided to read the lines with a devil-may-care air which convinced the bearded director that having a tough guy who was also a wise guy might be just what post-war Americans wanted to hear.

The Adventures of Sam Spade lived up to its title. Spade didn't handle cases; he ventured off on chases that veered in capricious directions and we went along, holding on tight for the bumps and curves Sam inevitably encountered.



There are few, if any, "serious" programs more pleasurable to listen to than *The Adventures of Sam Spade* and perhaps the principal reason why it is so entertaining is that Duff and Lurene Tuttle, who played Spade's secretary Effie Perrine, enjoyed the roles so thoroughly that their enthusiasm imbued the show with a sense of fun unequalled along Gunshoe Row.

Certainly writers Bob Tallman and Gil Doud deserved some credit for the witty lines, but the banter between Spade and the gallery of eccentrics he met could only be accomplished by an actor who could turn from two-fisted pragmatist to playful joker on a dime. Duff delivered some of the opening teasers, like the one of "The Prodigal Daughter Caper," with the thickest slice of ham this side of East Lynne. He preceded his dictation of "The Death Bed Caper" by launching into "Many brave hearts are asleep in the deep," started down the scale with "so beware, be-e-e-e-e," gave

KING OF SPADES

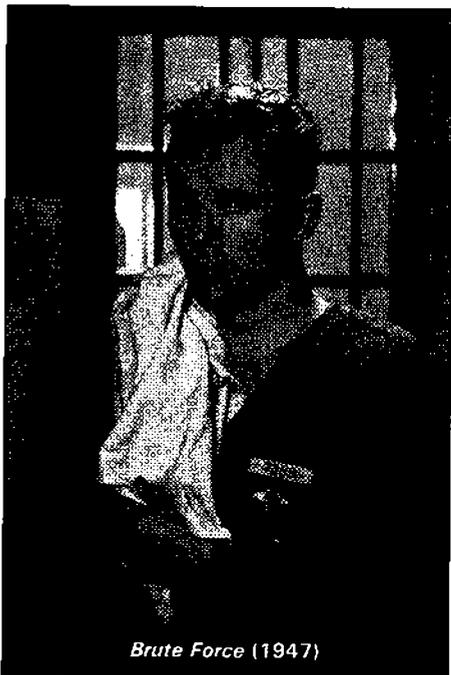
the date (June 20, 1948) as if beginning his report, reverted back to the song with an off-key "ware," and added a bold-faced "I have no shame" that made listeners slap their knees and say, "That's our Sam!"

Indeed, it was Spade's (and Duff's) inherent honesty that won our hearts. Usually the discovery of a corpse or a clue preceded the middle commercial, but on "The Hot Hundred Grand Caper" Sam noted wryly that nobody was directing bullets his way or taking swings at his head and grimly confessed, "Not much of a cliffhanger, but the best we could do this week."

The best they could do ranks as some of the most gratifying radio programming produced after WW II. If the part called for him to play Spade relatively straight in a tale of betrayal like "The Dick Foley Caper," Duff adopted a world-weary, "sour racket" mode appropriate for radio noir. Conversely, the farcical "Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail Caper" remains delightful even after repeated playings as Spade manages to keep his humor and dignity intact dressed as a white rabbit chasing red herrings.

The mingling of mystery and mirth constituted a delicate balance and Duff juggled them effortlessly. His tongue-in-cheek remarks never let us forget that he was portraying a gun-in-holster detective who meant business, not funny business.

Duff carried the Spade magic to all three networks at one time or another from 1946 to 1950 and also to other programs. Very likely the best of the hour-long *Suspense* shows is "The Kandy Tooth," a caper which pitted Spade (Duff) against Kasper Gutman (Joseph Kearns), his old adversary from *The Maltese Falcon*. One of the most amusing *Burns and Allen* shows is the episode in which Gracie could not separate Duff from the character he played and had



Brute Force (1947)

PHOTOFEST

Howard arrested. As Spade on *The Joan Davis Show* Duff solved a murder (and got the show's biggest laugh) by announcing that the victim had been fed jumping beans instead of kidney beans and had "been kicked to death from the inside."

Despite the popularity of the program, *The Adventures of Sam Spade* was kicked to death from the outside. Because Hammett, who, according to intimate friend Lillian Hellman, never listened to the show, and Duff, who had signed a document in support of the Hollywood Ten, had been deemed Communist sympathizers, the sponsor of the show, Wildroot, decided to cancel the series. A letter-writing campaign brought the show back to NBC in November of 1950, but without Duff as prime mover the series limped along for six months before expiring.

Unlike others who had been stung by the Red Scare and could not find any kind of employment in the entertainment industry, Duff simply walked around the closed door

of radio and through the open gates of the studios whose producers could always use handsome actors who looked like they knew their way around the block.

After debuting in the prison film *Brute Force*, he moved up to second billing and won accolades as a con man in *Naked City*, then advanced to the head of the class in the stark crime melodramas *Illegal Entry* and *Johnny Stool Pigeon*.

One of the early gems of Duff's career was as Jack Early in *Shakedown* (1950). As an unscrupulous photographer who used his camera for extortion and blackmail, Duff still conveyed enough humanity so that audiences felt a trifle sorry for Early when he was shot by a thug and redeemed himself somewhat before dying by snapping a photo of his killer.

The forthrightness that marked Duff's portrayal of Spade came across the screen as well. Even if his characters were dishonest, his assessment of his own character was not. When he told Colleen Gray, "We're no good" in *Models, Inc.*, we knew we were listening to a heel we could trust to tell it like it is.

Although Duff saddled up in the westerns *Red Canyon*, *Calamity Jane and Sam Bass*, and *Blackjack Ketchum, Desperado*, he seemed out of place in the wide open spaces as if he has taken a wrong turn where the sidewalk of the mean street ends. But when cast in *Women's Prison* as a conscientious doctor or a stalwart defender of a *Woman in Hiding* or a dedicated police lieutenant in *While the City Sleeps* or a waffling detective in *Private Hell 36*, he was back on the beat with his perspicacity still honing in with unflinching accuracy as in *Private Hell 36* when Jack Farnham told Cal Bruner (Steve Cochran), "You're sick, Cal. You don't care about anyone or anything."

Another reason he appeared right at home in these films is that his co-star in all



Mr. Adam and Eve (1957-58)
Ida Lupino and Howard Duff

PHOTOFEST

four pictures was Ida Lupino who became his bride in 1951. (Ida admitted, "I fell in love with his voice on the radio before I ever met him.") They also teamed up in the CBS-TV comedy series *Mr. Adams and Eve* in 1957 and 1958 as married and sometimes harried movie stars. Just as Tuttle's and Duff's affection for their parts on the Spade program shone though their performances, so on television husband and wife genuinely relished lampooning their images on both sides of the camera and taking swipes at the studio system as Eve Drake and Howard Adams.

Throughout the 1950s Duff appeared in a number of TV anthology series including *Ford Theatre*, *Climax*, *Schlitz Playhouse of Stars*, *Front Row Center*, *Science Fiction Theater*, *Crossroads*, and *Alcoa Theater*, and also put in an appearance as Mark Twain on *Bonanza*.

He began the following decade as star of *Dante* on NBC. For one season as Willie Dante, a suave nightclub owner with a mildly shady past, Duff traded quips with his bartender (Tom D'Andrea) and maitre d' (Alan Mowbray) and punches with as-

KING OF SPADES

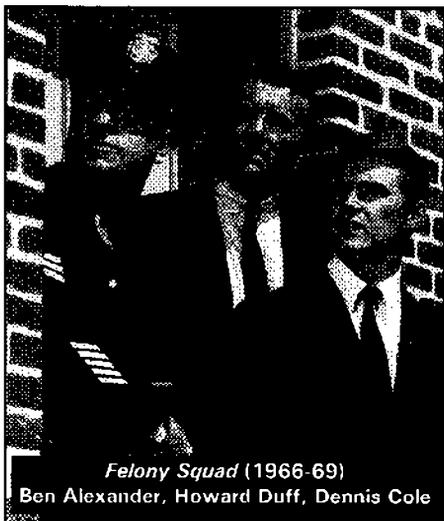
sorted scofflaws.

Although he appeared on almost every dramatic program of note during the 1960s including *I Spy*, *Burke's Law*, *Mr. Novak*, *Judd, for the Defense*, *Arrest and Trial*, *Twilight Zone*, *Combat*, and *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour*, his meatiest part came on *Felony Squad* (1966-69) as Sgt. Steve Stone who served as mentor to Detective Jim Briggs (Dennis Cole).

As they grey crept into his temples and seeds of jowls formed along his chinline, Duff moved smoothly from leading roles in which he supported the laws into guest shots where he bent or broke them. Whether appearing on *Mannix*, *The Streets of San Francisco*, *The Rockford Files*, *Shaft* or working with a longer leash on made-for-TV movies such as *Tight as a Drum*, *Snatched*, *The Heist*, or *A Little Game*, his characters were often on their way to dusty death or at least a prison cell.

When *Dallas* hit the jackpot in the late 1970s and Americans became fascinated with watching the unsavory rich dealing deceit at every hand, Duff knew they were singing his song: "Having a Grand Old Crime." As Sheriff Titus Semple on *Flamingo Road* he knew where all the bodies and secrets were buried. On *Knot's Landing* he played Paul Galveston who used his millions to manipulate for his purposes and to degrade for his amusement. As Senator Henry Harrison O'Dell on *Dallas* he had more power than money but no more scruples than the other wheeler-dealers he had played.

He continued to find steady employment on *Murder, She Wrote*, *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, *Detective in the House*, *Magnum, P.I.*, and other crime shows almost to the end of his life as well as choice roles in acclaimed movies like *Kramer vs. Kramer* and *The Late Show*.



Felony Squad (1966-69)

Ben Alexander, Howard Duff, Dennis Cole

PHOTOFEST

Howard Duff died of a heart attack July 8, 1990 at the age of 76. In an action that proved the hard-boiled actor was really a soft-hearted person, Duff had been up late the night before his death at a telethon to raise funds for residents of Santa Barbara who had lost their homes in a recent fire.

Although Duff admitted that his early love was the stage and that he was fond of making motion pictures, he never lost his affection for radio. He first stepped before a microphone in the mid-thirties, could still be heard half a lifetime later on *Zero Hour* in 1973 and *The Sears Radio Theatre* in 1979 and 1980, and it is one role in radio that overshadowed all his other accomplishments as an actor.

If some student wants to write a paper about Duff's place in show business history, the words spoken weekly by announcer Dick Joy would be instructive: "And now, with Howard Duff as Spade, Wildroot brings to the air the greatest detective of them all in *The Adventures of Sam Spade*." Period. End of report. ■

NOTE— Tune in to TWTD during June and July to hear Howard Duff as Sam Spade and in other radio radio roles.

Those Movie Operettas

BY DON FARRANT

Movie operettas really got started with Ernst Lubitsch. The German director had schemed all through the silent era and when sound came in, he acted.

In 1929 Lubitsch brought out *The Love Parade* starring his new French import Maurice Chevalier and, as his leading lady, Jeanette MacDonald. This would be the first of a stream of light-hearted and popular musical offerings. *Love Parade* was Paramount's biggest hit to that date, running in New York for 13 weeks.

Chevalier's career took off and he became one of Paramount's greatest assets, beaming a great smile and a flirty, "tip the hat" jauntiness as his salary grew to large proportions. Lubitsch, however, realized that MacDonald's performance had a lot to do with the success of the film, as she was beginning a fabulous career.

In 1932 Lubitsch teamed MacDonald and Chevalier again in *One Hour with You* featuring the music of Oscar Strauss. The film was well-received and was followed up with *Love Me Tonight* with a Rodgers and Hart score. It became an even bigger success. Now producers began scrambling for scripts and ideas for this new genre — a unique format that would carry the Hollywood movie operetta all through the 1930s and into the '40s.

In 1934 Lubitsch released *The Merry Widow*, based on the Franz Lehár operetta.

Don Farrant is a movie operetta fan from St. Simons Island, Georgia.

Once again, Maurice and Jeanette were teamed and the supporting cast included Edward Everett Horton and Una Merkel. It was another triumph for Lubitsch and his stars, but the film marked the end of the teaming of MacDonald and Chevalier; they liked each other well enough, but each was seeking new horizons. Besides, Jeanette considered Chevalier to be "...the fastest derriere pincher in Hollywood."

The operetta format, stemming directly from the stage, cannot be applied to all



The Love Parade (1929)
Maurice Chevalier and Jeanette MacDonald

PHOTOFEST

movie musicals. That's why we'll leave out a number of worthy musicals that didn't have the joyful, often frothy plot of instant romance, a big chorus, a royalty figure (count, prince, duke) with perhaps a case of mistaken identity, and always a happy ending. Some movie operettas, of course, were more serious than this. It's a thin line, actually, but at the risk of raising hackles, we'll list only the more frilly kind that harken back to the era of enduring melody, when heroes and villains were both likable characters.

For example, we may omit *Rio Rita* (1929). This was RKO's initial musical

THOSE MOVIE OPERETTAS

release and had the distinction of being the first Broadway stage success to also become a Hollywood success. The theme of a manhunt gave it a heavy story line, even with a good cast: John Boles, Bebe Daniels, and Wheeler and Woolsey adding a comic touch. For the same reason, we'll skip over *The Vagabond King* (1930) starring Dennis King and Jeanette MacDonald. This was based on the play *If I Were King* with music by Rudolf Friml. It could be called a "serious operetta" even though the plot, dealing with the revolt of the masses in the French Revolution, was pretty drastic.

Also in 1930 came an interesting change which certainly had the operetta format, although it is not remembered for its uniqueness. Opera star Grace Moore was recruited for *The New Moon* with Lawrence Tibbett. There was Sigmund Romberg music and the rather tired plot of a commoner falling in love with a princess.

Jeanette MacDonald was featured again in 1933 in *The Cat and the Fiddle* with music by Jerome Kern. Her career zoomed to even greater success when, in 1935, she was teamed with screen newcomer Nelson Eddy in Victor Herbert's *Naughty Marietta*. This was an MGM production directed by



The Merry Widow (1934)
Maurice Chevalier, Jeanette MacDonald

PHOTOFLSI

W. S. Van Dyke. Newspapers dubbed it "the greatest movie operetta ever made," fans loved it and MGM rapidly planned a sequel.

(One of the most popular musicals of this era was *Show Boat* (1936) with Allan Jones and Irene Dunne. This was a successful adaptation of a stage success, with enduring music by Jerome Kern. It was probably more of a "musical movie" although it had touches of the operetta format. Nevertheless, it has been classified as "timeless" and "a classic" by fans and critics alike.)

The Eddy-MacDonald team became legendary. *Rose Marie* (1936) was followed by *Maytime* (1937) and *The Girl of the Golden West* (1938). They were teamed again in *Sweethearts* (1938) and a remake of *New Moon* with a far different plot (1940), followed



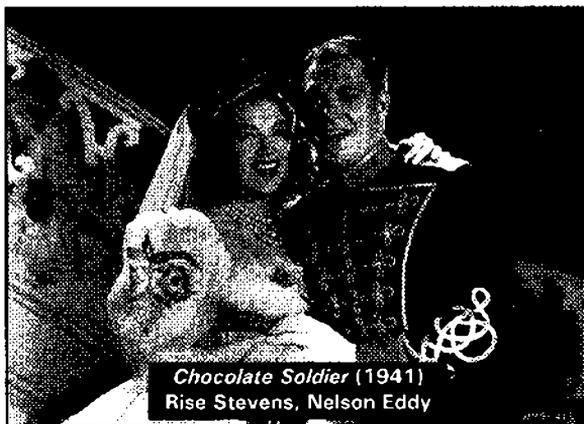
Show Boat (1936)
Irene Dunne, Allan Jones

PHOTOFEET

by *Bittersweet* (1940) and *Smilin' Through* (1941), which marked their final appearance together. Generally speaking, none of the later movies were as successful as their earlier triumphs, but most could be classified (perhaps loosely) as movie operettas.

Due to their high visibility, both Nelson and Jeanette made outside appearances with other co-stars. Eddy, for example, appeared in *The Chocolate Soldier* (1941) with Rise Stevens. This was strictly operetta fare (although modernized), but the baritone made others that were definitely not: *Rosalie* (1937) with Eleanor Powell; *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1944) and *Northwest Outpost* (1947). Jeanette's most notable "extra" during this time was *The Firefly* (1937) with Allan Jones, but it was called "boring" by the public and critics, primarily due to its two-hour length.

Meanwhile, a number of other mostly profitable and popular tuneful epics had



Chocolate Soldier (1941)
Rise Stevens, Nelson Eddy

PHOTOFEST

appeared. Among these was the first screen version of the Sigmund Romberg success *The Desert Song* (1929). This highly romantic operetta became a movie three times—first in '29 starring John Boles and Carlotta King; next in 1943 with Dennis Morgan and Irene Manning; and finally in 1953 with Kathryn Grayson and Gordon MacRae.

The melody parade of the 1930s had variety. Folks whistled the tunes from such Kern favorites as *Music in the Air*, *Robertta* and *Swing Time*. In 1938, *The Great Waltz* injected a schmaltzy Viennese flavor, with Fernand Gravet playing the young Johann Strauss, co-starring Luise Rainer. Not to be forgotten was the highly amusing screen adaptation of the Victor Herbert operetta *Babes in Toyland* (1934) with Laurel and Hardy.

After 1940, however, public tastes (perhaps due to the war) were undergoing a change. Post-war musicals seemed to have a new standard format, complete with lots of dancing, a large cast, maybe an occasional solo number.

There wasn't much need for the "movie operetta" of yesterday. ■

NOTE—Tune in TWTID during June and July to hear Railroad Hour versions of some popular operettas.



Babes in Toyland (1934)
Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy

PHOTOFEST

Buddy Hughes' Big Band Era

BY MICHAEL HAGGERTY

The ranks of the original Big Band singers are thinning, but some survive. One of their number is honey-voiced Buddy Hughes, who has made his home in the western Chicago suburb of Glen Ellyn since 1957. And he is still performing.

His real name is Charles Evans Hughes, but shortly after his 1919 birth he was nicknamed "Buddy" by his father and the moniker has stuck ever since.

Hughes started singing professionally at the age of 16 and he hit the big time in 1946 when he joined the Jimmy Dorsey Band. Dorsey had heard Hughes' recording of "Let it Snow" with "Here Comes Heaven" on the other side.

Dorsey was impressed and wanted to meet the singer, who was based in New York City at the time. Soon into the get-together at Dorsey's Manhattan hotel, with not even a minute of audition, Buddy Hughes became Jimmy Dorsey's new vocalist.

Hughes' first stage show with J. D. was in Hartford, Connecticut and he'll always remember that initial performance.

The giant spotlight burst upon him and "that just jars you," he says. "You can't see a thing. You're walking toward the microphone which is set up out there. You walk over to it and now all you can see is a dim bunch of faces out there. The theatre is packed with all the kids.

"I'm singing 'The Gypsy' and all I get out is 'In a quaint caravan...' and the place is going up for grabs. It was just too much,

a thrill a minute. It just tingled me."

Hughes has mostly happy memories of Dorsey. "Jimmy was very even-tempered, very professional," the ballad singer recalls. "He was very nice to work for, an immaculate dresser and a pleasant man."

Six months later Hughes was fitting nicely into the band, a fact underscored by this item in an entertainment column of a New York newspaper: "Jimmy Dorsey is happy with his new vocal discovery, Buddy Hughes."

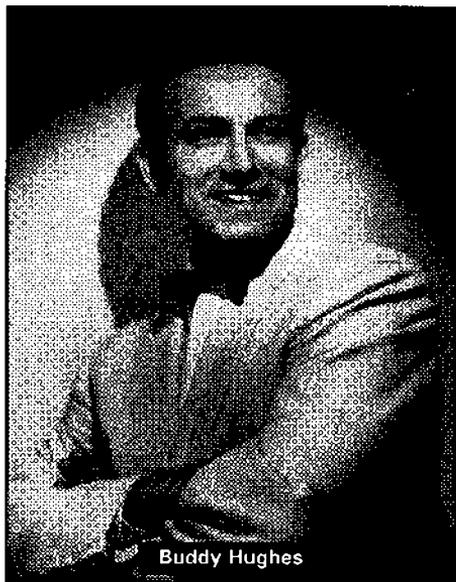
That evening the Dorsey band was appearing at the Terrace Room across the Hudson River in Newark, New Jersey. "The night was terrific," says Hughes, who felt he was really hitting his stride now. "Members of other bands who were off that night were there and it was great to have Benny Goodman's singers and others complementing me and congratulating me."

At evening's end, comments from the "pleasant" Dorsey were not so pleasant. "I have to give you your two weeks notice," Dorsey said meekly. "It's not your fault, Buddy. I need to record and I just got an ultimatum from the people at Decca Records. They hired a new singer and they want to give him more exposure. His name is Bob Carroll. Decca told me that he will record with us or our recordings will not be released. That's it."

Hughes had been recording with the Dorsey band in anticipation of a pending recording session and he had fourteen sides to go. The 27-year-old singer was heart-broken.

"I went from the happiest happiness to...

Michael Haggerty teaches psychology at Chicago's north suburban Oakton College.



Buddy Hughes

boom! I was done," he says. "When Jimmy told me... the tears just gushed. I couldn't believe what he was telling me. I was stunned."

The following day Hughes was visiting with a piano player in New York. "I met another singer there," he remembers "and to this day I don't know who he was. A young guy."

Hughes was introduced as "Jimmy Dorsey's singer."

"Jimmy Dorsey's ex-singer," Hughes corrected.

"Oh, I heard you just last night on the radio," the young man said.

"Yeah," Hughes shrugged. "That was my swan song."

In the ensuing conversation Hughes was told "Claude Thornhill is rehearsing a new band and he's taking his time," according to Hughes' new acquaintance. "He's personally auditioning singers and musicians. He wants this band to be impeccable."

"And that's what it became," asserts Hughes.

Thornhill, whose haunting "Snowfall" theme remains a favorite among many big

band enthusiasts, was working out his ideas at New York's Bismarck Hotel. The word of Hughes' availability had been getting around and the next day he got a call testing his interest about the new Thornhill band. Was Hughes free to be at Thornhill's rehearsal that day?

"You mean to audition?" Hughes asked.

The answer to that question was "no," because Thornhill already liked the way Hughes sang. Buddy Hughes had been hired without an audition again, this time over the telephone, as a member of the Claude Thornhill Band without ever having actually met Thornhill.

"Claude was a meticulous arranger and musician deluxe without doing a lot," reflects Hughes. "He had perfect pitch and was a lot like Duke Ellington and Count Basie. Claude would play the piano a little bit -- he'd stand by the piano and with one hand he'd noodle these fills.

"He always knew arrangements, where he was, the whole thing. But the entire time I knew him, Claude kind of ad-libbed, you might say. He appeared to me to be just looking around like he was off someplace. But he was aware of everything.

"Claude had one goal," Hughes continues. "That was to have Claude Thornhill's Band sound like Claude Thornhill's Band, and no other."

Hughes had a million-seller of sorts on Columbia. His recording of "Sonata" just happened to be on the flip side of Fran Warren's chart-busting smash, "A Sunday Kind of Love" for the Thornhill band.

By mid-1947 Hughes could tell that the popularity of the Thornhill sound was beginning to wane. He was therefore not surprised when the resulting drop-off at the box office was accompanied by some bad news.

"I'm cutting the band down," Thornhill announces. "Times are getting tough, Buddy. Do you want to take a major

BUDDY HUGHES' BIG BAND ERA

pay cut?"

Hughes was at the point in his career as a featured singer where he didn't want the high salary he had established for himself to be slashed. So he bid good-bye to the Thornhill band, whose number was to eventually be cut in half.

Several weeks went by and an idle Hughes picked up his ringing telephone to find Joe Dale, manager of the Gene Krupa Band, on the other end of the line.

"Can you come to the Meadowbrook at seven o'clock tomorrow night?" inquired Dale.

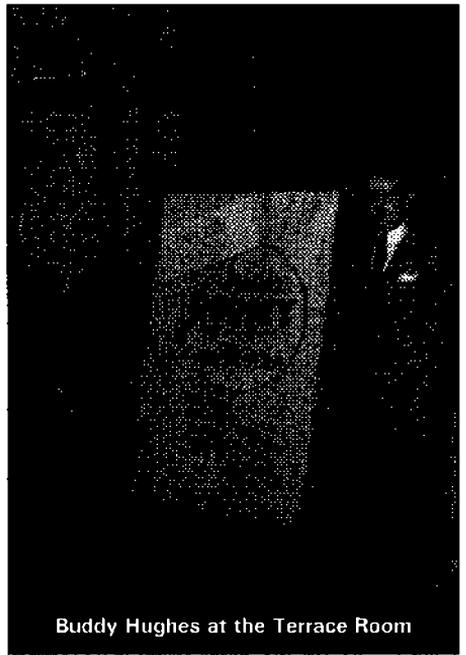
"To audition?" came the now-stock question from Hughes.

"No," answered the band manager. "Gene fired his singer last night and anybody who sang for Claude Thornhill for a year is good enough to sing for anybody's band. You've got the job. Gene wants you to sing with his band tomorrow night. Just come on over."

The ballroom was located in nearby Cedar Grove, New Jersey. "The name Frank Daily's Meadowbrook didn't mean anything yet to me at the time," confesses Hughes, "but I was soon to find out that it was legendary."

Krupa's former singer had left in a huff, taking the vocal music sheets with him. Hughes was advised that there were a dozen basic songs he should turn his attention to for his impending debut. The one he was most familiar with was "Time After Time."

"So the next night comes. Gene and I are sitting there at the appointed hour of seven and he is truly a nice guy," Hughes recounts. "We're having a cup of coffee and he says that we're on the air soon, at a quarter after seven. Nine o'clock had been the starting time I was used to, so that took me by surprise.



Buddy Hughes at the Terrace Room

"Anyway, Gene tells me to pick a couple of songs from the list for starters, so of course I choose 'Time After Time'," Hughes laughs, "as well as, I think, 'Day by Day.' And then all I have to do is watch Gene and he'll motion with his drumstick when it's time for me to come in. And I still don't have any lead sheets."

Hughes saw that the band manager, Dale, and the radio engineer were going into a corner and that Dale was also putting on earphones to listen to the new singer.

"So I go through the broadcast," Hughes relates, "and afterward Joe Dale comes over. He's grinning like a Cheshire cat. He tells me that it sounds like I've been with the band for years.

"Gene was a wonderful guy, totally friendly. You could talk with him about anything. He was not an 'untouchable' despite his star status. He was like one of the guys. He and I had a very warm relationship."

Hughes thinks that in retrospect some music fans have the wrong impression of

the Krupa band. "Ask some people today and they'll say 'lots of drums' because they don't always remember much about the Krupa band," he says. "But that band had beautiful ballads. That was a very good period in my life because I got to know Gene so well and I had so many good friends there. It was such a great band."

The good times, however, did not go on indefinitely. Halfway through his second year with Krupa he got word that the leader was breaking up the band. The bloom was coming off the Big Band rose by the end of 1948.

Hughes continued to live a life of financial comfort through a variety of musical avenues but his performances were never again to be as consistently illuminated by the high wattage supplied by Jimmy Dorsey, Claude Thornhill and Gene Krupa, three of the bigger names of the Big Band era.

He relishes thinking back on such things as conversing with Vic Damone in New York's famous Brill Building, visiting with Billie Holiday in her Manhattan apartment and bumping into —literally— Frank Sinatra in the Capitol Record Tower in Los Angeles.

"I had thought I'd be scared of all these big stars. When I was with Jimmy, Johnny Mercer would come by. Cole Porter would drop by. I was thrilled, but then I'd remember that I had become part of the musical world," he reminisces.

"And with Gene I was able to see Hollywood, be in a movie short and perform at the Palladium, where Lana Turner was backstage with us. Mickey Rooney was sitting out front with Ava Gardner. I was just enveloped in it.

"As I think back about those days, it's an ethereal type of feeling. Most of the time now it seems like a dream. Sometimes it's hard to believe that I didn't dream the whole thing up." ■

THE BALL GAME IS ON

BY RUSS RENNAKER

When World War II started I was with CBS in Washington, D.C. and like most of the young fellows my age I felt I ought to do my part.

I was married and had four small children... but so did Ed Lasker, Bill Cloony, and several others of the CBS crew who immediately enlisted or took commissions. So I had decided it was my duty to do so also. First I was told I had to take the physical exam.

Well, I was healthy enough so I went up to Bethesda Naval Hospital and went through the usual process. My first application was with the Army Air Force. I had been crazy about airplanes since I was a child. It turned out I had a "murmur" in my heart the doctor didn't like and I was rejected.

The Navy was my second choice (I did own a canoe once), but that doctor (who must have been a cousin of the first one) said the murmur would not do for the Navy, either, perhaps I should try the Army.

I did, with the same results. I never told my family how really unfit I was so far as the services were concerned.

A few days later I was having lunch with a co-worker of mine, and I was telling him the story.

"Well," he said, "you missed a good bet. Our boss, Harry Butcher, vice president of CBS in Washington, is heading up a new intelligence group under Bill Donovan, who runs the Office of Strategic Services. I don't think they'd mind a heart murmur."

Well, as it happened, they didn't. I never

THE BALL GAME IS ON

saw Harry Butcher again until sometime during the summer of 1945. He had become Naval Attache to General Eisenhower at SHAEF Headquarters in Europe. It was located in a little town called Reims in France, and was housed in a two-story brick schoolhouse that had once been Hitler's headquarters.

By this time I was heading up an office in the Pentagon Building that handled all press and press releases from SHAEF in France to the various press and radio outlets in the United States. Commander Butcher was in Washington on business and we just happened to meet in one of the corridors and we took lunch together.

After that I had several conversations over the various secure circuits between Reims and the Pentagon with Commander Butcher over various things. Once he asked me to be sure his wife's car got proper service as he was afraid she would forget to have it done.

Then one day in May, 1945 I got a strange message over the security teletype

that said, "Stand by for important event that must be kept secret until released by the President's office. The code word for the release will be 'The Ball Game Is On'."

The next morning a New York newspaper carried the headline, "War Is Over, Germany Has Surrendered!" I was sure the leak had come from my office and my career was over! But by the time I arrived at the Pentagon a second headline denied the story and they had fired the correspondent who had released it.

I sat in front of my Enigma machine all morning, afraid to leave it. Then, over the secure line came the code words, "The Ball Game Is On." I knew that meant the German High Command had agreed to a cessation of hostilities and the war was over!

Now I could release the thousands of press reports that had been pouring in from all over Europe but got no farther than my office until the code to release them had been received.

Leaving my office a few hours later, I ran into Lowell Thomas. "I just left Reims yesterday!" he moaned. "If I had only known I would have stayed on a day or two!" ■

Russ Rennaker...

...was a frequent contributor to the Nostalgia Digest until his death a year ago.

He was born in rural Indiana in 1906. He obtained his amateur radio license at age 13 and commercial operators' license in 1926. In 1929 he built a 100 watt broadcast station in Marion, Indiana and later worked for WFBM in Indianapolis.

In 1934 he joined radio station WBBM-CBS, Chicago as a broadcast engineer and was transferred to WJSV, Washington, D. C. in 1939. He was with the State Department during World War II and after the war joined ITT in Telecommunications. He retired in 1973 and continued to operate his amateur station, W9CRC until his death, July 10, 2000.



Russ Rennaker
at age thirteen with his homemade radio

He authored two books, A Radio Journal 1912-1940 and Tales of the Yesteryears, a collection of his newspaper columns, many of which found their way into the Nostalgia Digest.

How a TV Generation Came to Say 'Uncle'

BY RANDALL G. MIELKE

Several television networks were crying "uncle" in the mid-1960s because on NBC, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* was a top-rated TV show.

The idea for *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* started with producer Norman Felton who, in 1963, felt that TV audiences were tired of doctors and attorneys and wanted a different kind of hero. Felton was influenced by Ian Fleming's James Bond novels and, in many ways, *U.N.C.L.E.* was "James Bond on TV." In fact, Ian Fleming was asked to give his input early on in the project.

Felton decided to bring in Sam Rolfe, whom Felton considered one of the top producers and writers in television, to work on the show. It turned out that Rolfe used very few of Fleming's original ideas except the idea of the "innocent" person becoming involved in each of the adventures of *Mr. Solo* (which the show was initially called). Felton, recalling the Alfred Hitchcock thrillers, felt the innocent's involvement was crucial to audience empathy, providing a vicarious involvement in the action. The concept became a hallmark of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* series.

In the pilot for the series, the role of the head of U.N.C.L.E. was given to Will Kuluva. For television, Kuluva had appeared in *The Defenders*, *The Fugitive*, *Bonanza*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, and *Ben Casey*. Kuluva was to play a rather gruff, very serious Mr. Allison, Napoleon Solo's boss.

The biggest task facing the development

Randall G. Mielke of Aurora, Illinois is an author and free-lance writer.



David McCallum and Robert Vaughn

MIELKE COLLECTION

team was finding someone to play the lead role of Napoleon Solo. Reportedly the role was offered to Robert Culp, but Culp was committed to another project. Felton continued his search for Napoleon Solo, and eventually offered the role to Robert Vaughn, who was appearing in another Felton television series at the time called *The Lieutenant*. Vaughn accepted.

The only role left for Felton to cast for the pilot episode was that of Solo's fellow agent, Illya Kuryakin. This role was almost a throwaway in Rolfe's pilot script, at first only referred to as "the Slav," since his function as a Russian assistant to Solo was to provide an international flavor to the series. He was not even given a name until later. Eventually, the role was assigned to a young actor who was virtually unknown in America at the time — David McCallum. McCallum was signed for only

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

seven of the first 13 episodes.

The version of the pilot that emerged was not what was seen by the TV audience later. For one thing, when the pilot was done filming, it was still titled *Mr. Solo*. In addition, although U.N.C.L.E. is referred to, the letters those initials stood for are never mentioned. The reason, quite simply, is that at that point no one had decided what they should stand for.

Rolfe confessed that one reason he chose "U.N.C.L.E." was because it was provocative — it could be mistaken for the United Nations, or Uncle Sam. U.N.C.L.E. was to be opposed by an international criminal group, later called THRUSH, that would be used when the series could not come up with an individual villain of interest. At one point in the production Felton received a panic call from the NBC legal department. Apparently someone had thought that the "U.N." in "U.N.C.L.E." stood for United Nations, and sent them a copy of the script for their approval. The UN objected to a television show using their name. Felton and Rolfe had hoped to add an air of mystery to the show by not assigning a meaning to the name. They toyed with some words to go with the letters, at one point using "Unilateral Network of Combined Leaders against Evil." Eventually, "United Network Command of Law and Enforcement" was decided upon by Rolfe.

After the pilot was shot, some changes were already being made for the series. "Sam Rolfe had the idea," Felton remembers, "that since we had very few things going for us, with Vaughn and

McCallum still relatively unknown, maybe we could get an older actor who has name value to play the head of U.N.C.L.E. He felt that now that we had a deal for a series we could afford a name actor even though we couldn't in the pilot." To Rolfe and Felton, Leo G. Carroll was the perfect choice to play the new character, Mr. Waverly. Carroll was known to moviegoers from his roles in *Wuthering Heights*, *Suspicion*, and *North by Northwest*, and by the time he was chosen for the Waverly role, he was already well-known to American television audiences from his regular roles on *Topper* and *Going My Way*.

But the change in actors for the head of U.N.C.L.E. did entail problems for the already-filmed pilot. It would be confusing for the audience to tune in to the pilot and see Will Kuluva as Mr. Allison, the head of U.N.C.L.E., one week, and see Leo G. Carroll as Alexander Waverly the next. So Kuluva's scenes in the pilot were cut, re-filmed with Carroll, and then spliced into the final version of the pilot.

The Man from U.N.C.L.E. premiered on Tuesday, September 22, 1964. *U.N.C.L.E.*'s plots were bold, modern, and imaginative, and the villains unique. Humor was also present in the show and this acted as a counter-balance to the suspense.



The Man from U.N.C.L.E. (1964-68)
David McCallum, Leo G. Carroll, Robert Vaughn
Ilya Kuryakin, Alexander Waverly, Napoleon Solo

PHOTOFEST

Slow to gain momentum in the TV ratings, Vaughn and McCallum did a national tour to help promote the show. At the same time, the college crowd embraced the show and as word of mouth spread the ratings soared. The promotional tours, plus a change in time slots and the evolution of McCallum's portrayal of Illya Kuryakin from secondary character to co-star, turned the ratings around.

In the pilot episode, McCallum's total appearance on the screen lasted less than a minute in two brief scenes. In the pilot credits, his name came far down the list. By the end of the first season, however, he would not only be an equal co-star with Robert Vaughn, but a teen idol and national "sex symbol" as well. This change was both sudden and unexpected, but crucial to the show's success.

Sam Rolfe confirms that Illya was not intended to be a co-star originally. "The thought was that he would be a secondary figure. Not the major secondary figure, even. I thought there would be other agents before too long, but (Illya) at least would start us out. The focal point of it all was Bob Vaughn."

In the second season there is no question that the two agents are now a team, and no longer is Illya second fiddle. All the episodes play equally to both characters, and there are no all-Solo episodes in the second season.

By the start of the second season, the two U.N.C.L.E. agents had become household words. They received tons of fan mail, made guest appearances on other TV shows, and had stories written about them in teen magazines. All this in addition to the thousands of U.N.C.L.E. guns, toys, games, books and comics that the show spawned.

Other networks, wishing to capitalize on the spy-show craze, deluged the TV schedule with their own shows in the 1965-66



Robert Vaughn

PHOTOEST

season. On CBS there was *The Wild, Wild West* and *Mission: Impossible*. *Honey West* was on ABC, which also altered the format of its detective series *Burke's Law* to become *Amos Burke, Secret Agent*. NBC itself offered *I Spy* and *Get Smart*, the latter a comedy spoof of *U.N.C.L.E.* Still, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* held its ground. The show ended its second season in 13th place among the 66 shows on the air.

The reasons for the show's downfall in the third season are numerous. A succession of different producers worked on the show, and the spin-off series, *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.* (1966-67) took much of the creative talent from the original show. (*The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.* was cancelled after its first season.) In addition, *U.N.C.L.E.* broadened its humor and slapstick-type scenes were included in several episodes.

In its fourth season, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* eventually fell to 64th place in the ratings and the show was cancelled in mid-season, an embarrassing demise for an established show.

A total of 105 episodes were made and, at its best, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* had a perfect blend of adventure and light humor that millions of viewers came to enjoy. ■



Chuck Schaden's

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WDCB • 90.9 FM • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

JUNE 2001

SATURDAY, JUNE 2

ADVENTURES OF FRANK MERRIWELL (7-31-48) "Secret of the Old Mill" starring Lawson Zerbe as Frank, with Hal Studer as Bart Hodge and Elaine Rost as Inza Burrage. During summer vacation in Atlantic City, college chums are having fun on the midway of an amusement park when a fire breaks out. Sustaining, NBC. (29 min)

RAILROAD HOUR (1-21-52) "Desert Song" starring Gordon MacRae and Mimi Benzell in a radio version of Sigmund Romberg's operetta. Cast includes former silent screen star Francis X. Bushman. Norman Luboff Choir, Carmen Dragon and the orchestra. Marvin Miller Announces. Association of American Railroads, NBC. (30 min) *Read the article about movie operettas on page 9.*

BOSTON BLACKIE (1940s) "The Baseball Murder" stars Dick Kollmar as the detective who is an "enemy to those who make him an enemy, friend to those who have no friend" in this story about a baseball star who is mysteriously shot while sliding into second base. Cast includes Jan Miner as Mary Wesley and Maurice Tarplin as Inspector Faraday. Pioneer radio horse racing announcer Clem Mc-

Carthy appears as a sportscaster in this story. Syndicated. (27 min)

SCREEN GUILD THEATRE (2-4-40) "I Met Him in Paris" starring Melvyn Douglas, Ann Sothern and Robert Young in a romantic comedy about a young woman on a holiday in France who must choose between a playwright and a novelist. Roger Prior hosts this radio version of the 1937 film. Gulf Oil Co., CBS. (28 min)

AMERICA'S POPULAR MUSIC (1958) Chapter 2 of the 18-part "Glenn Miller Story." Host Andy Mansfield interviews Red Nichols who had employed Glenn Miller as one of Nichols' "Five Pennies." AFRTS. (30 min)

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF DENNIS DAY (10-22-47) Dennis, in his own comedy series, takes a second job selling insurance. Colgate, Lustré Creme, NBC. (28 min)

SATURDAY, JUNE 9

ADVENTURES OF SAM SPADE (10-24-48) "The Insomnia Caper" starring Howard Duff as Sam Spade, private investigator. Sam can't get any sleep because of a lovers' quarrel outside his room. Lurene Tuttle appears as Sam's secretary Effie Perrine. AFRS rebroadcast. (25 min) *Read the cover story about Howard Duff on page 4.*

AMERICA'S POPULAR MUSIC (1958) Chapter 3 of "The Glenn Miller Story, covering Miller's early days as a bandleader (1937-39). Andy Mansfield hosts. AFRTS. (30 min)

CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT (1-10-49) *Isolated episode* of "The Return of Ivan Shark" starring Ed Prentiss as Captain Midnight. Announcer Pierre Andre makes a four-minute pitch for the new 1949 Key-O-Matic Code-O-Graph, which also figures prominently in the continuing story line. Ovaltine, MBS. (13 min)

CAVALCADE OF AMERICA (6-16-41) "Annie Oakley" stars Agnes Moorehead in a radio portrait of the sharpshooter, highlighting the legend of her crack marksmanship. duPont, NBC. (26 min)

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JIMMY DURANTE SHOW (4-7-48) The Schnozzola convinces guest Dorothy Lamour that she should run for President of the United States. Jimmy, of course, will be her vice president. Peggy Lee, Crew Chiefs, Alan Reed, Rexall, NBC. (29 min)

INNER SANCTUM (9-19-49) "Honeymoon with Death" featuring Mason Adams, Arlene Blackburn and Mercedes McCambridge. A honeymoon couple witness a murder. AFRS rebroadcast. (23 min)

AMERICA'S POPULAR MUSIC (1958) Chapter 4 of "The Glenn Miller Story." Host Andy Mansfield interviews Tex Beneke who recalls his days as a saxist and singer with the Miller orchestra. AFRTS. (29 min)

SATURDAY, JUNE 16

AMERICA'S POPULAR MUSIC (1958) Chapter 5 of "The Glenn Miller Story." Guest Marian Hutton talks about her days as a vocalist with the Miller band. Host Andy Mansfield plays a portion of the ASCAP 1939 Miller concert at Carnegie Hall. AFRTS. (30 min)

SCREEN DIRECTORS PLAYHOUSE (12-9-49) "Call Northside 777" starring James Stewart in a radio version of his 1948 film. A Chicago reporter tries to prove a convicted killer innocent of murdering a policeman. Sustaining, NBC. (30 min) *Read the article about this story on page 30.*

SPEAKING OF RADIO (6-16-88) Ray Singer recalls his long career as a radio writer in this conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded at Mr. Singer's home in Beverly Hills, California. Ray Singer died in 1992 at age 76. (26 min)

PHIL HARRIS-ALICE FAYE SHOW (10-9-49) When Phil finds a few grey hairs, Alice makes an appointment for him to get a dye job at her beauty shop. Elliott Lewis appears as Frankie Remley; Walter Tetley as Julius; Robert North as Willie. Ray Singer was one of the writers of this series. Rexall, NBC. (28 min)

AMERICA'S POPULAR MUSIC (1958) Chapter 6 of "The Glenn Miller Story." Andy Mansfield presents the final portion of the 1939 Miller ASCAP concert at Carnegie Hall. AFRTS. (29 min)

SUSPENSE (12-16-56) "Eyewitness" starring Howard Duff as a newspaper reporter who gets the scoop of the year when a small building in the State Penitentiary is taken over by the inmates. Cast features John Dehner, Tony Barrett, Joseph Kearns, Jack Kruschen, Dick LeGrande, Lou Merrill, Barney Phillips. Sustaining, CBS. (30 min)

SATURDAY, JUNE 23 REMEMBERING DON MC NEILL on the 68th Anniversary of The Breakfast Club

BREAKFAST CLUB (6-23-58) Don McNeill stars on the long-running program's 25th Anniversary broadcast from the College Inn Porterhouse of the Hotel Sherman in Chicago. Appearing are Don, singer Dick Noel, Fran Allison (as Aunt Fanny), Sam Cowling ("Fiction and Fact from Sam's Almanac") and Eddie Ballentine and the orchestra. Don chats with members of the audience who raised their children while listening over the past quarter-century and hears predictions for radio in the next 25 years. McNeill introduces his sister, his mother and father, and his wife Kay and sons Tom, Don, Jr. and Bob. Plus: the moment of silent prayer and the march around the breakfast table. Multiple sponsors, ABC. (29 min & 31 min)

FRED ALLEN SHOW (5-9-48) Don McNeill joins Fred and the Allen's Alley regulars. Fred tells Don his idea for a new radio quiz show. Cast includes Kenny Delmar (Sen. Claghorn), Parker Fennelly (Titus Moody), Minerva Pious (Mrs. Nussbaum), Peter Donald (Ajax Cassidy). Ford Dealers, NBC. (30 min)

SILVER SALUTE TO AFTRA (1961) Host Don McNeill presides over the 25th anniversary salute to the Chicago Chapter of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists. Broadcasting from the Sheraton Chicago Hotel in the Windy City, McNeill presents awards and introduces performers who got their start in Chicago: Pat Buttram, Les Paul and Mary Ford, Marvin Miller, Jim Jordan, Cliff Arquette, Hugh Downs, Pat Flanagan, Virginia Payne, Cliff Norton, Marilyn Maxwell, Fran Allison, and Les Tremayne. Announcers are John Harrington, Pierre Andre, and John Holtman. Frankie Masters and the orchestra. WLS, Chicago. (29 min)

REFRESHMENT CLUB (2-5-37) Don McNeill hosts an informal half hour of music and fun from Chicago, featuring Clark Dennis, Helen Jane Behlke, the Cadets, Walter Blaufus and the orchestra. A few corny jokes and some music for mid-day. Coca Cola, NBC. (30 min)

BREAKFAST CLUB (4-28-58) *Excerpt.* Don McNeill welcomes guest Bob Hope who answers questions from the audience. (23 min) *Read an excerpt from John Doolittle's new book about Don McNeill and His Breakfast Club on page 26.*



Chuck Schaden's
THOSE WERE THE DAYS
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JUNE - JULY 2001

SATURDAY, JUNE 30

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (4-5-36) Broadcasting from New York City (the show didn't move to California until the fall of 1936), Jack and the gang present a spoof of rival Fred Allen's show, entitled "Clown Hall Tonight." Mary Livingstone, Kenny Baker, Don Wilson, Sam (Schlepperman) Hearn, John Brown, Johnny Green and the orchestra. Jell-O, NBC. (31 min)

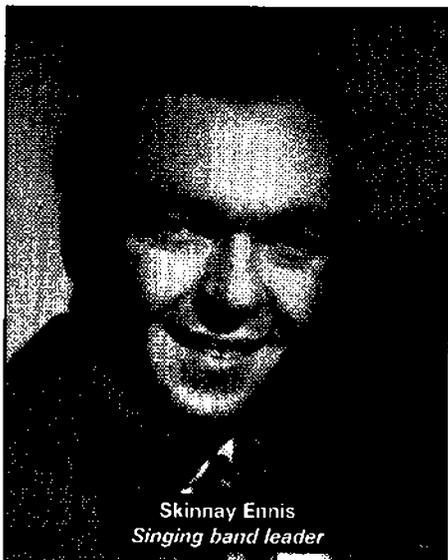
HOLLYWOOD THEATRE OF THE EAR (2000) "Ole Doc Methuselah" is an example of some "new time" radio being produced these days. It's a science-fiction story about a surgeon who roams the universe righting wrongs. The drama is narrated by veteran radio actor/announcer Jackson Beck and features Hamilton Camp, Arte Johnson, David Rasche, Petrea Burchard, Steven Markle, Newell Alexander, Rosemary Alexander, Melissa Greenspan. This L. Ron Hubbard story was adapted for radio, produced and directed by Yuri Rasovsky and was originally presented as part of the National Public

Radio series, 2000-X. Earlier this year "Ole Doc Methuselah" won a Ray Bradbury Award from the Science Fiction Writers of America. *The entire series of 26 one-hour science-fiction programs, hosted by Harlan Ellis, is available for download on the Internet at www.audible.com (24 min & 25 min)*

AMERICA'S POPULAR MUSIC (1958) Chapter 7 of "The Glenn Miller Story." In this session, host Andy Mansfield presents a number of early Glenn Miller recordings and broadcast excerpts from 1940. AFRTS. (29 min)

HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (11-4-48) "My Friend Flicka" starring Jeff Chandler and Claude Jarman, Jr. in the sentimental story about a boy who loves a rebellious horse. James Hilton hosts. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (29 min)

PHILCO RADIO TIME (10-22-47) Bing welcomes guests actor Clifton Webb and folk singer Burl Ives. Webb lambastes typical radio fare, especially detective shows. In a sketch, "Clifton Webb, Private Face," surprise guest **Howard Duff** turns up in his role as Sam Spade. Ken Carpenter, John Scott Trotter and the orchestra. Philco Radios, ABC. (30 min)



Skinnay Ennis
Singing band leader

SATURDAY, JULY 7
SINGING BAND LEADERS
OF THE BIG BAND ERA

OZZIE NELSON AND HIS ORCHESTRA (3-30-40) "Young America's favorite," Ozzie Nelson broadcasts from the Blackhawk Restaurant at Wabash and Randolph in Chicago. Vocals by Ozzie and Rose Ann Stevens. Ozzie and Rose Ann sing "I'm Looking for a Guy who Plays Alto and Baritone, Doubles on Clarinet and Wears a Size 37 Suit." Ozzie sings "It's a Blue World" and "Shake Down the Stars." Sustaining, WGN/MBS. (29 min)

VICTORY PARADE OF SPOTLIGHT BANDS (10-26-44) Louis Armstrong and his orchestra broadcasting from Ellington Field, Texas. Vocals by Sachmo, Velma Middleton and

Jimmy Ross. Louis sings "Louise," "Dance with the Dolly" and "Lazy River." AFRS. (15 min)

NBC BANDSTAND (10-26-56) *Excerpt.* Bert Parks presents Skinnay Ennis and his orchestra with guest vocalists Betty Madigan and Johnny Desmond. Skinnay sings "I Went Out of My Way," "There Ought to Be a Moonlight Savings Time," "A Foggy Day," and his theme song, "Got a Date with an Angel." Sustaining, NBC Radio & TV. (14 min & 18 min)

JACK TEAGARDEN AND HIS ORCHESTRA (9-27-39) Remote broadcast from Frank Dailey's Meadowbrook, Cedar Grove, New Jersey. Vocals by Jack Teagarden and Kitty Kallen, and "the top-flight trumpeting of Charlie Spivak." Jack sings "I've Got a Right to Sing the Blues," "The Little Man Who Wasn't There." Sustaining, NBC. (15 min)

OUR SPECIAL GUEST is big band historian **Karl Pearson** who will talk about —and bring recordings and air checks of— the singing band leaders of the big band era.

—PLUS—

AMERICA'S POPULAR MUSIC (1958) Chapter 8 of the 18-part "Glenn Miller Story." Jerry Gray, Miller's chief arranger, reminisces about his days with the Band. Andy Mansfield hosts AFRS. (29 min)

SATURDAY, JULY 14

RAILROAD HOUR (1-23-50) "Merry Widow" starring Gordon MacRae with guests Dorothy Kirsten and Jack Kirkwood in a presentation of the Franz Lehár operetta about a prince and a rich American woman. Norman Luboff and the choir; Carmen Dragon and the orchestra; Marvin Miller, announces. Association of American Railroads, NBC. (31 min)

HALL OF FANTASY (1953) "The Steps that Follow Me." The diary of a dead man reveals a tale of fear. Written and produced by Richard Thorne, who also narrates. Broadcast from Chicago, the cast features Carl Grayson, Eloise Kummer, and Sam Segal. Organ music by Harold Turner. WGN/MBS. (24 min)

AMERICA'S POPULAR MUSIC (1958) Chapter 9 of "The Glenn Miller Story." Host Andy Mansfield presents a variety of clips from Miller's Chesterfield radio series and from remotes from the Cafe Rouge. AFRS. (29 min)

BURNS AND ALLEN SHOW (5-19-49) George Burns and Gracie Allen are surprised when guest Mickey Rooney turns up. Mickey's hiding from his studio because he's tired of play-

ing "innocent, little-boy parts" in his pictures. Gracie decides to adopt Mickey. Maxwell House Coffee, NBC. (30 min)

ADVENTURES OF SAM SPADE (12-4-49) "The Flopsy, Mopsy and Cottontail Caper" starring **Howard Duff** as Sam Spade, with Lurene Tuttle as Effie and Elliott Reid as Detective Fritz Crockett who "moves in" on Sam and lands a job for the two of them guarding valuables at a gala masquerade charity affair. Wildroot Creme Oil, CBS. (28 min) *Read the cover story about Howard Duff on page 4.*

IT PAYS TO BE IGNORANT (9-7-45) Moderator Tom Howard asks impossible-for-them-to-answer questions of panelists Harry McNaughton, Lulu McConnell, and George Shelton. Example: "What is carried in a mail pouch?" AFRS rebroadcast. (30 min)

SATURDAY, JULY 21

FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (2-15-44) Jim and Marian Jordan star as the couple from Wistful Vista. A handwriting analysis shows that Fibber has the "common touch" and could be a physician. So he fancies himself as Dr. McGee, Physician and Surgeon. Cast: Shirley Mitchell (Alice Darling), Ransom Sherman (Wellington), Arthur Q. Brian (Doc Gamble), Marlin Hurt (Beulah), and Harlow Wilcox, King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (30 min)

AMERICA'S POPULAR MUSIC (1958) Chapter 10 of "The Glenn Miller Story" covers the Band's recordings of early 1941 and features studio recordings of Miller's first movie, "Sun Valley Serenade." Andy Mansfield is host. AFRS. (29 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (8-2-76) Comedian/writer **Bob Arbogast** recalls his career and his days in Chicago with WMAQ's *Arbogast Show* in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded in Hollywood, California. (26 min)

ARBOGAST SHOW (11-2-51) **Bob Arbogast** and Pete Robinson with a late-evening comedy and records program. George Stone announces. Sustaining, WMAQ/NBC. (30 min)

AMERICA'S POPULAR MUSIC (1958) Chapter 11 of "The Glenn Miller Story." Host Andy Mansfield offers more from the Miller movie "Sun Valley Serenade" and some other recordings from 1941-42. AFRS. (29 min)

NIGHTBEAT (7-13-51) "Anton's Return" starring Frank Lovejoy as Randy Stone, reporter for the Chicago Star, who tells a love story that "begins on a Chicago elevated train and ends in Eternity." Sustaining, NBC. (31 min)



Chuck Schaden's

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WDCB • 90.9 FM • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

JULY 2001

SATURDAY, JULY 28

SUSPENSE (8-7-47) "Quiet Desperation" starring Walter Abel. A bank employee, tired of his mundane life, hears about a securities exchange worth \$80,000. Cast includes Cathy Lewis, William Johnstone, Wally Maher. Roma Wine. CBS. (30 min)

BOB HOPE SHOW (1950s) Actor Fred MacMurray joins Bob and the gang: Bill Goodwin, Margaret Whiting, Sara Berner. Bob and Fred take the train to a Friar's Club tribute to Hope. AFRS rebroadcast. (25 min)

AMERICA'S POPULAR MUSIC (1958) Chapter 12 of "The Glenn Miller Story." This episode covers the mid- to late-1941 period in the life of the Miller Band, as war clouds loom overhead. The Band recorded "It Happened in Hawaii" on November 24, 1941 two weeks before Pearl Harbor! AFRTS. (30 min)

THE AVENGER (12-9-41) "High Speed Death." A struggling artist is upset when his successful model tells him she is getting married. "The Avenger" is a famous biochemist who also fights crime. Historian John Dunning calls the show "a poor man's version of 'The Shadow'." Syndicated. (27 min)

RAILROAD HOUR (3-5-51) "Vagabond King" starring Gordon MacRae and Irra Petina with Francis X. Bushman in Rudolf Friml's operetta.



Gordon MacRae
The Railroad Hour

Norman Luboff choir, Carmen Dragon and the orchestra. Association of American Railroads, NBC. (29 min)

FAVORITE STORY (3-11-47) "Three Musketeers" starring Howard Duff as D'Artagnan in the swashbuckling tale by Alexander Dumas. Host Ronald Colman introduces this favorite story of heavyweight boxing champion Gene Tunney. Syndicated. (28 min)

...coming in August...

An On-the-Air Old Time Radio Picnic and Ice Cream Social!

...and for more good listening...

ART HELLYER SHOW-- Music of the big bands and the big singers with lots of knowledgeable commentary and fun from one of radio's legendary personalities, **now in his 54th year on the air!** *WJOL, 1340 AM, Saturday, 9 am-1 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, 11 am-1 pm.*

MIDWEST BALLROOM-- John Russell Ghrist hosts a big band program featuring Chicago area orchestras and dance bands. *WDCB, 90.9 FM, Saturday, 5-6 pm.*

“When Radio Was” -- WBBM-AM 780

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

June, 2001 Schedule

FRI/6-1	The Shadow (11-12-39) <i>Inventor of Death</i> ; Johnny Dollar (7-9-56) <i>Shady Lane</i> Pt 1/5
MON/6-4	Mysterious Traveler (3-27-44) <i>Good Die Young</i> ; Abbott & Costello (11-18-43) Pt 1
TUES/6-5	Abbott & Costello Pt 2; The Whistler (9-25-44) <i>Married to Murder</i>
WED/6-6	Gunsmoke (9-6-52) <i>The Brothers</i> ; Duffy's Tavern (4-12-46) Marie McDonald Pt 1
THU/6-7	Duffy's Tavern Pt 2; Damon Runyon Theatre (10-9-49) <i>Joe's Terrace</i> John Brown
FRI/6-8	Suspense (1-6-44) <i>One Way Ride to Nowhere</i> Alan Ladd; Johnny Dollar Pt 2/5
MON/6-11	Frontier Gentleman (9-14-58) <i>Horse for Kendall</i> ; Jack Benny (10-3-48) Echo Pt 1
TUES/6-12	Jack Benny Pt 2; Crime Classics (11-25-53) Wm. Corder and the Farmer's Daughter
WED/6-13	Nick Carter (7-19-43) <i>Death's Double Deal</i> ; Burns & Allen (3-6-47) Pt 1
THU/6-14	Burns & Allen Pt 2; X Minus One (12-21-55) <i>Marionettes, Inc.</i>
FRI/6-15	The Shadow (2-11-40) <i>Death is an Art</i> ; Johnny Dollar (7-11-56) <i>Shady Lane</i> Pt 3/5
MON/6-18	Lone Ranger (1-17-49) <i>Joshua Biddle Returns</i> ; Great Gildersleeve (4-2-47) Pt 1
TUES/6-19	Great Gildersleeve Pt 2; Dragnet (10-12-50) <i>The Big Quack</i> Jack Webb
WED/6-20	Green Hornet (10-3-40) <i>Highway that Graft Built</i> ; Charlie McCarthy (9-9-45) Pt 1
THU/6-21	Charlie McCarthy Pt 2; Lights Out (11-3-42) <i>Across the Gap</i>
FRI/6-22	Suspense (12-17-44) <i>Life Ends at Midnight</i> ; Johnny Dollar <i>Shady Lane</i> Matter Pt 4/5
MON/6-25	Escape (10-1-47) <i>Most Dangerous Game</i> ; Fibber McGee & Molly (2-24-42) Pt 1
TUE/6-26	Fibber McGee Pt 2; Boston Blackie (6-18-46) <i>Hooded Gang</i> Dick Kollmar
WED/6-27	Gangbusters (1940s) <i>Case of Thornberry Brothers</i> ; Phil Harris-Alice Faye(12-12-48)Pt 1
THU/6-28	Phil Harris-Alice Faye Pt 2; Richard Diamond (6-26-49) <i>Tom Waxman Killed</i> Dick Powell
FRI/6-29	The Shadow (3-24-40) <i>The Plot that Failed</i> ; Johnny Dollar(7-13-56) <i>Shady Lane</i> Pt 5/5

July, 2001 Schedule

MON/7-2	Box Thirteen (4-24-49) <i>Find Me, Find Death</i> ; Jack Benny (10-10-48) <i>World Series</i> Pt 1
TUE/7-3	Jack Benny Pt 2; Rocky Fortune (2-2-54) <i>Football Fix</i> Frank Sinatra
WED/7-4	Tales of Texas Rangers (7-22-50) <i>Apache Peak</i> ; Charlie McCarthy (6-28-42) Pt 1
THU/7-5	Charlie McCarthy Pt 2; Black Museum (1952) <i>The Sash Card</i> Orson Welles
FRI/7-6	Suspense (4-27-44) <i>Death Went Along for the Ride</i> ; Couple Next Door (1-1-58)
MON/7-9	Sam Spade (6-27-48) <i>Bail Bond Caper</i> Howard Duff; Aldrich Family (10-23-41) Pt 1
TUE/7-10	Aldrich Family Pt 2; Lights Out (11-10-42) <i>Bon Voyage</i>
WED/7-11	Gunsmoke (9-13-52) <i>Home Surgery</i> ; Abbott & Costello (12-2-43) Veronica Lake Pt 1
THU/7-12	Abbott & Costello Pt 2; Dragnet (11-9-50) <i>The Big Mother</i> Jack Webb
FRI/7-13	The Shadow (10-6-40) <i>Ghost Town</i> ; Strange Dr. Weird (11-21-44) <i>Unknown Journey</i>
MON/7-16	Philip Marlowe (11-28-48) <i>Hard Way Out</i> ; Fibber McGee & Molly (3-3-42) Pt 1
TUE/7-17	Fibber McGee & Molly Pt 2; Dimension X (4-29-50) <i>No Contact</i>
WED/7-18	This is Your FBI (12-8-50) <i>Floating Stick-up</i> ; My Friend Irma (1-12-48) Pt 1
THU/7-19	My Friend Irma Pt 2; The Saint (9-3-50) <i>Baseball Murder</i> Vincent Price
FRI/7-20	Suspense (6-29-44) <i>Walls Came Tumbling Down</i> ; Vic & Sade (6-4-41) <i>Lodge Lady</i>
MON/7-23	Lone Ranger (1-19-49) <i>Ring No. 1</i> ; Burns & Allen (11-20-47) <i>Romantic Notions</i> Pt 1
TUE/7-24	Burns & Allen Pt 2; Escape (10-15-47) <i>Shipment of Mute Fate</i> Jack Webb
WED/7-25	The Big Story (1-7-48) <i>Manhunt in Manhattan</i> ; Life with Luigi (6-19-49) Pt 1
THU/7-26	Life with Luigi Pt 2; Casey, Crime Photographer (8-29-46) <i>Red Raincoat</i>
FRI/7-27	The Shadow (10-13-40) <i>Isle of the Living Dead</i> ; Bill Stern's Sports Newsreel (4-17-43)
MON/7-30	Broadway is My Beat (8-25-49) <i>Val Dane</i> ; Duffy's Tavern (4-11-44) Carole Landis Pt 1
TUE/7-31	Duffy's Tavern Pt 2; Green Hornet (6-15-41) <i>Man Wanted for What</i> Al Hodge

Don McNeill's First Call to Breakfast

BY JOHN DOOLITTLE

In the early 1930s radio networks were discovering how to produce programs that would attract larger audiences and, therefore, more sponsors. People would tune in nightly to learn about the doings of their favorite radio characters who might resemble their neighbors. Programs such as *Vic and Sade*, *Lum 'n' Abner*, *Amos 'n' Andy*, and *Fibber McGee and Molly* were first heard nationwide from studios in Chicago and each reflected values associated with the central part of the nation.

Many of the daytime soap operas like *Helen Trent* and *Ma Perkins* and numerous dramatic shows such as *First Nighter* and *Lights Out* also started in Chicago. It made sense to originate network programs from Chicago for several reasons. A number of the nation's leading advertising agencies were headquartered in the city, which made it easier to attract sponsors for new program ideas. Geographically, it worked because the city served as a major switching point for radio programs. In the early 1930s, network feeds from New York went to affiliate stations as far west as Chicago. Then the same program was produced again hours later for a feed to the west coast stations and was sent over lines from Chicago. In 1931, Chicago's status as a creative center for network radio was



Don McNeill

enhanced by NBC when it opened new studios on the top two floors of the Merchandise Mart, which, when completed, was the largest commercial building in the country and one of Chicago's most impressive structures. Shortly after the facility was opened, the network moved some 50 programs from New York to Chicago, bringing to 120 the number of programs that originated in the Midwest.

In Louisville, two young radio performers were experimenting with their version of slice-of-life humor on a weekly evening program over WHAS, billing themselves as *The Two Professors of Coo Coo College*.

Van Fleming sang and played guitar while Don McNeill played clarinet. They both acted out inanities in their make-believe classroom such as the monthly student fire drills. In the skit, listeners heard the shuffling of students marching outside. Once the classroom was emptied of students, the professors decided to actually start a fire with a cigarette lighter. They

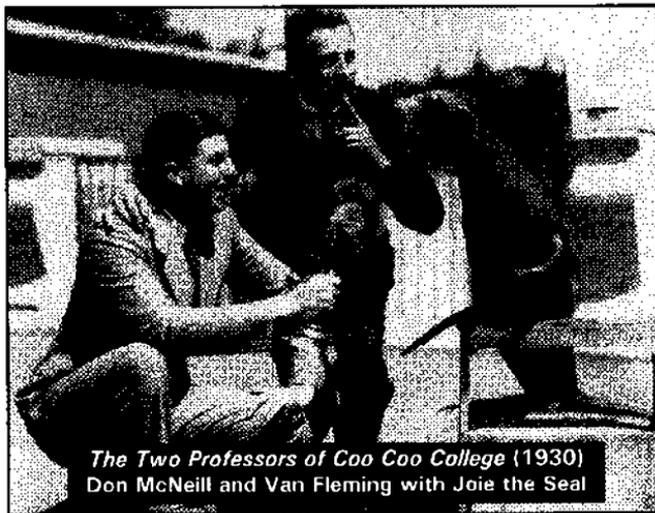
John Doolittle is the author of the new book *Don McNeill's Breakfast Club*, published by University of Notre Dame Press. (\$22.95 cloth, 244 pages, illustrated, with accompanying compact disc.) This excerpt is printed with permission.

marveled at the sight while the listeners heard the crackle of flames engulfing the building. When they were not burning down the school, the professors regularly featured their pet students, Joie the seal and a parrot named Chloe.

The boys had spunk and were continuously polishing their act. Feeling a bit cocky, they risked their future with the Louisville station by auditioning in Chicago for a network time slot. The gamble paid off because their audition was good enough to entice a sponsor, Quaker Oats, to give them a contract to perform their antics on NBC's west coast network out of San Francisco.

Van and Don became the early morning performers over NBC's nine stations along the west coast. Their showmanship was improving with practice. Quaker Oats was paying McNeill \$1,000 a month in 1931 and he felt pretty flush.

It was a lot better than the \$15 a week he earned on his first radio job at WISN in Milwaukee. McNeill had taken that job in order to help pay for school expenses while pursuing his degree in journalism at Marquette University after his father's furniture factory in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, failed. The job entailed his being an announcer, sports commentator, radio column editor, and clean-up man around the office. When McNeill found the courage to ask the manager for a three-dollar raise it was gruffly refused with the suggestion that "there's no future [for you] in radio. You'd better get into something else." That advice challenged McNeill to look for work at a rival Milwaukee station, WTMJ, which paid him \$30 a week to do essentially the



The Two Professors of Coo Coo College (1930)
Don McNeill and Van Fleming with Joie the Seal

MC NEILL FAMILY COLLECTION

same work. Within a year's time he was earning \$50 a week plus commission payments for commercials. One of McNeill's programs, *Dinner Table of the Air*, brought him some recognition after a poll of Milwaukee Journal readers selected it as one of their favorite radio features.

The fact that *Coo Coo College* had a sponsor and was heard on nine stations rather than one had given the Two Professors a taste of the good life. McNeill rented a comfortable apartment and bought a sporty Chrysler Phaeton. In his spare time he thought about the woman who had swept him off his feet when they met at Marquette University. McNeill first noticed Kay Bennett at a fraternity dance which both had attended with different dates, but they caught one another's eye after he brazenly mentioned that her slip was showing. He was taken with her exuberance and ease with people. She liked his dash (McNeill wore a raccoon coat) and thought he danced "divinely."

In San Francisco one night, McNeill climbed atop Telegraph Hill and thought about Kay and how a year earlier when she was visiting him in Louisville they took a drive and ended up at Cherokee Park where he gave her an engagement ring. Sitting

DON MCNEILL'S BREAKFAST CLUB

alone in San Francisco, McNeill made up his mind to bring Kay out to California so they could be married.

In 1932 the United States was feeling the increasing effects of the worldwide economic depression. Therefore, it was not surprising when Quaker Oats dropped its sponsorship of all radio programs, including *Lum 'n' Abner* and the *Two Professors*. Thinking they had a good act and would find new sponsors, the pair went back east to sell their show first in Chicago and then in New York.

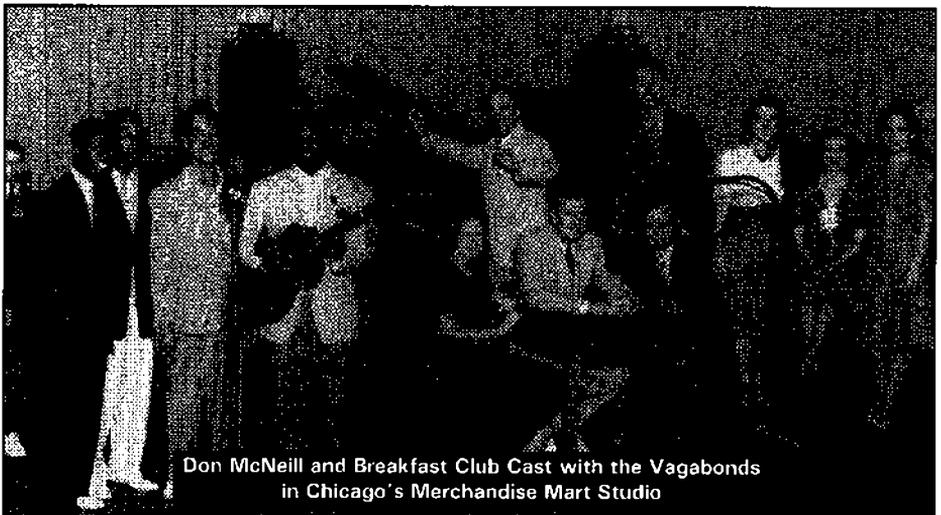
In spite of their experience, no one wanted to hire them, so they split up, hoping to find better luck alone.

Looking for work, McNeill began calling on agencies, stations, and networks while he and Kay were forced to make do in the cheapest apartment they could find in Queens, but after several months McNeill admitted defeat. He withdrew what little money they had left and the couple headed back to Milwaukee. The New York banks closed the next day.

Milwaukee was friendlier to McNeill than New York had been and he found an

announcing job at WTMJ where he demonstrated his comedic creativity on several shows such as *Around the Dinner Table*, *Homer Benchbottom* (a pre-game baseball interview program), and *Saturday Night Jamboree*, an audience participation show which sometimes featured Kay. The station was paying McNeill \$85 a week, which was quite a bit less than he made in San Francisco but was top dollar at WTMJ. In fact, it was ten dollars more than his immediate boss earned which didn't help their relationship. One day the manager told McNeill, "You've lost your radio personality.... I think you better look for something else."

Up to this point, radio had been a mixed blessing for McNeill. He enjoyed writing crazy skits and thinking up characters to act in them, but broadcasting had offered little security. However, he was optimistic when he learned that NBC was auditioning in Chicago for someone to emcee an early morning show called *Pepper Pot*. He asked the network for a chance to try out for the show, telling them about his background and enclosing sample scripts from his Milwaukee-based programs plus a photograph.



Don McNeill and Breakfast Club Cast with the Vagabonds
in Chicago's Merchandise Mart Studio

MC NEILL / FAMILY COLLECTION



Breakfast Club Cast Members Eddie Ballantine (top left), Sam Cowling, Johnny Desmond, Cliff Petersen, Patsy Lee, Don McNeill, Fran Allison

MC NEILL FAMILY COLLECTION

The NBC brass agreed to hear his ideas; after all the show needed a shot of fresh energy. The program was heard over stations on NBC's Blue Network, which typically carried non-commercial and less popular shows. The network regarded the Monday through Saturday show as a public service which provided NBC with a morning presence on the air, and since the orchestra was already on staff, the cost of producing the program was modest.

On the day McNeill was scheduled to present himself to the network executives, Kay did the driving from Milwaukee. During the trip to Chicago, McNeill made notes about how the morning show might be produced. Scribbling all the way, he imagined a wake-up program divided into fifteen-minute segments which were to be announced as First, Second, Third and Fourth Calls to breakfast, much one would hear while traveling on a passenger train. He had some ideas to make the hour both happy and inspiring by interspersing mu-

sic with comical vignettes like he had done with success in his previous radio shows. He envisioned listeners having their breakfast during the show, and therefore decided to call it *Breakfast Club*.

McNeill's was one of three auditions NBC executives had scheduled to determine the next *Pepper Pot* host. When he arrived at the network offices, he was ushered into a studio that was bare except for a microphone. At six foot two, McNeill was an imposing young man in the empty room. He stepped up to the mike and began to tell the executives, who were listening in a nearby studio, about his plans for the show. In addition to the four

wake-up calls, McNeill's *Breakfast Club* would feature his favorite poems mixed with a bit of philosophy, humor, a children's march around the house, and popular music featuring the orchestra and the show's male vocalist.

Seven of the eight executives who heard McNeill that day felt he made the poorest showing of the three auditions. Perhaps they found his somewhat nasal voice and colloquial style unsophisticated. However, one member of the panel, Sidney Strotz, liked what he heard and his vote counted more than the others. Strotz, the network's central division director, offered McNeill the job. Maybe someone better would come along but, for now, Strotz believed that McNeill's breezy and friendly manner would help the show.

On June 23, 1933 radio listeners heard Don McNeill's First Call and the *Breakfast Club* was on the air! ■

NOTE—Tune in TWTD June 23 for a four-hour salute to Don McNeill.

CALL SOUTHSIDE 1758

BY WAYNE KLATT

Most people assume that news just happens. In reality, each story is a little like a continent that needs to be discovered, and it was even more so in those days before fax machines, department spokespeople and news conferences.

In the 1940s there was a popular radio drama that recreated the real-life stories behind the news, and one episode of *The Big Story* featured the legwork needed to free an innocent man convicted in Chicago of what was considered the worst possible crime of all, the killing of a policeman.

But this time the tip didn't come from someone with an axe to grind or a friendly desk sergeant. The information was right there in one of the back pages of the Chicago Daily Times (later the Sun-Times) on October 10, 1944. It was a classified ad reading simply: "\$5000 reward for killers of Officer Lundy on December 9, 1932. Call GRO-1758."

Good newspeople can make connections as if scenting something in the air. The reward would not be surprising if it had been offered a year or even two after the murder. But why after nearly 12 years, and why offer a reward when Joe Majczek was already serving a 99-year sentence in Stateville prison near Joliet in what everyone regarded as an open and shut case?

That was the thought that bothered Terry Coangelo, a young brunette the Times had hired from the City News Bureau because World War II left the paper short of male reporters. Terry had been reading virtually every word of the paper because it was such a slow news day, and she sensed a

human interest feature where her more experienced colleagues might not even see a story.

Terry showed the ad to her respected city editor, a man named Karin Walsh, and he gave it to James McGuire, who had become a reporter after working as a private detective. McGuire looked up William Lundy's case in the cabinet of enveloped newspaper clippings, called the "morgue," and read that the officer was fatally shot by two robbers in a delicatessen in the old Stockyards police district. A witness "fingered" him at a showup (not yet called a lineup) in the basement of the police station.

But McGuire knew there was more to the case than just the facts. Lundy's shooting had been the sixth unsolved murder that week, and the Depression-uneasy public quickly demanded an arrest. Delegations of business groups were even putting pressure on Mayor Anton Cermak to keep Chicago from reclaiming its violent reputation from the 1920s.

There was yet another reason why Majczek, Illinois Department of Corrections inmate 8356E, was serving a virtual life term. He had an alcoholic private attorney who took \$1,500 from the family but only went through the motions of a trial and an appeal. All the cards were stacked against Joe, except one. He had a Polish-American mother who believed in him.

Joe's only previous run-in with the law had been a \$2 neighborhood robbery, and it was said that he sometimes had been cruel to his mother. He was no saint, but Tillie Majczek knew that her son was also no killer. She continued working as a housewife but now she scrubbed floors in the downtown Commonwealth Edison building at night with the sole purpose of

Wayne Klatt is an editor of the City News Service (formerly the City News Bureau) and a free-lance writer.

raising a reward for information that would bring justice to her son.

The family lived on her husband's salary as a slaughterhouse laborer, and every penny Tillie earned on her own went to the bank account for the reward. When the passbook showed \$5,000, she was ready to grab the only chance she could

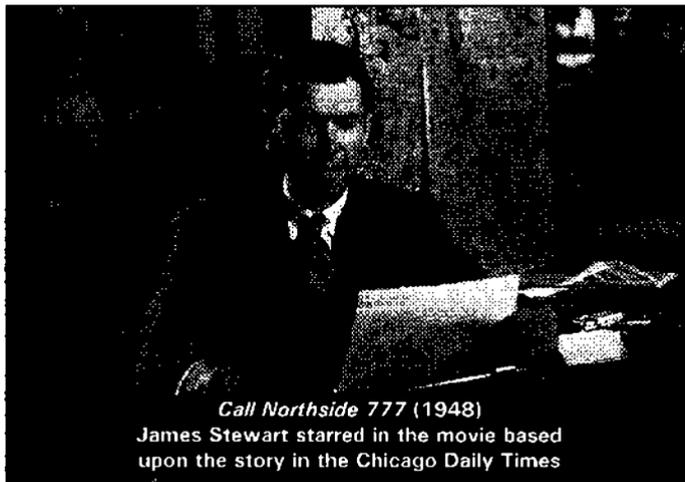
think of. A two-line ad that few would read. Her friends must have told her she was crazy.

Although living without hope, Joe completed his high school classes in prison and was trusted with the job of infirmary clerk. That gave him a chance to type a 30-page history of the case that his mother thought would help him get a pardon.

The story was taken over by Times reporter/writer John McPhaul, a slender man with a fedora and often seen smoking a pipe. McPhaul located the original arrest slip in a police warehouse. It stated that Majczek had been charged after he was identified by the deli store owner, Vera Walush.

With Walsh's approval, McPhaul went to the South Side to have an interview with the woman. She told him the same thing she told the jury, that she had recognized Majczek as one of the killers. But the reporter also learned that in those lingering years of Prohibition, Walush had been illegally selling pints of liquor from her store at 4312 South Ashland Avenue.

The judge, Charles Molthrop died two years after Majczek's conviction, but his son told McPhaul that his father had spent sleepless nights pacing the floor over what



Call Northside 777 (1948)

James Stewart starred in the movie based upon the story in the Chicago Daily Times

PHOTOFEET

to do in this case. This jibed with Majczek's written account stating that after his conviction, Molthrop had him brought to his chambers behind the bench and told him he was convinced of his innocence.

The judge told a second witness that he would see to it that Majczek would receive a new trial "even if I have to pay for it out of my own pocket," but he was dropped by the Democratic Party six months later and never took any action.

It took some doing, but McPhaul tracked down the former judge's bailiff. The man said that the deli owner, Walush, actually had gone to two showups and told police that she could not identify Majczek, but that she pointed him out at a third after some officers had a talk with her about how they could charge her with running a speak-easy.

During the trial, Walush even told Judge Molthrop in his chambers that she didn't think Majczek was the man she saw struggling with Lundy just before the shooting. When the judge told the state's attorney's office that Majczek should receive a new trial, the bailiff said, he was advised to lay off or give up his political career.

This clearly was no longer what news-

CALL SOUTHSIDE 1758

men called a "sob sister" feature of a woman who scrubbed floors for her son. This was a much larger story of a man facing life in prison as a result of a police frame-up to arrest someone, anyone, because Mayor Cermak wanted to take the heat off the department; and he was being kept in prison because the current state's attorney didn't want to admit that his office had made a mistake.

There were still lots of loose ends, but in news like this the facts are seldom complete. The Times began printing its developments two and three times a week. Then the editors took the unusual step of hiring erudite state Sen. Walker Butler — an attorney and later a Superior Court judge — to prepare an application for pardon.

The pardon was signed by Gov. Dwight Green, a former Chicago reporter who went on to help the government develop the networth theory that brought down Al Capone. It was the first pardon ever granted in Illinois without the arrest and conviction of the real killer.

The iron gates clanked open for Joe Majczek on August 14, 1945, and he walked out in a new suit to rebuild his life. The state legislature eventually voted him \$24,000 compensation, and he became an insurance broker living in Oak Lawn.

McPhaul, McGuire and Walsh were honored by the American newspaper Guild and the national journalism fraternity, Sigma Delta Chi, and the newspaper received the outstanding public service award from the National Headliners Club. After the dramatization on *The Big Story*, Twentieth Century-Fox bought the motion picture rights and filmed the exteriors in the Stockyards neighborhood in 1948.

The studio merged all three reporters involved into a fictional character "James McNeal," played by Jimmy Stewart, and for legal reasons changed the other names and made up a telephone number for the title — *Call Northside 777*. The black and white documentary-style film may seem tame today, but is essentially accurate and has a refreshing absence of theatrics.

Joe Majczek suffered head injuries in a car accident and died in a sanitarium in 1983, and his mother lived until 1964.

As for the real killer of Officer Lundy, we'll never know who he was. And yet this long-ago story of Majczek's ordeal has a discomforting modern sound of political pressure and a haste to prosecute, and it serves as a reminder that the news media do more than just keep us up on sports and the weather. ■

NOTE—Tune in TWID June 16 to hear a radio version of the film "Call Northside 777" on the Screen Directors' Playhouse.

A HOME FOR HOWDY

Howdy Doody is no longer homeless. As Wayne Klatt reported in the October/November 2000 issue of the Nostalgia Digest, the original puppet was locked in a vault in a Rhode Island bank during a custody battle following the death of host Buffalo Bob Smith. A federal judge in New Haven, Conn., ruled in January that the marionette belongs to the Detroit Institute of the Arts, where it will join Kermit the Frog and 800 others in its puppet collection. Show puppeteer Rufus Rose had promised to donate Howdy to the museum, but after Rose's death his children wanted to sell the original. Just a copy went for \$113,000 in 1997.



MY CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT SECRET DECODER

BY VICTOR M. PILOLLA

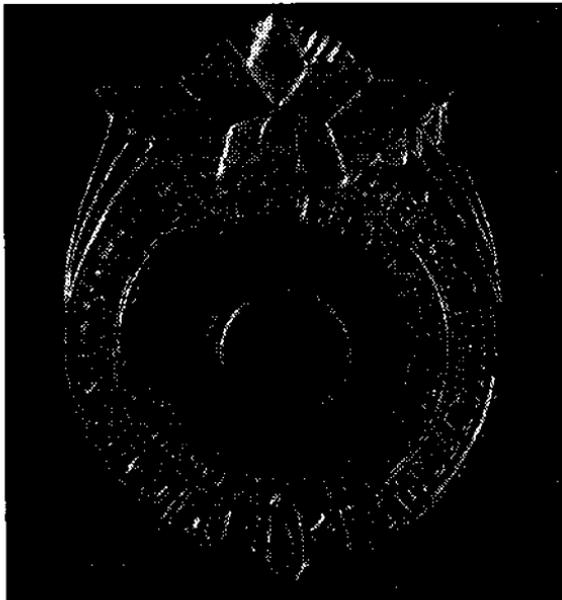
I was a *Captain Midnight* fan and I remember the old *Captain Midnight* secret decoder.

The decoder consisted of an outer dial with letters of the alphabet and an inner dial with numbers. At the end of each *Captain Midnight* radio show the announcer rattled off a set of numbers. By matching the letter dial with the number dial you were able to “decode” what the next evening’s story development would be.

In order to get the decoder you had to send in an Ovaltine label along with ten cents. Getting the label was no problem, but prying that dime from a Mom disciplined during the Great Depression was!

One Sunday morning as I was reading the comics section, I came across an Ovaltine advertisement that featured a big color picture of the coveted decoder. I gazed intently at the picture, wishing I had one in my hand. Suddenly I was hit with one of the biggest brainstormers of my life: Why not just cut out the picture of the decoder—along with the inner dial—paste the pieces on a cardboard template, and have my own decoder then and there?

The idea possessed me with a boyhood passion. But would it work? I spent a good part of that Sunday fashioning my paper decoder, but I had to wait until the evening of the following day to find out whether it



worked. I could hardly wait; it was the longest day/night cycle of my life!

Finally, *Captain Midnight*'s Monday radio segment concluded and the announcer's mysterious coded message came over our Zenith console.

I hunched over my home-made decoder and put it to the test. Carefully I rotated the dials, matching the numbers with the letters and printing out the words, letter by letter. When I finished I leaned back to see the results.

Wow! It worked! I can't tell you the joy and satisfaction it gave me.

For a good while after that I was the envy of my admiring neighborhood buddies as they watched wide-eyed as I decoded message after message.

And all without spending a dime. That was a real kick! ■

Victor M. Pilolla of Oak Park, Illinois is an attorney at law.

Young Ears and Old Sounds

BY MARK BURLEY

The young man goes over to the cabinet and opens the drawer carefully. Then, he takes out one of many audio tapes that he owns and puts it into the combination radio and cassette player, preparing to lose himself in another place and time.

Admittedly, the above description does not have much in common with the golden days of radio, when families would gather together and listen to their favourite programs.

Yet, thanks to select bookstores and organizations, these tapes are the way that great numbers of people are discovering and sometimes rediscovering classic shows.

My own introduction was a little more personal. As a child I spent much time with adults and occasionally I would hear them talk about different personalities. Soon my interest grew and, eventually, one of my uncles gave me a Jack Benny tape. The sound quality was not the greatest and some of the material might seem corny to modern tastes, but the impact on my young ears was quite profound.

Some shows have aged better than others. I often feel a twinge of discomfort when hearing stuff like *Amos 'n' Andy*, but sometimes it helps to put these broadcasts into their proper context and remember when they were made.

There are some programs that worked better on radio than when they have been transferred to another medium. Two such examples are *The Green Hornet* and "Sorry, Wrong Number."

While I have always enjoyed the *Green Hornet* TV series, I've come to think that the radio shows had the edge because, on radio, no one but Britt Reid's sidekick Kato knew his secret identity, and this

increased the risk of the Hornet's getting caught and raised the excitement level for the audiences.

As far as "Sorry, Wrong Number" is concerned, we have a good movie starring Barbara Stanwyck and Burt Lancaster, but the problem is that there is too much story, most of it being told in flashbacks. This may flesh out Lucille Fletcher's characters, but it also diluted some of the tension from the film's atmosphere. On the original radio drama, aired on *Suspense*, the only things required were Agnes Moorehead, sick in her upstairs bedroom, and a telephone on which she could hear her husband's plot to kill her. These ingredients were enough to put listeners on the edges of their seats.

Those of my generation or younger who have had either limited or no exposure to old-time radio may put it down for its sometimes exaggerated acting style or primitive effects. However, having had an experience in radio acting I can say that performing in front of a microphone and with a producer as your only audience, the feeling is both liberating and a little strange. One must also keep in mind that acting styles have changed over the years.

Some people wonder what the faces behind the characters look like. These musings were given a nice comedic touch in Woody Allen's tribute to the early times of broadcasting, *Radio Days*, in which the hero of a certain series is on the air handsome and strong, but in real life is paunchy and balding.

Still, even though curiosity is understandable, I think that there are times when these voices from the past should be enough, for, as anyone who has ever been told a great story knows, what we hear can be as valuable to us as what we see. At their best, these vintage sounds prove this to be true. ■

Mark Burley is a young fan of old-time radio who lives in Scarborough, Ontario, Canada.

OGDEN NASH

BY RICHARD W. O'DONNELL

I have listened to thousands of radio shows over the years. But I have known only one person who appeared nationally on network radio shows.

That would be poet Ogden Nash. He was a regular on *The Guy Lombardo Show* during the late thirties. He recited his whimsical little verses every week, and made life pleasanter for listeners. His poems were a joy.

Nash appeared on *Information Please*, the erudite radio quiz show, a number of times. Because of his stature as a poet, he was also a regular on those week-end panel discussion shows the networks used to feature in those days. Later, he did TV for a while.

I interviewed Nash in the fifties, and since he spent his summers in New Hampshire, where I lived, we kept in touch. We were both Red Sox fans.

My encounters with Nash were not often enough. But they were memorable. In particular, two stand out. The first was the time I sat down with him in his New York apartment — he hailed from Baltimore, by the way — and he challenged me to give him topics for poems.

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

It was amazing. I'd say *baseball*, and a minute or so later, Nash would jot down an amusing four lines on the subject. If I said *the weather*, he'd come up with a poem in nothing flat. All I did was suggest a subject, and Nash would fire back a poem at me. The man was truly gifted.

All of which brings me to my favorite Ogden Nash story. Back in 1964, I was on the rewrite battery of *The Boston Globe*.

Lawrence L. Winship, *The Globe's* editor at the time, came up to my desk, and handed me a letter that had arrived in the mail that morning.

"You know Ogden Nash, don't you?" he said.

I nodded.

"Well, the letter's from Nash," said Winship. "His car was rifled last week while he was in Boston overnight at the Ritz-Carlton. He's written a letter to the editor asking for help in locating his lost property."

I inquired: "Do you want me to use the letter as the basis for the story?"

"No," said Winship. "I want you to mention the letter in the story. But first get Nash on the phone, and see if you can get some lively quotes out of him."

Nash had parked his station wagon in a Back Bay parking lot the previous Wednesday while staying overnight at the hotel.



PHOTOFEST

OGDEN NASH

He was in Boston for a conference with his publishers, Little Brown & Company, about a new book called "Marriage Lines," which was due out the following month.

The poet and his wife had stopped off in Boston while enroute from their summer home in New Hampshire to their New York apartment. When they left the hotel the following morning, they discovered that \$7000 worth of luggage and personal effects had been stolen from the station wagon.

"Since I am sure there are no thieves among your readers," Nash wrote *The Globe* in his letter, "I make this appeal to whoever found three suitcases and two dress bags in my stationwagon.

"The loss of the contents is far more crushing to my wife and me, than rewarding to the finder, as some of them are impossible to dispose of for a fraction of their worth. My wife's collection of scarves is more of a reflection of her personal taste than a marketable item.

"Others," he concluded, "such as family photographs, old checkbooks and financial records are of value only to us. The antique and costume jewelry is not likely to appeal to an under-the-counter buyer, and even my wife's engagement ring is not of a design to afford easy resale."

Fortunately, I was able to contact Nash at his New York flat in a matter of minutes after editor Winship handed me the poet's letter.

"How about a short poem on the robbery?" I suggested. "I could put it at the top of the story. It would attract a great deal of attention. The robbers might see it, and decide to return some of the stuff they took from your wagon."

Then I thought to add: "You'll have to write it in a hurry, though. My deadline's in fifteen minutes."

Nash considered my suggestion for a few seconds, then instructed: "Call me back in exactly ten minutes, Dick."

And I did.

Needless to say, the poet's verse was featured prominently on the front page of the evening edition of *The Globe* that rolled off the presses an hour or so later.

The now-famous "Robbed in Boston" poem read:

*I'd expect to be robbed in Chicago,
But not in the home of the Cod,
So I hope that the Cabots and Lowells
Will mention the matter to God.*

The Associated Press picked up the poem and circulated it across the nation. It was front page news everywhere the following morning. Alas, despite the tremendous amount of publicity the short verse inspired, Nash never did recover any of the possessions stolen from his station wagon.

It should be noted that the verse failed to bring smiles to the faces of the town fathers in Chicago. In fact, they were quite upset about it. As a result, Nash made a public apology to the good citizens of the Windy City. ■

NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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OUR READERS/LISTENERS WRITE

WE GET MAIL

CHICAGO-- When I was growing up in the early 1950s, I recall a radio show that was on at night that used to scare the hell out of me: *The Hall of Fantasy*. I never hear it played or see it in the *Digest* as a listed program. Could you please tell me what you know of this show? The sponsor, years on the air, day and time of broadcast, and why it was so short-lived.--**ROBERT FORD ED. NOTE--** *Hall of Fantasy* was a Chicago-originated supernatural-type program produced at WGN and broadcast on the Mutual network between Aug. 22, 1952 and Sept. 28, 1953. Richard Thorne was the writer, creator, producer, and director of the show and many Chicago actors performed on it each week. It was well-received, but, alas, it was difficult to survive in the closing days of the golden era of radio against such competition as *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts* and *Voice of Firestone* on radio, and television. Tune in *TWTD* July 14 to hear an exciting *Hall of Fantasy* broadcast, "The Steps that Follow Me" from 1953.

E-MAIL-- At a recent tent sale, I found a copy of "Juke Box Saturday Night" by Glenn Miller. It was in good shape with the original sleeve intact. That wasn't the only part. On the sleeve were notes about a new RCA Victrola. It said that it had a tone arm that played both sides of the record. It had a Magic Tone Cell for clearer tone. The most interesting part was that it had something called a Jewel-Lite Scanner. This, it said, entirely eliminates use of needles. It had a flexible tone bridge that eliminates all undesirable mechanical noise. It seems like this scanner was the first example of a style of laser-like music player. I heard of one that played long-play 33s but never one that played 78s. It was kind of interesting to me. Maybe this idea got lost with WW II. Maybe it just never caught on like the long play version. If I found either of these light-n-needle players, they would probably be one of the last ones I would get. Maybe someday I'll get over to the Player Piano Clinic in Berwyn to see what they've got. --**TOM PAPROCK**

LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY-- I attended Wittenberg University, Springfield, Ohio from 1960-64. I spent many a late night listening to *Moon River*. Pete Matthews read the words then. He was not mentioned in the Ed Knapp article (Feb/Mar 2001 *Digest*). At the end of each program, Pete would announce "Ruby Wright sings the songs, Herschel Luecke plays the organ. This is WLW, Cincinnati." It should be emphasized that the music was recorded live. It was the same organ that Fats Waller played when he was at WLW. --**TIMOTHY KURYLEA**

E-MAIL-- I began listening to your program when I was younger, probably in fifth or sixth grade, I don't really remember. There was hardly a weekend that we didn't listen. I grew to look forward to *Fibber McGee and Molly*, *Jack Benny*, *Our Miss Brooks* and all the rest. The *Cinnamon Bear* and "A Christmas Carol" became traditions for us. My husband and I moved back into the Chicago area about seven years ago and I began listening to your show again with my then fourth grade daughter. Now there are very few Saturdays that go by that we aren't tuned in. Your show has touched a third generation in my family and we share a bond that is quite unique in our fondness for your show. --**KATE ROBERTSON**

E-MAIL-- I've been listening to your show for over ten years now and I wanted to say thank you for bringing all of these shows to everyone. I'm too young to have heard them during their original runs, and if it weren't for shows like yours, I probably never would have heard them. *Those Were The Days* is definitely the highlight of my Saturdays. Thank you and everyone who works on the show. --**ANGELA CRIBBEN**

HIGHLAND PARK, IL-- I enjoyed reading the story "Remembering the Chicago World's Fair" by George Littlefield, Sr. in the April/May issue. Like Mr. Littlefield Sr., my late father John G. Cumberland worked at the Fair as co-pilot flying the Sikorsky S-38 amphibian airplanes, giving sightseeing rides over the Fair. They were operated by



MORE MAIL

Palwaukee Airport in Wheeling, Illinois and were kept at the Fair's lakefront. Two of the Sikorsky S-38s were sold to Palwaukee for the Fair by Mr. Charles R. Walgreen, Sr. of the drug store chain. Johnson's Wax Company of Racine, Wisconsin bought one of the Sikorsky S-38s at the end of the 1934 Fair season.

During the Fair in 1934 my dad gave Miss Sally Rand an airplane ride in his own airplane, an OX-5 Swallow Biplane NC 5088.

Some early radio personalities in the Chicago area flying at that time, at Palwaukee Airport, were Wayne King, Edgar Bergen, and two guys known as Amos 'n' Andy. Andy went on to get his flying license, but Amos gave it up, only because he refused to do spins, which were a requirement for a license at that time.

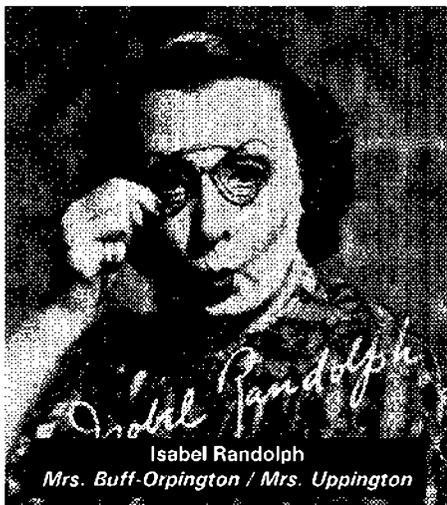
My father and I both enjoyed the Century of Progress "reunion" you had in November of 1978 (at North West Federal Savings auditorium) with Miss Sally Rand as a special guest that Sunday afternoon.

--GORDON CUMBERLAND

NORTHBROOK, IL-- Nice article in the April/May issue by Randall Mielke on cowboy sidekicks who were comedy foils; but how could the most famous of them all not be mentioned: Gabby Hayes? Can't remember to whom he was sidekick. Nor the actor's name of the always hungry "California," sidekick of Hopalong Cassidy (also not mentioned). --**PHILIP SCHWIMMER**

ED. NOTE-- The article was about *four*, but not all, *television* cowboy sidekicks. Gabby was Roy Rogers' sidekick in the movies and, for a while, on radio, but not on TV. Gabby also helped out Hopalong Cassidy in the movies, but not on TV while Andy Clyde played California Carlson with Hoppy in the movies and radio, but not on TV. Edgar Buchanan joined Hoppy in those made-for-TV shows.

E-MAIL-- You and I know who Mrs. Buff-Orpington is, but my neighbor, a child of about 42, has never heard of her, and I can't find any reference anywhere to prove



that she "exists" or that shows her persona. Can you steer me? There is no mention of her in any web site I have found. I have long known from whence her name is derived; there is a rare breed of chickens called Orpington, which comes in several colors, such as black and, yes, *buff*. Research gives me plenty of info on the poultry, but nothing about the old bird herself. --**ALAN COSNOW**

ED. NOTE-- The lady in question was a character appearing occasionally on the *Blondie* program. She was a snooty, society-type woman who drove around in a large, chauffeured automobile that made a comic sound whenever she arrived or departed. She was played by Isabel Randolph, who almost made a career of that type character, having also portrayed Mrs. Uppington on *Fibber McGee and Molly*.

CHICAGO-- You gave us quite a scare in December with the news of WNIB closing. I do not think you have any idea how many people plan their day around your show every Saturday. My children have to record it for me if I am not at home, and they have learned to love the old shows as much as I do. Thank you for all your work in finding a new home for *Those Were The Days*. Is there any way you can publish the address of WNIB so we can send a letter to the old owners, thanking them for years of listening pleasure and to wish them good luck in their retirement?--**MARIE GAWNE**

ED. NOTE -- You may write to Bill and Sonia Florian at 1140 W. Erie Street, Chicago,

Illinois, 60622. But WNIB listener **Kevin Murphy** may have been speaking for many when he e-mailed the following note to the station (and sent a copy to us):

TO WNIB, CHICAGO:

This is a letter I have resisted writing from the moment that I heard the news that WNIB/WNIZ will fade into history. Resisted, I guess, because writing this letter means that I have accepted that which I have not wanted to accept, the end of another great classical radio station, and the dwindling of the field.

But to not accept would mean not expressing my gratitude for the wondrous world of classical music and classic presentations that you --all of you at WNIB-- have made available to us. More than 30 years ago, I first became a subscriber to WNIB, while I was still living in Oak Park. Later, after moving to Chicago's historic East Side, I renewed my subscription.

When Chuck Schaden began involving listeners in old time radio groups, I participated for a time with the Near South group until family health problems demanded more of our time than we could allot to the group. So, you have been part of our lives for three decades or longer. I don't recall when I first heard the station, but I suspect it was back in the late 1950s.

I've grown to love WNIB and cherish the work of Obie Yadgar, Mr. A., Ken Alexander, Miller Peters, Fred Heft, Bruce Duffie and Scott Thomas -- and Karl Haas, one of the truly fine educators in the media. Thank you all, gentlemen, for the countless hours of sanity and soul-sustaining links with great music.

To the Florians, who have been largely unseen and unheard throughout all this grand period of Chicago radio, I know that you have earned the right to retire and enjoy a more relaxed life style, but your creation will be sorely missed.

My wife Joann and I hope that your retirement years will be as enjoyable for you as you have made the past several decades for all of us who have grown to love WNIB/WNIZ.

-- **KEVIN AND JOANN MURPHY**

ADDISON, IL-- Thank you so much for all your efforts in getting a new radio station. I knew you could do it. And now life will go on. Congratulations for getting a good

quality station, too. Who do we write to at WDCB to thank them and give our support? I've tried the station and like it. They even have some classical music!

--**BERNICE MURPHY**

E-MAIL-- I have been listening to WDCB on my car radio since you announced that you were taking your show there. I have found that I love the jazz and folk format and now listen to it constantly when driving. Tell your new bosses they are picking up a whole new audience because they made room for you and *TWTD!* --**G. W. NYMAN ED. NOTE** -- The management at WDCB will be delighted to hear from anyone who cares to write: WDCB, College of DuPage, 425 22nd Street, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137-6599. E-mail address: wdcbmktg@cdnet.cod.edu Many listeners have been communicating with WDCB and have sent us copies:

TO WDCB--

I want to thank you so much for agreeing to carry *Those Were The Days* after the closing of WNIB. For those of us who love Chuck Schaden's program, you are heaven sent! And while no one likes to see an old friend pass away, it is a pleasure to know that often new friends are just around the corner waiting to be discovered. Thanks for being that new friend --**PAUL ST. ONGE**

TO WDCB--

Thank you, thank you, thank you for allocating a time slot for Schaden's *Those Were The Days* on Saturday afternoon, transferring from the WNIB broadcast time.

As one of Chuck's many followers and fans, I greatly appreciate your willingness to continue this very important segment of our lives. As Robert Feder pointed out in his Sun-Times column, this is a perfect extension of Bruce Oscar's *Swing Shift*, of which I am also a faithful listener.

And, as a lover of traditional jazz, classical music, and old-time radio, I will be listening to your station even more. And you can be assured I will continue to be a friend to WDCB with my financial support. I responded to Bruce Oscar's plea about two years ago during your campaign drive, and have "re-upped" again. Please find enclosed a check for an additional [amount] in appreciation for your inclusion of *TWTD* to your program schedule.

--**WILLARD A. ALROTH** (Deerfield, IL)



STILL MORE MAIL

TO WDCB--

Happy to see you having our favorite four hours of radio on Saturday afternoons. We have been listening to Chuck for years and subscribe to his *Nostalgia Digest*. My wife and I have been very concerned about *TWTD* not finding a spot.

Since his announcement this Saturday, I have been tuning you in and was pleasantly surprised with classical and jazz. We get you easily on our home music system and car radios. I haven't been able to pull you in clearly on my small portable that I use to listen to *TWTD* in my backyard in the summer. I will have to work on that one. Be known that you are on our memory radio dials. Thank you, thank you, thank you.
--RON WENDT (Gurnee, IL)

TO WDCB--

Mere words cannot express how elated I was to hear the announcement that Chuck Schaden's *Those Were The Days* program is going to be added to the already outstanding broadcast schedule at WDCB!

I am a current subscriber and very loyal listener to WDCB. Your addition of an "old time radio" program to the already wide varied program line-up has sealed your position as the ultimate radio station in my humble opinion. Although I have felt very good about pledging my support to your fine programming in the past, I now feel as though I am getting twice the "bang for my buck."

Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that circumstances would allow WDCB the opportunity to pick up what is arguably the finest OTR program in the country today. Chuck Schaden's extensive knowledge about the Golden Age of radio, combined with his warm personality and fervent passion for nostalgia radio make his *Those Were The Days* program a "Must Listen" show. --DARYL WM. SIEBERT (West Chicago, IL)

TO WDCB--

Enclosed is my Donation to WDCB to support your efforts in public broadcasting. When I was living in Wheaton, Illinois I had

the pleasure of enjoying your programming. Now that I am in Georgia, I am a bit outside your transmitter's coverage. However, I wish to applaud your decision to carry Chuck Schaden's *Those Were The Days* program on Saturday afternoons. I greatly enjoyed his program when I was in the Chicago area, and greatly missed it after I left. When he began broadcasting via the Internet, I was delighted to once again receive his program, but I am once again dismayed that it is no longer available over that medium.

One of the purposes of my enclosed contribution is to hopefully stimulate your efforts to provide an Internet connection for your broadcasting, so that I shall be able to once again enjoy my favorite old-time radio shows. --LINDSAY CLEVELAND

OAK LAWN, IL-- In case any listeners are still concerned about receiving a good signal from WDCB, here's some good news you may want to pass along. I did exactly as your listener from Schererville, Indiana mentioned (April-May 2001 *Digest*). That is, I installed a Radio Shack #15-2163 FM Antenna in my attic, and ran coaxial cable to the receiver. Now I'd say the reception of WDCB where I'm at (Oak lawn) is about 95 per cent as good as WNIB ever was (at times, it's 100 per cent). I did have to move my receiver from the basement to a floor that is above ground, but now I can pick it up almost perfectly. --RANDY MICAL

CRETE, IL-- When I heard you were moving to 90.9, I turned my radio to 90.9 and -- zilch!! To make a long story short, after several trips to stores and crawling around the attic installing a 100 foot coaxial cable to an old color TV antenna in the attic and from attic to basement and from basement to main floor and from there upstairs and back to the basement with speaker cables and attaching a booster, I got you back! Wheooooo!!! YEAH! JOHN JOHNSON

CHICAGO-- I have no trouble pulling in WDCB's signal where I live, which is at the lakeshore around Belmont (3200 north). Since FM is line of sight, maybe it is relevant that I live on the fifth floor. The reception is actually quite good, although for some reason I cannot get it in stereo. I'm very happy that your program found a new home, and I shall be listening often.
--PAUL VARNELL

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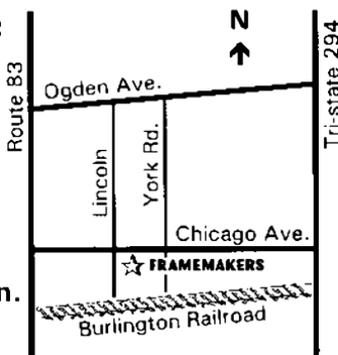
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← DON MC NEILL

presided over morning radio for 35 years. Read how he got the job in an excerpt from John Doolittle's new book, "Don McNeill and His Breakfast Club." Page 26.

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