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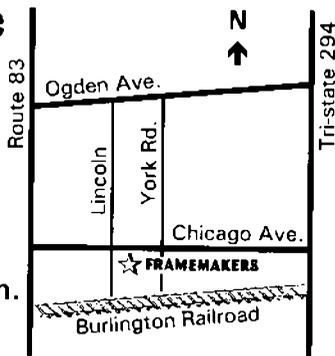
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## *High Adventure*

BY CLAIR SCHULZ

Many homes constructed in the last thirty years or so have built-in features of convenience and comfort such as attached garages, electric door openers, central air conditioning, walk-in closets, and low-maintenance exteriors. However, quite a few of these modern marvels lack one thing that came standard with older residences: an attic.

When I was growing up, the attic fascinated me more than any other part of the house, partially because it seemed just an extension of my bedroom for the only way to enter it was through a door in the ceiling of my closet. My niece Gwen considered such proximity a defect and wondered why I wasn't afraid that some monster lurking up there under the rafters might come down and pounce on me in my sleep. I explained to her that such notions were silly, but I didn't tell anyone that for years before going to bed I made certain the hasp on that door was firmly over the staple in the frame.

But not even Bela Lugosi himself could keep me from regularly opening that door and exploring, even when in January it was like an expedition to Antarctica and in July a walk across the Sahara. The smell that greeted me as I climbed the final steps was a mixture of

leather, dust, must, and rust. For those who have never been in such an odoriferous place the only way to replicate the experience might be to walk into a used book-and-belt store located in a former machine shop on a crisp fall day when the furnace is burning off the motes of summer.

There was so much territory to explore that I would stand with my hands on my hips trying to decide which path to take. Straight ahead to the west were the cartons opened just in the colder months. Several big boxes contained tangled strings of Christmas tree lights, those delicate hand-blown ornaments that sometimes seemed to break just by looking at them, tinsel that stuck to fingers and clothes like magnets, and dozens of cards from friends which Mother would keep and recycle the following Christmas on packages simply by cutting the senders name off with a scissors.

One box in that wing contained my brother Neal's Lionel train set. Every December we set up the train to run through the holidays. I rarely became upset when I had to give the black engine a boost to get it going for it was always a miracle to me how such a heavy object could pull its freight at lightning speed with just a touch of a knob on a transformer. Even when the train ran off its route that became part of the game

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because I would just pretend I was shoveling people and cargo inside the cars, align the wheels back on the track, and issue orders: "Sissies, go home. Everybody else, all aboard!"

On a bench near those boxes were piled the quilts that saved us on many a frosty evening. Until I was sixteen no register existed in my bedroom so during those early winters after I put on my pajamas I headed for cover in a hurry. Getting under those blankets was the easy part. I became warm in a couple minutes. But I felt like the bottom slice in a Dagwood sandwich and in the morning I would have to devote a considerable amount of the energy I had stored up overnight just to toss the four layers away from me. By the time I raced into my clothes I had already done my morning exercises.

Whenever I moved around the attic, I couldn't help but notice how my father always kept the central area open and worked from the outside in. Deep in the corners were the bulky objects: copper boilers, motors, fruit baskets, stoneware jugs, boxes of Mason jars and depression glass, a rocking chair that needed caning, and buckets brim-

ming with a miscellany of doorknobs, clamps, finials, and drawer pulls.

From nails in the rafters hung picture frames, Easter baskets, artificial wreaths, tree-climbing spikes, a horse collar (to this day when I hear a baseball announcer say that a player who went hitless "took the collar" I picture the poor fellow wearing that weather-beaten hunk of black leather), a kerosene lantern which I remember groping for in the dark and bringing downstairs one night after the family returned from watching an Alan Ladd picture to find that we were

without electricity, and two pair of boxing gloves which were dried and cracked from being placed too near the chimney and which were so abrasive that after a couple of rounds Neal and I would emerge from the basement with faces looking (according to mother) like two beets that had been beaten.

Near the chimney knelt a black metal trunk which protected my mother's wedding dress and a cowhide vest, the latter a product of Father's handiwork when he worked on a farm in the early 1920s. The dress appeared to be too delicate even to touch. However, I did try on the vest one day when I was playing cowboy, but it came down almost to my knees and was so cumbersome that I ended up chasing rustlers in a crouching position like Groucho Marx.

The book hiding at the bottom of the trunk was not entitled *What Every Young Man Should Know*, but it definitely belonged to that class of literature which fathers kept buried deep in trunks or in drawers beneath layers of underwear. My father need not have harbored any fears about it reaching my prying eyes for, after reading a number of pages

**"...I felt like the bottom slice in a Dagwood sandwich..."**

which used words like *eugenics*, *hygiene*, *corporeal*, and *constitutional*

*disturbances*, I gave it up when I concluded that such subject matter had nothing whatsoever to do with what my pals were talking about at school.

An old kitchen table that had been rescued from the home of my grandparents staked out a prominent position on the south side. Father was fond of showing me the little ledge under the table where he used to put pieces of lard bread during meals which he would retrieve later when he became hungry in the middle of the night. Sometimes now

when I answer a gnawing stomach with a midnight snack of cereal I think of that boy sitting cross-legged in the moonlight munching contentedly on a morsel of chewy bread that must have had all the digestibility of a flatiron.

On the east side stood a portable closet constructed of laminated cardboard

which housed coats, dresses, and suits that, though far from new, were still wearable if they needed to be called into service. The smell of mothballs that met me when I let the top half slide down which made my eyes water was not as much a shock to my system as the day I failed to adequately secure the latch on the return trip. I had reached the other side of the room when that panel dropped with a bang and I hit the floor yelling "Who shot me?" while reaching for my cap pistol to even the score with the desperado who had dared to embarrass me when my back was turned.

Father had built shelves on the north side that seemed to attract odd groupings. A gnarled piece of driftwood shared space with an old tin globe that bore the dents of numerous spins while playing the "close my eyes and wish I was here" game. Pots and popcorn poppers with badly-scorched bottoms surrounded a cigar box filled with watch faces, crystals, and bands. The handwarmer that Neal received as a premium for delivering newspapers which burned icy cold or blisteringly hot with no in-between setting nestled in its velvet pouch inside a chipped mixing bowl. Another source of warmth, a bathroom heater with a cone of twisted coils that glowed a fiery orange and hissed when drops of water fell on it, spent its summer vacations flanked by plaques and bookmarks, souvenirs of trips to

Black River Falls, Wisconsin Dells, and the Cave of the Mounds.

Sitting majestically by itself on the top shelf was a dried gourd Father insisted dated back to the time he bought the house in 1938. When I picked up this eighteen-inch high curiosity by the neck and shook the seeds inside, I sometimes

wondered how it had survived all those years and, more significantly, why.

That "why" is what makes attics so intriguing and what kept me coming back time after time. It was not just the expectation of discovery, the hope of finding some knickknack overlooked before but also the renewing of acquaintances with the orphans who had weathered the years in grand seclusion. What went into the attic were usually keepers, what we couldn't bear to part with. Unlike that corner we were consigned to when we were bad, an attic was that place we sent things when they were good. ■

*"...the smell of mothballs  
...made my eyes water..."*



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## Rushville Center, aka Chicago, Home of *Ma Perkins* Radio's Mother of the Air

BY JIM COX

Anyone who is familiar with the origins of broadcast soap opera should fully comprehend Chicago's strategic role in its embryonic stages and early development. The

form was not only conceived but also delivered on October 20, 1930 in a small radio studio in the Windy City when WGN gave rise to *Painted Dreams*. With a minuscule cast, the serial was the first to be derived from the inspired and—as fans would soon learn—prolific pen of drama mama Ima Phillips.

*Painted Dreams* is credibly the original feature of a genre of more than 200 daytime radio dramas that surfaced across the next three decades—and scores more appearing on television through the present day. Any thought of denying Chicago its rightful place as the cradle of broadcast soap opera would have been forsaken by media historiographers

*Jim Cox of Louisville, Kentucky is the author of the book The Great Radio Soap Operas (McFarland & Company, \$55, 330 pages, photographs, illustrated case binding, 1-800-253-2187). This excerpt is printed with permission.*

a long time ago. Indeed, as has been well documented, it was there that so many characteristic traits commonly associated with drama by installment were manufactured and cultivated.



Virginia Payne as *Ma Perkins* (1933-60)

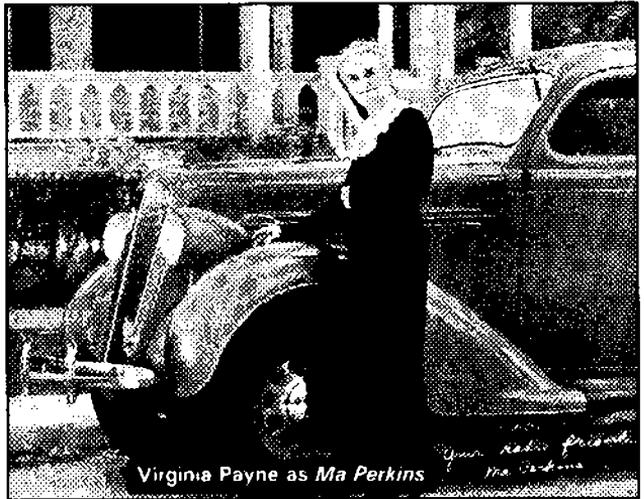
Ingredients like ample portions of organ music, extensive story line recaps, characters that addressed each other by name every few seconds to be sure the listeners knew who was talking and who was being spoken to, and exceedingly slow-moving dialogue became synonymous with those dishpan dramas. Heavy doses of the devices were

injected into every tale that emanated from the confines of several Chicago air theaters each weekday.

While, in the modern age, most of those early traits have abated, some of the plot devices initially attempted along the shores of Lake Michigan are still with us. They include a strong emphasis on individual character development and dramas that include figures gainfully employed in diverse professional capacities. Such subjects are considered to lead “more interesting” lives than those who might be depicted in some other vocations.

Thus, successive producers, directors and writers have, from generation to generation, transferred a few of those seeds sown in soap opera's formative years to contemporary settings. And an erstwhile Chicago dominion still flourishes. What took root there almost 72 years ago pervades our video screens during the modern epoch.

The two most fertile minds among the architects of serial melodrama, then or now, were Chicagoans who established a soap opera empire that influenced the breed almost from its inception to the very end of its aural occupation. Edward Frank Hummert was a partner in the Chicago advertising firm of Blackett-Sample-Hummert Inc. when he hired a newspaperwoman, Anne Ashenhurst, as his editorial and copywriting assistant. Within two years Hummert acted on his suspicion that radio drama might be as appealing to housewives as was serialized fiction. Employing yet another print news journalist, Charles Robert Douglas Hardy Andrews (one man!), who had authored several continuing features for *The Chicago Daily News*, Hummert and Ms. Ashenhurst gave their young protégé his first assignment for the ears: to contrive the dialog for a radio serial called *The Stolen Husband*. Although that initial effort couldn't be declared a phenomenal success, it gave the collaborating triumvirate some valuable insights. And in a short while it led them to develop a trio of extremely successful serials against which almost all others could (and would) be measured throughout radio's golden age: *Just Plain Bill* (1932-55), *The Romance of Helen Trent*



and *Ma Perkins* (1933-60).

Frank Hummert and Anne Ashenhurst married each other in 1935 and soon became matinee moguls whose affinity for serialized sequences was to witness tentacles extending far beyond their humble beginnings—into almost every aspect of a burgeoning industry. Upon soap opera they would leave an indelible imprint that ultimately was to span three decades. Eventually the pair would control one-eighth of all commercial radio time at billings of \$12 million annually. They soon maintained 36 separate radio features, all of them airing concurrently. Across their lifetimes, they would introduce radio listeners to a sum in excess of 60 different programs, more than 50 of them soap operas. Their shows would be created, written and produced by a tightly controlled assembly line of minions operated initially under the banner of Hummert Radio Productions and later as Air Features Inc.

Included among the Hummerts' early successes was one of broadcasting's most memorable, compelling and influential narratives. Billed as the "mother of the air," *Ma Perkins* was truly the epitome of radio soap opera. For 27 years, in fact, it was the most widely revered and genuinely

beloved washboard weeper on the ether. While its association with Chicago and the infamous Hummerts dates back to 1933, the drama actually debuted in an earlier trial run in Cincinnati. The history of the sweeping, all-pervasive serial that left its mark on so many others of its ilk, predominating the species, is worth recounting.

The program began as a replacement for a faltering series that was underwritten by Cincinnati soapmaker Procter & Gamble Co. In an effort to hawk its wares both regionally and to the expansive reaches of its hometown clear channel 50,000-watt audio powerhouse, WLW, in 1932 the manufacturing firm began sponsoring a serialized domestic comedy titled *The Puddle Family*. The show appeared on the air on behalf of P&G's Oxydol brand granulated detergent. To P&G's dismay, however, *The Puddle Family* met with considerably less than instant success.

Early in 1933 the Oxydol trade was transferred to a different advertising agency. An account executive there, Larry Milligan, hastily suggested a continuing narrative that would revolve around a "helping hand" character instead of the comedy. He proposed the tale of a self-reliant widow whose family and friends leaned heavily upon her—*Ma Perkins*, it would be called. Oxydol's own Ma Perkins. The idea immediately clicked with agency directors and P&G officials.

At the time all of this was going on, a lovely young blonde actress, Virginia Payne, then 23 years old, was portraying the title role in a WLW drama about a Southern diva, *Honey Adams*. Jane Froman, who was destined to become one of the nation's most popular vocalists a few years later, supplied the singing on the show.

Payne was obviously in the right place at the right time. Despite her youthfulness, a certain tremolo in her versatile voice



could make her sound as if she were considerably older. Thus, she was tapped for the role of Ma, never dreaming how far it would take her in years, miles and association. The fact that the serial's eventual sterling success was partially, yet inextricably, linked to the personal contributions of Virginia Payne would, in time, have been difficult to miss.

Unlike the homespun character for whom she would be recalled for the rest of her days, Payne was a highly cultured young woman. The daughter of a Cincinnati physician, she was well educated, holding two master's degrees (one in literature) from the University of Cincinnati. A devout Roman Catholic, she maintained high principles personifying the everyday trust in human nature that Ma Perkins would come to embrace.

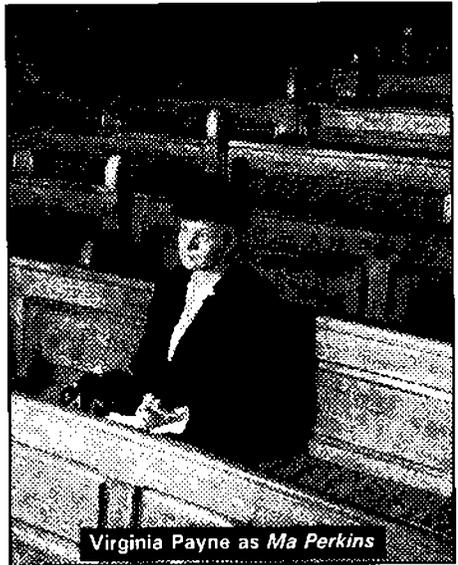
A 16-week experiment was launched on WLW on August 14, 1933. Unlike their response to its predecessor, *The Puddle Family*, however, the Cincinnati crowd quickly adopted the new series. P&G noted too that grocers in the area were asking wholesale distributors for many more boxes of Oxydol than before, as listeners

reacted positively to the program's commercials. It was obvious that some earlier market research conducted by P&G was right on target. It had found that women desired radio entertainment, not just to be informed about social graces and given cooking hints as they had been previously, while working in their homes.

With that kind of affirmation in its local market, P&G was ready to send its fledgling drama to a national audience. Under the firm's watchful eye, the serial was entrusted to Frank and Anne Hummert. By that time the Hummerts had already met with success in *Judy and Jane*, *Betty and Bob*, *Marie the Little French Princess*, *Easy Aces*, *Just Plain Bill* and *The Romance of Helen Trent*. On Monday, December 4, 1933 at 2 p.m. Central Time, *Ma Perkins* debuted on the full NBC network. [The figure Ma Perkins, incidentally, whose authoritative, common-sense advice was usually well received, would later be cited by media author Jim Harmon as "*Just Plain Bill* in skirts," an allusion to another of radio's well-established, unsophisticated serial sages.]

Throughout its lengthy run, the *Perkins* program would waft into kitchens and living rooms to a slight variation of "My Old Kentucky Home," played on the studio organ. The theme was an original melody written by Larry Larsen and Don Marcotte and became synonymous with the series, as much as its sponsor's detergent brand had.

In its earliest days, Ma Perkins was a far different character from the tenderhearted, compassionate woman that would be remembered by most of the show's fans. Indeed, she was originally envisioned as a harsh, gutless creature that barked orders and had a cynical outlook on life. In those days she despised son-in-law Willy Fitz, who was married to Ma's eldest daughter, Evvy. Ma referred to him as a "no-account



scalawag." Could this be the same homey, soft-spoken matriarch that most listeners recall from decades of following her family's troubles? The widow who believed in everybody's dreams? Yes, one in the same. Even Virginia Payne didn't like her very much then. She petitioned for a change so strongly that Ma evolved into a warm, benevolent figure at odds with only the small-minded residents of her mythical Midwest hamlet of Rushville Center.

On making the change to a more accepting Ma, there was little further shift in her demeanor over the decades, or in that of any of the other Perkins characters. Soap opera figures—in this serial and elsewhere—maintained a behavioral consistency that was dependable. Confronted with a crisis, heroes and heroines reacted precisely as they had done in the past and as listeners would expect them to be in the future. It was comforting to know that the values, traits and conditions ascribed to an individual in one situation wouldn't be altered in another.

Ma was considered the wisest sage in her parts, sought for counsel, advice and reflection. The basis of her technique was a

trust in people and life itself. She lived by the Golden Rule. Her personal qualities included tough honesty combined with an instinctive understanding of the human spirit. In the Depression era from which she stemmed, people found a role model of strength and determination that inspired her listeners. Through her philosophy and successes as an arbitrator and problem-solver, Ma gave encouragement to the "little people" of Rushville Center, becoming the town's conscience. In addition to laundry soap, sponsor Oxydol gently urged a logic of patience, benevolence and determination upon the nation—not wealth, image and prestige.

Ma's theory of forgiveness, just one of the moral bromides she regularly sanctioned, would be typical of her philosophy. In a 1938 episode, she declared: "Anyone of this earth who's done wrong, and then goes so far as to try and right that wrong, I can tell you that they're well on their way to erasing the harm they did in the eyes of anyone decent."

Her wisdom didn't come from extensive formal education, for she was a bona fide, unpretentious theorist. We don't have to look beyond her grammatical constructions and enunciation patterns to verify it. "I ain't sure I understand it," she was fond of saying. In a 1950 episode she lamented: "I do know it is wrong to say something against a person without hearing from the person theirself." Equally atrocious was this epithet of that era: "He said so to Willie hisself." Finally: "In all these years we've knowed each other, I ain't never heard nothin' like this." You could say that again, Ma! It was a good thing that most of the nation's English teachers were in class at the time the serial was broadcast. They would have fainted dead away over the liberties that most Rushville Center townfolk took with the mother tongue.

One of the strokes of genius in writing

Ma Perkins was a hook on which it left its listeners hanging each day. Following the closing Oxydol commercial, announcer Charlie Warren submitted an epilogue. This one was typical: "And so, the whole family is deeply concerned about Fay [Ma's youngest daughter]. And though Ma expressed her deep faith in Fay, is Ma concerned too? Well, Fay does see Andrew White [a beau she had discarded on the eve of her nuptials with someone else] and . . . Fay finds words on her tongue which surprise even Fay . . . tomorrow." Who could resist? Loyal listeners simply had to be within hearing range when the darling of the family said her piece to Dr. White.

Meanwhile, during the 1940s, operating behind the scenes and never actually affecting the audience, the Hummerts decided to shift virtually all of their programs to a New York City origination. The duo purchased a mansion in Greenwich, Connecticut for themselves, from which they continued to oversee their vast domain. Basing their shows in the Big Apple was to give them closer ties with the headquarters of both the major advertising agencies as well as the radio networks. Another benefit was their timely access to a larger pool of talent that could be readily tapped for their dramas, drawn from radio and theater sound stages. In 1946, after 13 years in Chicago, Ma Perkins joined those soap operas that transferred to the East Coast, becoming a staple that would air from New York for the remainder of its run, some 14 years hence.

New York announcer Dan Donaldson—who often used the pseudonym "Charlie Warren," as his predecessor Marvin Miller had when the show broadcast from Chicago—promised listeners a great deal. [The alias avoided a conflict with other advertisers—presumably sponsors manufacturing laundry soaps. This allowed those announcers to broadcast on other



Virginia Payne and Charles Egelston  
as Ma Perkins and Shuffle Shober

programs under their own names, not an assumed one.] “Warren” would introduce an episode by recapping previous action, then state something like this: “Well, today we’ll hear Ma express herself on this very important matter.” His summary at the close of the previous day’s episode would have told listeners the same thing, only in different words. Sometimes in those summaries he would get even bolder as he enticed the audience to stay with the show: “On Monday, Fay considers the proposal of marriage, while Shuffle [Shober, Ma’s business partner and best friend] wonders about those ulterior motives . . . and there’s that matter of the missing funds from the charity ball. We’ve got lots to listen for in the days just ahead.”

Another frequent device appearing on this serial involved the announcer saying, “Let’s turn the clock back.” The listener would then hear what had transpired at another time: a snippet from a previous episode or some action never heard on the air before. Either way, it was an effective

means of bringing audiences up to date with fresh detail or a development they could have missed.

There were at least two occasions in the life of *Ma Perkins*, the serial, when thousands of listeners abandoned all semblance of rationality. One—as might be expected—occurred when the series was canceled. That one will be examined later in this treatise. The other happened more than 16 years earlier, when Ma’s only son, John, died and was buried on the battlefield “somewhere in Germany in an unmarked grave” during the Second World War. While nearly 300,000 Americans were fatalities during those same hostilities, John Perkins was the single major soap opera personality to die. The audience reacted

in shocked disbelief, but soon turned its trance into utter outrage. The network was deluged with sympathy notes addressed simply to “Ma.” The avalanche of complaints that ensued could hardly have been predicted. Callers and letter writers were rabid in their consternation. Many protested that mothers and wives of service personnel did not need such a vivid reminder of the dangers of battle.

The episode became a public relations nightmare for Dancer-Fitzgerald-Sample advertising agency, and several attempts were made to pacify the detractors. Things eventually cooled down when a young seminary student who could pass for John in looks and manner arrived in Rushville Center, was rented John’s old room in the Perkins home by Ma and assumed John’s former occupation as a door-to-door dairy deliveryman. For about three years he was active in the drama, putting the quietus on what had been a frustrating flare-up for all concerned.

In what would turn out to be one of the

drama's most memorable and durable sequences, and perhaps its darkest hour across 27 years, for 12 months—between Christmas 1949 and Christmas 1950—the consternation caused by some distant relatives (of the late Pa Perkins) made life pure hell for Ma and her brood. Millions of fans sat spellbound by their radios during the ordeal, nearly afraid to miss a chapter as they wondered if Ma—who trusted everybody—could ever separate what was truth from fiction.

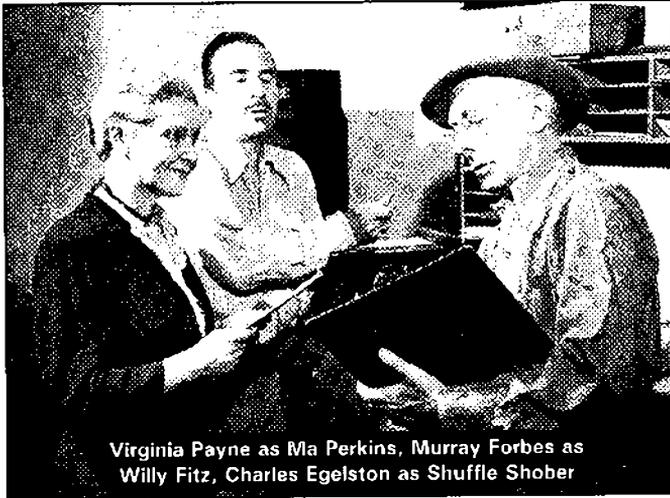
During that terrible, absorbing year, both Ma's best friend Shuffle Shober and son-in-law Willy Fitz quit their jobs at the Perkins Lumber Yard after many years when some conniving cousins moved in and virtually took over. In their haste to control whatever assets Ma had, they duped Fay into a marriage proposal and schemed to take all of Evey and Willie's life savings under the guise of placing the couple's funds in stocks. This would eventually be exposed as fraudulent, but not for several months. Still worse, they led the Fitzes to lie to Ma about their personal involvement in their unsuspected designs, something they had never done before. Only Shuffle saw through the plotting, for months insisting that the cousins were up to no good. Yet Shuffle was held in abeyance by the family because no one could believe such atrocities would be perpetrated by their own flesh and blood. It was a sad day for Ma and clan, and the listeners could hardly get enough of it. Ratings and sales of Oxydol soared throughout the lengthy sequence.

When at last reality sunk in, dawning first on Ma's "wise old eyes," unmitigated proof was obtained that confirmed Shuffle's long-held suspicions. Then Ma faced the evildoers who had all but destroyed her family and her business and turned them out for their vile connivance. Millions must have breathed a collective sigh of re-

lief on that day of enlightenment as the truth tumbled out and the thorns in the Perkins' sides were expelled, never to resurface again in their easygoing down-to-earth drama of hope and harmony.

When the Hummerts accepted control of *Ma Perkins* in 1933, they assigned it to their foremost scribe, Robert Hardy Andrews, the ex-newspaperman whom they had hired two years earlier to produce dialog for the ill-fated *Stolen Husband* serial, their first attempt at the form. After that experience, the three proceeded through the introduction of a string of subsequent serials, improving their output all the while. Andrews gained notoriety for ultimately producing more words than anybody else in the business of soap opera. A journalist labeled him a "writing syndicate," in fact. At one time, for a full decade, he was churning out up to five daily episodes of between four and seven different radio features, netting a weekly production rate in excess of 100,000 words. Between noon and midnight seven days a week he claimed he consumed 40 cups of coffee, chain-smoked 100 cigarettes and—when he wasn't about the task of writing dramas for the ether—he'd roll out novels and dozens of movies in his "off" time. The Hummerts never replaced their workaholic, and when Andrews died in 1976 it was surely the passing of an era among gainful wordsmiths.

Eventually *Ma Perkins* passed from Hummert control into the hands of other producers. Longtime sponsor Procter & Gamble finally acquired it, as was a standard practice among many of the daytime dramas. When at last the firm sold its interests in late 1956 to the network then airing it, CBS, P&G claimed its decision indicated no lack of regard for the drama. The program continued to be loved by listeners and advertisers for several more years. The decision by P&G to discontinue



Virginia Payne as Ma Perkins, Murray Forbes as Willy Fitz, Charles Egelston as Shuffle Shober

underwriting it was a reflection of a then-current trend toward multiple sponsors and away from sole participation. The washing powder and the Perkins serial were so closely intertwined in listeners' minds ("Oxydol's own *Ma Perkins*"), nonetheless, that the tie persisted for years after P&G bowed out.

Robert Hardy Andrews' contributions notwithstanding, head writer Orin Tovrov had the benefit of developing those familiar radio characters for more than two decades. This gave him an extraordinarily unprecedented affinity with the principals—Ma, Shuffle, Fay, Willie, Bvey and the others—that few peers would ever experience. Tovrov was lauded for the quality of his work and may have been the best of his trade, cited by several media critics for his superb accomplishments with the narrative. The Radio Writers Guild elected him its first president. He would go on to write two other popular daytime serials, *The Brighter Day* on radio and television, and *The Doctors*, on television.

While reviewers routinely threw bricks at the washboard weepers, particularly for the slow pace at which most of their stories transpired, there was one area in which those shows far excelled their broad-

cast counterparts: cost per listener. Minimal production fees attracted sponsors in the early days of soap opera, with most of those programs originating in Chicago. When the return on investment translated into huge matinee audiences, advertisers purchased even more time. Production costs per rating point for *Kate Smith Speaks*, the

highest-measured weekday program on the air in 1943, were \$609.76. But *Ma Perkins*, boasting a rating very near that enjoyed by Smith, cost only \$164.56 per point. It took \$5,000 per week to put Smith's quarter-hour on the air, yet Perkins could be produced for a scant \$1,300. Costs were a factor the critics of dishpan dramas never could substantially repudiate. Late in the run, in fact, after P&G had bowed out, CBS boasted that a single 15-minute serial broadcast five days weekly reached an audience of 6.4 million at a mere 49 cents per thousand listeners. It would be hard to refute impressive figures like that when compared with most other advertising mediums.

*Ma Perkins'* audience size and influence also put most of its contemporaries to shame. In the heyday of radio the serial had the good fortune to rack up dual broadcasts extending to all four networks over a period of nine years, seven of those seasons consecutively. Not many programs of any type could claim such a feat. With ratings figures in the double digits in both dual- and single-broadcast years, it was an unshakable fact that the *Perkins* drama was one of the most popular narratives ever on American radio. Listeners were so en-

thrilled by it that in some communities door-to-door salesmen, who peddled consumer goods and services during that era, knew not to disturb homemakers while Perkins' quarter-hour segments were being aired.

The serial's recognition didn't rest there, however. At its peak, *Ma Perkins* was carried on stations in Hawaii, Canada and Europe, the last of those through Radio Luxembourg. In the late 1940s its advertising agency even attempted a TV pilot but it didn't work. Fans wouldn't accept it; they had created their own images of the citizens of Rushville Center in their minds and were quite satisfied with them, sight unseen.

Long after the program left the air, actress Virginia Payne confided to an interviewer that she had maintained one recurring nightmare throughout the extended run. Because of the significant difference between Eastern and Pacific time zones, broadcasts were performed live twice daily (at least until quality recording equipment came into vogue and a network ban against using it was lifted in the late 1940s). Sometimes an actor would leave the studio and start for home, not realizing the mistake until it was almost too late to return for the second show. Actor Burgess Meredith, playing the title character in *Red Davis*, was fired when he missed the second show of that drama just once, for example. In Payne's hallucination, she saw herself as the only performer on hand for the latter broadcast. Fortunately, it never became a reality.

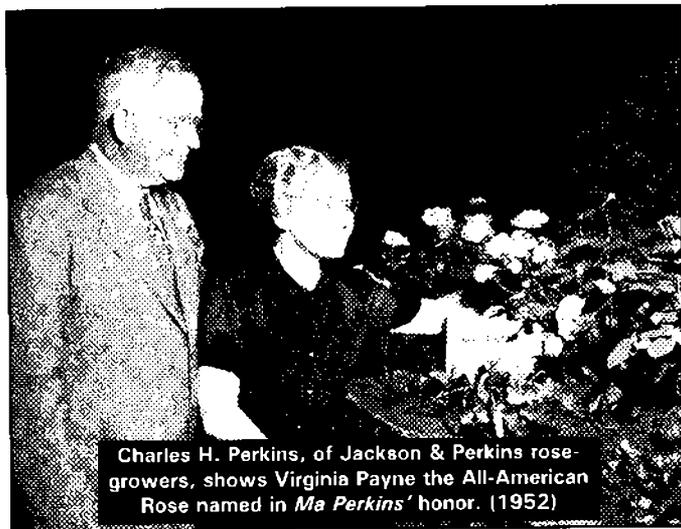
In the early days in Chicago a note on an NBC file card cautioned that Payne's identity was never to be released to the public. This suggested that a certain perception might be destroyed if people knew who she really was—and, perhaps, how young she really was. With the passing of time, however—as Payne advanced in

age—that rule was relaxed. In response to the demands of her fans, CBS wrapped the young blonde actress in a gray wig, steel-rimmed glasses, low-heeled Oxfords and dowdy dresses and sent her out to make public appearances. Local audiences loved it.

Only two of the many actors associated with the soap opera remained with it all the way from Cincinnati to Chicago and through the final day in New York more than 27 years after the feature's inception. They were Virginia Payne and Murray Forbes, the latter portraying Ma's son-in-law, Willie Fitz. A third actor, Charles Eggleston, who had been in the part of Shuffle Shober since the start in Cincinnati, died in late 1958 after the drama had been airing for more than 25 years. That trio of thespians collectively contributed nearly 80 years of their professional lives to the one serial while concurrently accepting many additional acting jobs. In such a remarkable accomplishment, there were truly no equals.

In the 1950s, as television began to encroach upon radio's heretofore unchallenged turf, longrunning aural soap operas went on the chopping block in wholesale numbers. When General Foods announced the cancellation of three of its most successful series—*The Aldrich Family*, a nighttime comedy show, and two late-afternoon serials, *When a Girl Marries* and *Portia Faces Life*—Virginia Payne, who wasn't directly associated with either series, observed: "I feel as though the main pillars had been knocked out of the house." Colbee's Restaurant, near CBS, where many heroes and heroines of daytime drama gathered socially, was "Forest Lawn without the flowers," according to soap star Mary Jane Highbly.

But that wasn't the end of *Ma Perkins*. The cast fought on bravely for a few more years, seemingly denying that a final epi-



Charles H. Perkins, of Jackson & Perkins rose-growers, shows Virginia Payne the All-American Rose named in *Ma Perkins*' honor. (1952)

had brought her simple, unsophisticated tale of domestic struggles into American homes for nearly three decades—and the actress behind her, Virginia Payne, who had never missed a single performance, who had been the first of her gender to be elected president of the Chicago, New York and national chapters of the American Federation of Ra-

diode would come, despite the fact that the serial's contemporaries were falling all around it. Network affiliates were demanding the release of time so that they could sell it more profitably locally. When CBS felt it could no longer suffice the pressure, the web at last set a date to clear its schedule of soap operas, the last of the major chains to do so. By then there were only four open-ended stories left: *The Right to Happiness*, *Ma Perkins*, *Young Doctor Malone* and *The Second Mrs. Burton*. The day of demise was set for Friday, November 25, 1960 during the Thanksgiving weekend. Longtime listeners would see the irony in it for they neither felt grateful nor blessed by the experience.

In some parting words that day, speaking directly to her radio audience, Virginia Payne allowed: "This was our broadcast 7,065. I first came to you on December 4, 1933. Thank you for all being so loyal to us these 27 years." She named the actors and production staff that had been with the show for so long, then gave her fans an address where they could write her personally and departed with a cheery "Good-by, and may God bless you."

Then she was gone! The woman who

radio [and Television] Artists—was gone, never to return to a microphone on any sustained basis! It was more than many listeners could handle. So outraged were they that the CBS switchboards lit up like Christmas trees. Angry callers and letter writers gave the network a piece of their minds, sparing no words in the process. Through tears of anguish, writers and callers vented their hostilities toward the chain, some practically unable to write or speak due to extreme emotional states.

Deeply embedded in the very nature of the serials had been the implied trust that they would go on forever. On November 25, 1960 that trust eroded, resulting in pure myth. Rushville Center and its inhabitants were swept away without a vestige that they had ever existed in Radioland. The characters that audiences had come to know so well instantly disappeared, forgotten by the medium, never to be intersected again. They wouldn't even be mentioned on many of the same stations that had carried them to waiting audiences for years. It was too much for some of the faithful to comprehend; they had lost some of their very best and most dependable, albeit fictional, friends. →

Yet soaps would remain an enduring part of American popular culture for decades into the future. Radio (and especially its innovative stalwarts like Chicagoans Irna Phillips, Frank and Anne Hummert and Robert Hardy Andrews) had instigated an entertainment form that would not be dissolved—at least, not anytime soon. And

what of Virginia Payne? What became of her? The day the “mother of all soap opera” (as media observer Charles Stumpf aptly put it) left the air the day she said “goodby” to those millions of faithful comrades tuning in at home—apparently she, herself, received no similar farewell message from CBS. According to the actress

then playing Ma’s daughter Fay, Margaret Draper, “A couple of us in the cast invited her to go across the street for a drink following that final broadcast. That was all she got. It was a shabby way for her to be treated after she devoted all those years to that highly successful show.”

Payne, a spinster in real life, had spent many years living alone in a posh apartment on Manhattan’s East Fifty-Fifth Street. [By 1957 her income reached \$50,000 annually, a tidy sum in that era, surpassing every other actress in daytime radio.] Only 50 when her show left the air, she moved to Orleans, Massachusetts, residing there for several years. In retirement she recorded radio commercials and frequently performed on stage. In 1964 she appeared with Carol Burnett in the Broadway musical comedy *Fade Out, Fade*

*In*. She toured the nation in the 1960s and 1970s in productions of *Becket*, *Carousel*, *Oklahoma!*, *Long Day’s Journey into Night* and *Life with Father*. At Houston’s Alley Theatre she received standing ovations.

Not long before she died, Payne returned to the little white frame house in Cincinnati in which she had lived with her family

during her young adult years. It was the homeplace from which she began her long association with the role of Ma Perkins. While living there again she succumbed to death at the age of 66 on February 10, 1977.

In recent years a longstanding member of a Cincinnati vintage radio club told this writer that he had labored zealously to purchase the

Perkins estate. The family living there now, he testified, “has no appreciation for it, and doesn’t even realize the magnitude of the celebrated individual who once occupied it.” The property has reportedly been in foreclosure, but an updated account indicates that the future of this parcel and dwelling on it is still uncertain as this is written.

Author Robert LaGuardia dubbed *Ma Perkins* the “den mom of our dreams,” depicting her as a “pie-baking Sherlock Holmes with an I. Q. of about one hundred and eighty.” Millions probably viewed “the mother of the air” like that. Surely Virginia Payne portrayed her role with complete and absolute comprehension of that fantasy. ■

*NOTE-- Tune in TWTD June 22 to hear four consecutive episodes of Ma Perkins.*



Virginia Payne

UNITED STATES ARMY  
RECRUITING MAIN STATION  
CHICAGO  
615 West Van Buren Street  
Chicago 7, Illinois

SUBJECT: CONDUCT WHILE IN TRANSIT  
TO: ALL ENLISTEES, INDUCTEES AND REENLISTEES.

You are a new part of the United States Army and about to depart for your first assignment. You will depart this building and proceed to Wabash Railroad's Dearborn Street Station (Dearborn and Polk Sts). You will remain in assigned area (located in the station and assigned by your group leader) and depart Chicago via Wabash Train #17 at 2335 HRS, arrive St Louis Union Station at 0715 HRS tomorrow. You will eat breakfast at Harvey Restaurant in St Louis Union Station. You will depart St Louis by Frisco Train #3 at 0830 HRS and arrive Newburg, Missouri at approximately 1143 HRS. You will be met on arrival Newburg and directed to local restaurant for dinner. Immediately after dinner you will load on busses that are waiting for the group and proceed to Ft Leonard Wood, Missouri. (30 miles). Your group leader has government transportation requests for your railroad travel and all meals.

During your trip to Ft. Leonard Wood, you are accountable to your group leader and your conduct is expected to be such that it will bring credit to the service, as well as yourself. THE FOLLOWING IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED and any violation will be reported and the violators dealt with accordingly.

1. Loud or boisterous conduct of any kind.
2. Profane language.
3. Wrestling or skuffling
4. Gambling.
5. Appearing other than fully clothed in the aisles or any area other than the washrooms and your own inclosed bay.
6. Whistling or making advances toward female passengers.
7. Consumption of alcoholic beverages of any kind. (Club car is "OFF LIMITS")

In fact all that is asked of you is that you conduct yourself as a soldier and a gentleman.

VICTOR C. LIEN  
Capt, Inf  
Adj

This Army hand-out, courtesy of Pvt. Dan McGuire (Retired), was distributed to all those reporting for military service in the mid- to late-1950s. ■

When Gary Cooper left his Montana ranch home to make his way in the world, his father, Charles Cooper, had only a few words of advice.

"Whatever you want to do," he said, "aim for the top and if you get close to it, you've done all right.

Cooper never has forgotten it.

"What better advice could be given anyone," he explains. "There isn't a single case in which it doesn't apply. It doesn't make any difference whether you want to be an accountant, or a doctor, or a reporter, or an actor.

"Try to be the best in your field. Only a few can make it, but if you aim high you'll get further than you would if you were willing to trail along with the crowd.

"There's no short-cut for a determination to do your best, no matter what you intend to do. Maybe I haven't set the world on fire, but I guess I haven't done too badly."

As always, Cooper's reference to his own career, one of the most sensational in Hollywood history, was on the modest side.

That Gary has "done all right" is evidenced by the fact that his most recent starrer, *Task Force*, is his 58th. Prior to this picture he played the idealistic, modern architect, Howard Roark, in *The Fountainhead*, the Warner Bros. screen adaptation of Ayn Rand's best-selling novel with Patricia Neal and Raymond Masssey.

Although some of his greatest roles were in western stories like *The Virginian*, Cooper has been a hit in every variety of story

which has brought him to the screen. He won a top Academy Award for his portrayal of the title role in *Sergeant York* for Warners. His versatility has ranged from *City Streets*, with Sylvia Sydney, to *A Farewell to Arms*, with Helen Hayes, to *Saratoga Trunk* with Ingrid Bergman.

Gary's last western, a tongue-in-check western, in fact, was *Along Came Jones*, made four years ago with Loretta Young. It was one of two pictures he produced in conjunction with Nunnally Johnson. Their other was *Casanova Brown*.

Under contract for a picture a year to Warners, Gary isn't certain when he'll make another outdoor picture.

"It all depends when a good western story comes along," he says, "I'm more interested in a story being good than the locale."

It was natural that Cooper should have made his entry into motion pictures with a gun in his hand and spurs on his boots. He was born in Helena, Montana, the son of Charles M. and Alice H. Cooper, so his early life was spent on the range.

One snapshot in the family album shows Cooper at the age of 17. He was wearing chaps, a checkered shirt and two bone-handled pistols. His hands rested on their butts as though ready for the draw.

When he was nine, he was taken to England, where he attended grammar school at Dunstable, Bedfordshire. He returned to Montana just before his thirteenth birthday to enter high school. Soon after he began his new studies he was injured in an automobile accident so badly his father sent him to the family ranch to recuperate. After two years on the open range Gary resumed his studies. Later he attended Grinnel College in Iowa for two years.

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*This is the official Warner Bros. Studios biography for Gary Cooper issued August 9, 1949. Gary Cooper died May 13, 1961 at age 59.*

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He had studied art in both high school and college and decided on a career as a cartoonist. He got a job on a Helena newspaper. At the end of five years he moved to Los Angeles to expand his career.

Cooper did get an audience at one newspaper, but he was over-anxious and nervous when he did a requested sketch and he failed to make an impression. For the next three months he managed to eke out a bare existence selling advertising for a Los Angeles agency. Never once did he let his parents know he was low on funds.

But he had almost made up his mind to try his luck elsewhere when he heard a tough young horseman might make a living as an extra and stunt man in motion pictures.

Looking back, Cooper says: "I figured I could make \$25 now and then by taking a fall off a horse. I didn't take as many falls as I expected and sometimes the going was mighty tough. Funny thing how a guy will risk his neck to keep himself in groceries. Times have changed. If I suggested to a

studio now that I take a fall off a horse, someone would jump right down my throat. My neck was just as valuable to me then as it is now."

For more than a year after he started stunt and extra work, Cooper was just one of those obscure hundreds on the fringe of the film business.

His first break came in 1925 when Hans Tiesler, an independent producer, singled him out from the crowd to become the boots and spurs hero of a two-reeler, playing opposite Eileen Sedgewick. Small parts in feature length pictures began opening to him. However, it wasn't until he was cast as Abe Leo in *The Winning of Barbara Worth* that he received any important recognition.

His youth and unique personality soon attracted the attention of B. P. Schulberg, one of the most important figures in the industry. Summoned to Schulberg's office, he was given the first non-photographic test on record.

The office onto which Cooper walked was filled with producers, directors and other executives. Finding himself in this position without warning, he flashed an embarrassed but engaging smile around the room. Then, before he had even uttered a word, he was dismissed.

As soon as he left, Schulberg turned to his aides and said: "Well, gentlemen?"

Every comment was favorable and within half an hour a young man whose name is now known in every corner of the globe was being groomed for stardom. He appeared first—and briefly—in *Wings*. Then he appeared with Clara Bow, famed as the "It Girl" in *It* and *Children of Divorce*.

That was the heyday of western dramas which had followed in the wake of *The*

*Covered Wagon* so Schulberg decided to mould him into a new western star. His ranch training made this a simple process and with *Arizona Bound* Cooper became one of the screen's greatest outdoor heroes.

A long series of successes followed. Then began a cycle of gangster films, which took the edge from westerns for the time being. It looked for a short time like there might be a depression in Cooper's career. But, after *Fighting Caravans*, Gary's bosses decided to take him out of chaps and put him in civilian clothes. He proved as big a hit as a city man as he had as the hero of the wide, open spaces.

He played opposite Sylvia Sidney in one gangster picture, *City Streets* and followed this with *I Take This Woman* and *His Woman*.

Then his health became impaired. Cautious by doctors, Cooper consented to halt his career for a time and join a big game hunting expedition in Africa. This trip was to prove one of the highlights of his life. In October, 1931, he left with Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Preston for the Dark Continent. Six months later he returned to Hollywood, healthy, happy and with a full load of pelts, heads and other trophies of the hunt. These prized possessions line his studio dressing room and the den of his home.

Gary plunged into his screen work again, being cast in *Devil and the Deep* with Tallulah Bankhead and Charles Laughton. From that day his importance increased steadily and producers began to give him free rein, allowing him to display the change of pace of which he has shown himself so capable.

Upon completion of *Design for Living*, Cooper went to New York City. Ostensibly the trip was to make personal appearances in conjunction with the picture. But, two weeks after his arrival on December 15, 1933, he married the society beauty Veronica Balfe, who had appeared on the

screen as Sandra Shaw. Cooper and her friends call her "Rocky."

Of Mrs. Cooper, Gary says, "I am blessed with a wonderful wife." Gary gives full credit to her as being "a tremendous help" in his career. "I don't mean to say that she tells me that I should make this picture or that I shouldn't make that one," he explains, "But I have her read every script which comes to me. We talk it over as to whether it would make a good picture, irrespective of any of the parts. Then we talk over whether I'd be the best one in Hollywood to play the male role. If we decide some other actor might be a better casting than I would, then I don't make the picture."

They have one daughter, Maria, born September 15, 1937.

Recently Maria has expressed a desire to become a motion picture actress. Cooper makes it clear that the decision ultimately will be her own, but he wants her to finish her schooling first. "Then," he adds, "if she wants a career, she can go to a dramatic school and learn the rudiments of the business. If she wants to be an actress, I'll help her all I can, but first she'll have to help herself."

Cooper's hobbies are all confined to the great outdoors, and it is to this life which he attributes his rugged physique. A wardrobe fitting for *The Fountainhead* revealed that Gary's physical measurements are exactly the same as they were 20 years ago. He is six feet, three inches tall, weighs 185 pounds and has a 32-inch waist and a 42-inch chest.

While making *The Fountainhead*, Cooper and his wife took up their latest rugged sport, surf-board riding. Ten years ago they took up skiing. "Lots of my friends told me that it was a sport that only children should take up, much too dangerous for a man in his thirties," Gary explains. "Then we went to Sun Valley and ran into



a man in his sixties who was skiing. He had started when he was 55. I figured that if he could start at that age, I certainly wasn't too old. Great sport!"

Cooper likes to hunt and fish. He is a frequent visitor to the fields and forests of Idaho and Wyoming. He swims almost every day and plays tennis every week-end.

Gary has been a free-lance actor for ten years but recently he signed a contract with Warner Bros. for one picture a year. For five years he has made only a picture a year, but has considered increasing this to three pictures every two years. Five years ago Cooper and Nunnally Johnson formed their own production company, but made only two pictures. Gary doesn't think it likely he'll turn independent producer again. "Too many headaches," he explains simply.

He likes to get out in the rural sections of the country and talk to people, to find

out what they like in motion pictures. "You get many a good idea," Coop says. "I never go on a hunting or a fishing trip that I don't talk to merchants and other people." Sometimes Cooper will drive to a small town and stay there for two or three days, talking to the folks on main street.

He hasn't a single complaint to make about Hollywood. "I think it's a wonderful place," he says. "It's been mighty good to me."

One day a correspondent pressed him for suggestions on what studios could do to make working conditions more pleasant for actors. "To tell you the truth," said Coop, "I can think of only one thing. They might give us actors softer shoes to work in. It might be a little easier on our feet."

His own tremendous success he regards as "just good luck. I can't say that I did this or I did that," he explains. "There are too many other people involved. No one can be successful in this business without a lot of help from a lot of people."

Cooper has one particular picture he'd like to make. It is one concerning the life of President Andrew Jackson. "The story of his career is fabulous, enough to make six pictures," Gary says.

Recently he's had a yen to go on the stage, but he hasn't made any definite plans. "On the stage you can get the direct reaction of an audience," he explained. "I think it would be fun." The only time Gary ever trod the boards was in high school.

Cooper likes to read. He enjoys good food and plenty of it. He's never dieted a day in his life.

His greatest wonderment is why people are so interested in him. ■

*Tune in TWTD July 13 to hear Gary Cooper on radio.*

OLD TIME  
RADIO



CENTURY

Chuck Schaden's

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WDCB • 90.9 FM • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

## JUNE 2002

### SATURDAY, JUNE 1 RADIO AND WORLD WAR II BIG BANDS IN 1942

★ **GLENN MILLER'S SUNSET SERENADE** (11-29-41) A Saturday afternoon USO Matinee from the Cafe Rouge of the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York. Glenn Miller announces the tunes, including "Nickel Serenade," "Georgia On My Mind," "Elmer's Tune," "and "Chattanooga Choo Choo." Vocals by Marion Hutton, Ray Eberle, Tex Beneke, Modernaires. Sustaining, NBC Blue. (19 min & 30 min)

★ **SPOTLIGHT BANDS** (1-31-42) Sammy Kaye and his Orchestra broadcasting from Washington, D. C. Selections include "Dear Mom," "Let's Have Another Cup of Coffee," and "Remember Pearl Harbor." Vocals by Alan Foster, Morrie Cross, Tommy Ryan, Three Kaydets. Guest Fulton Lewis, Jr. offers a Salute to the Red Cross. Coca-Cola, MBS. (30 min)

★ **TREASURY STAR PARADE #31** (1942) Kay

Kyser and his "makes-you-wanna-dance" band offer a program of music to buy bonds by including "Johnny Doughboy Found a Rose in Ireland," "Jersey Bounce," and "A Zoot Suit." Vocals by Harry Babbitt and Sully Mason. U.S. Treasury Department. (15 min)

★ **TREASURY STAR PARADE #70** (1942) Harry James and his Orchestra, doing their part to sell war bonds, offer "I Don't Want to Walk Without You" and "One Dozen Roses." U.S. Treasury Department. (15 min)

★ **LADY ESTHER SERENADE** (8-17-42) Freddy Martin and his Orchestra present a program of music dedicated to "the girl back home." Tunes include "I Came Here to Talk for Joe," "He Wears a Pair of Silver Wings," "Please, Won't You Leave My Girl Alone?" and "Angels of Mercy." Vocals by Connie Haines and the Martin Men. Truman Bradley announces. Lady Esther Products, CBS. (25 min)

**OUR SPECIAL GUEST** is big band historian **Karl Pearson** who will present a number of musical clips and excerpts from broadcasts and talk about the role of the big bands during 1942.

### SATURDAY, JUNE 8 WAUKEGAN SALUTES JACK BENNY

*The City of Waukegan, Illinois has scheduled a three-day Jack Benny event for the week-end of June 7-8-9, during which time the new Jack Benny Statue will be dedicated. We'll do our part to celebrate this very special occasion by devoting our program this week to our favorite Radio Hall of Famer.*

**JACK BENNY PROGRAM** (3-21-37) Broadcasting from the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Pierre in New York City, Jack and the gang welcome Jack's boyhood friend, Mancel Talcott, Mayor of the City of Waukegan, Illinois. In a sketch about Jack's boyhood in Waukegan, Jack plays his own father. Jell-O, NBC. (29 min)

**BENNY BIRTHDAY BASH** (2-13-94) A special event celebrating the 61st anniversary of Jack

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Benny's 39th birthday, sponsored by the Museum of Broadcast Communications. Ken Alexander wrote the script, "A Surprise for Jack," based upon characters and situations created during the twenty-three year run of one of the most successful programs in the history of radio. Our *TWTD Radio Players* brought the script to life. John Sebert, winner of a Jack Benny sound-alike contest, portrayed Jack. Special guest Joan Benny, Jack's daughter, portrayed Mary Livingstone. Weatherman Harry Volkman appeared as Dennis Day and Ken Alexander was Professor LeBlanc. Jack's grandson, Bobby Blumofe, took on a special role. (35 min & 26 min)

**JACK BENNY PROGRAM** (6-18-39) On this last show of the 1938-39 season, Jack and the gang are planning a trip to Jack's hometown of Waukegan, Illinois. They meet at the railroad station. Jell-O, NBC. (28 min)

## **SATURDAY, JUNE 15 15th ANNIVERSARY SALUTE TO THE MUSEUM OF BROADCAST COMMUNICATIONS**

*The Museum of Broadcast Communications opened 15 years ago on June 13, 1987.*

**OLD TIME RADIO CLASSICS** (6-12-87) Special broadcast from River City in Chicago's South Loop. On the eve of the official opening of Chicago's Museum of Broadcast Communications, Chuck Schaden and John Hultman talk with celebrities at a special all-star gala to celebrate the event. Among those heard are Paul Harvey, Alex Drier, Len O'Connor, Don McNeill, Ed Herlihy, Mrs. Frances Bergen, Lee Phillip, Dorsey Connors, Jim Conway, John Madigan, Mrs. Fahey Flynn, Fran Allison, Bob Atcher and Jack Brickhouse. Also featured are clips from radio programs and big band broadcasts. WBBM, Chicago. (37 min & 32 min & 30 min)

**CHARLIE MC CARTHY SHOW** (12-7-47) Edgar Bergen stars with Charlie, Mortimer Snerd, Pat Patrick, Ray Noble and the orchestra, and guests Roy Rogers and the Sons of the Pioneers. Bergen tries to tutor Charlie; Mortimer reads a blank diary; Roy Rogers gives advice on being a movie cowboy. Royal Puddings,

Chase and Sanborn Coffee, NBC. (30 min)  
**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (2-6-40) Jim and Marion Jordan star as Fibber and Molly. Fibber cannot understand why everyone is being so nice to him today. This *milestone broadcast* features the first appearance on the show of the King's Men. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29 min)

## **SATURDAY, JUNE 22**

**SUSPENSE** (6-17-42) "The Burning Court" starring Charlie Ruggles with Julie Haydon. During a party, a mystery writer accuses a guest of murder. *This is the first program in the series which began 60 years ago this week and was for 20 years a mainstay of radio's golden age.* Sustaining, CBS. (30 min)

**MA PERKINS #4433** (1950) The first of four consecutive episodes in the long-running daytime series. All the troubles that have befallen Ma and the others have come from the cousins. Virginia Payne stars as Ma. Oxydol, CBS. (14 min) *Read the article about Ma Perkins on page 4.*

**MATINEE WITH BOB AND RAY** (12-7-49) Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding, early in their career, present sketches featuring Arthur Sturdley, Lawrence McGaffigan, Lyle Green, Mary McGoon, and a bedtime story. Multiple sponsors, WHDH, Boston. (29 min) *Read the article about Bob and Ray on page 37.*

**MA PERKINS #4434** (1950) The second of four connected episodes. Cousin Sylvester is going to propose to Fay. Oxydol, CBS. (14 min)

**MA PERKINS #4435** (1950) The third of four related episodes. Is Ma going to learn the truth about the cousins at last? Oxydol, CBS. (14 min)

**JIMMY DURANTE SHOW** (3-24-48) The Schnozz is on the campaign trail to the White House as he outlines his presidential cabinet. Guest is Victor Moore. Rexall, NBC. (29 min)

**MA PERKINS #4436** (1950) The last of four consecutive episodes. Ma is going to ask Evy and Willy a question she hates to ask. Oxydol, CBS. (14 min)

**DIMENSION X** (10-29-50) "No Contact" starring Luis Van Rooten. Space expeditions to the planet Volta have encountered a galactic reef which has not permitted explorers to penetrate or return to Earth. Sustaining, NBC. (29 min)

*Those Were The Days* may now be heard world wide on the Internet at  
[www.wdcb.org](http://www.wdcb.org)

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



**Chuck Schaden's**

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WDCB • 90.9 FM • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

**JUNE--JULY 2002**

## SATURDAY, JUNE 29 A RADIO BIRTHDAY PARTY

**PHIL HARRIS-ALICE FAYE SHOW** (3-20-49) Phil is determined to be a thoughtful husband and buy Alice a birthday gift, even though it's two days after her birthday. Elliott Lewis as Frankie Remley, Jeanine Roos and Ann Whitfield as the Harris daughters. Rexall, NBC. (29 min)

**EDDIE CANTOR SHOW** (1-30-47) To celebrate his 55th birthday, Eddie decides to start a new radio network and looks for help from guests Jack Benny, Peter Lind Hayes and Ralph Edwards. Harry Von Zell announces; Edgar "Cookie" Fairchild and the orchestra. Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer, NBC. (29 min)

★ **SUSPENSE** (8-28-43) "The King's Birthday" starring Dolores Costello with Martin Koslick, George Zucco and Ian Wolf. A story about Nazi occupied Denmark played against the background of the "new order" in Europe and a protest suicide promised before midnight on the birthday of the King. Sustaining, CBS. (29 min)

**DANNY KAYE SHOW** (1946) Danny welcomes guest Billie Burke who is planning a surprise birthday party for herself. Singer Georgia Gibbs also joins regulars Butterfly McQueen, announcer Dick Joy and Dave Terry and the orchestra. John Brown is the "average radio listener." Danny sings "Bali Boogie" from his film "Wonder Man" and Georgia sings "Shoo, Shoo Baby." AFRS rebroadcast. (30 min)

**MY FRIEND IRMA** (11-29-48) Marie Wilson stars as Irma Peterson with Joan Banks as Jane Stacy. It's Irma's birthday and Jane is planning a big costume party in her honor. Cast features Hans Conried as Professor Kropotkin, Gloria Gordon as Mrs. O'Reilly, John Brown as Al, Donald Woods as Richard Rhineland III. Pepsodent, NBC. (28 min)

**JACK BENNY PROGRAM** (2-13-55) On the eve of our star's birthday, Don Wilson takes the listeners back to last year when the Beverly

Hills Beavers were planning a surprise party for Jack. Featured are Mary Livingstone, Dennis Day, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Verna Felton, Mel Blanc, Sportsmen Quartet. *Jack does not appear on this broadcast until 14 minutes into the show.* Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS. (26 min)

## SATURDAY, JULY 6 TOMMY DORSEY: THE SENTIMENTAL GENTLEMAN

**TOMMY DORSEY AND HIS ORCHESTRA** (2-20-37) *Excerpt.* Remote from the Palm Room of the Hotel Commodore in New York City. Tommy and the orchestra present "There's Something in the Air," "Song of India," and "Melody in F." Vocals by Jack Leonard and the Three Esquires. Sustaining, MBS. (9 min)

**RALEIGH-KOOL CIGARETTE PROGRAM** (1-14-38) Tommy Dorsey and his Orchestra in a special broadcast tracing the history of swing music. The Dorsey band recreates a number of old recordings in the actual style of the period. Vocals by Edythe Wright, Jack Leonard, the Three Esquires. Guest is bass saxist Adrian Rollini. Paul Stewart announces. Selections include "Memphis Blues," "Tiger Rag," "Whispering," "Japanese Sandman," "Night and Day," "Posin'," and "Marie." Raleigh and Kool Cigarettes, NBC. (28 min)

**TOMMY DORSEY AND HIS ORCHESTRA** (1940) Remote broadcast from the Astor Roof of the Hotel Astor in New York City. This is an International broadcast with all announcements in Spanish, "short-waved to our Latin-American neighbors." Vocals by Jo Stafford, Frank Sinatra, Connie Haines, Pied Pipers. Songs include "Sweet Lorraine," "Imagination," "East of the Sun," and "Devil's Holiday." Sustaining, NBC-White. (29 min)

**TOMMY DORSEY AND COMPANY** (6-24-45) Featuring the Dorsey orchestra with Charlie Shavers on trumpet, Buddy Rich on drums,

and vocalists Stuart Foster and the Sentimentalists. Guest is actress Paulette Goddard who co-stars with Tommy as a romantic couple in a sketch looking back at the year 1940. Music includes "Sentimental Journey," "Chloe," "Alexander's Ragtime Band," and "I'll Never Smile Again." AFRS. (30 min)

**TOMMY AND JIMMY DORSEY** (6-4-55) *Excerpts*. Live recording of a Dorsey Brothers dance date at the Jantzen Beach Ballroom, Portland, Oregon with vocals by Bill Raymond and Shirley Jeanne. Music includes "Marie," "Tangerine," "One O'clock Jump." (26 min)

**OUR SPECIAL GUEST** is big band historian **Karl Pearson** who will talk about Tommy Dorsey and his orchestra and offer clips and excerpts of various Dorsey broadcasts and recordings.

### SATURDAY, JULY 13 REMEMBERING GARY COOPER

**SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS** (12-10-45) "Along Came Jones" starring **Gary Cooper** with Ona Munson and William Demarest in a radio version of the 1945 film, a comedy-western with Cooper being mistaken for a notorious outlaw. AFRS rebroadcast. (25 min)

★ **JACK BENNY PROGRAM** (12-13-42) Broadcasting from New York City before an audience of servicemen on leave, Jack and the gang welcome guest **Gary Cooper**. Jack and Coop decide to "paint the town red." Cast features Mary Livingstone, Dennis Day, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Alan Reed, and guest conductor Benny Goodman. Grape Nuts, NBC. (29 min)

**LUX RADIO THEATRE** (11-2-36) "The Virginian" starring **Gary Cooper**, Charles Bickford, Helen Mack and John Howard. A rugged cowpoke's best friend is found guilty of cattle rustling. Cast includes Earle Ross, Frank Nelson, Lou Merrill. Cecil B. DeMille hosts. Lux Soap, CBS. (21 min & 14 min & 23 min)

**PHILCO RADIO TIME** (10-1-47) Bing Crosby's first show for his second season for Philco finds him playing host to **Gary Cooper** in a comedy spoof of singing westerns. Also on hand: Peggy Lee, Rhythmaires, Ken Carpenter, John Scott Trotter and the orchestra. Philco Radios, ABC. (30 min)

**OUR SPECIAL GUEST** is movie historian **Bob Kolosowski** who will talk about the film career of Gary Cooper.

*Read the biography of Gary Cooper on page 16.*

### SATURDAY, JULY 20 RADIO AND WORLD WAR II MORE FROM THE WAR

★ **FRED WARING AND THE PENNSYLVANIANS** (12-8-41) In the evening following the United States Declaration of War, Fred Waring and his 55 Pennsylvanians present a program of music in response to the events of the day. Selections include "This is My Country" and "America, I Hear you Singing." Paul Douglas announces. *This program is preceded by a war bulletin.* Chesterfield Cigarettes, NBC. (14 min)

★ **GREAT GILDERSLEEVE** (5-3-42) Harold Peary stars as Gildersleeve with Walter Tetley as Leroy, Lurene Tuttle as Marjorie, Lillian Randolph as Birdie. A new U. S. Naval Liberty Ship is to be named "SS Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve" and Marjorie is going to christen it. Gildy's family takes the train to California for the occasion. Kraft Foods, NBC. (30 min)

★ **TREASURY STAR PARADE #14** (1942) Actor Frederic March emcees a patriotic program featuring singer Mary Jane Walsh and reads: "Nightmare at Noon" by Steven Vincent Benet. U.S. Treasury Department. (15 min)

★ **IT'S TIME TO SMILE** (6-3-42) Eddie Cantor stars in a broadcast from U. S. Army Camp Haan in Riverside, California. Guest is actress and pin-up girl Veronica Lake, who wants to join the Women's Army. Eddie spoofs a Tokyo short wave broadcast and has a soldier in the audience speak to his folks back home. Cast includes Harry Von Zell, Bert Gordon, Cookie Fairchild and the orchestra. Ipana, Sal Hepatica, NBC. (25 min)

★ **COUNTERSPY** (6-8-42) Don McLaughlin stars as David Harding, chief of U.S. Counterespies, "fighting Germany's Gestapo and Japan's Black Dragon." Harding investigates the "suicide" of a Washington official and discovers a Nazi espionage plot. Sustaining, Blue Network. (30 min)

★ **TREASURY STAR PARADE #15** (1942) Actress Jane Cowell narrates the "Story of Mary Dyer." Genevieve Powell sings a new Irving Berlin song, "It's a Lovely Day Tomorrow." Frederic March is host. U. S. Treasury Department. (15 min)

★ **PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT** (6-14-42) The President of the United States

★ INDICATES A WORLD WAR II BROADCAST OF SPECIAL INTEREST



**Chuck Schaden's**

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

**WDCB • 90.9 FM • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM**

**JULY 2002**

speaks to the nation on Flag Day and discusses the Four Freedoms. All networks. (8 min)

★ **YOUR HIT PARADE** (7-18-42) Martin Block introduces the top tunes of the week as presented by Barry Wood, Joan Edwards, the Hit Paraders, Mark Warnow and the orchestra. Basil Rysdale announces. Just six months since Pearl Harbor, there's a distinct patriotic flavor throughout this broadcast. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (28 min & 12 min)

## **SATURDAY, JULY 27 CHRISTMAS IN JULY**

*Since the collapsed transmitter tower took WDCB off the air during the middle of our Christmas broadcast last December 22, we herewith repeat all of the shows scheduled for that date.*

**DRAGNET** (12-22-53) Jack Webb stars in the program's traditional Christmas story. The statue of the infant Jesus is stolen from the Mission Church as Friday and Smith investigate. Ben Alexander co-stars. NBC. (27 min)

**GREAT GILDERSLEEVE** (12-21-41) A package marked "Do Not Open Until Christmas" arrives from Gildy's old chum in Wistful Vista, Fibber McGee. But Gildersleeve's curiosity is challenged. Harold Peary stars. *This broadcast is related to the Fibber McGee and Molly show of December 23, 1941 which follows later this afternoon.* Kraft Foods, NBC. (30 min)

**PHILCO RADIO TIME** (12-24-47) Bing Crosby in his traditional Christmas program of carols

and the telling of the story "The Small One." Bing sings "White Christmas." Cast includes pianist Skitch Henderson, Charioteers, John Scott Trotter and the orchestra, Ken Carpenter. Philco, ABC. (29 min)

★ **THE WORLD TODAY** (12-19-41) Mel Allen with correspondents Thomas Werthen in Manila, Charles Collingwood in London, Eric Sevareid in Washington. "Japanese forces have landed on Hong Kong and the British position there is serious... In the Philippines, the Manila area had two air raids during the night, Japanese planes coming over in two waves... On the Russian-German front, the Red Army continues to smash at retreating Germans..." CBS. (12 min)

★ **FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (12-23-41) Jim and Marian Jordan star with Gale Gordon, Isabel Randolph, Mel Blanc, Harlow Wilcox, singer Martha Tilton, King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra and guest Harold Peary as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve. The McGees receive an unmarked Christmas package containing door chimes and they can't figure out who sent it to them. *This broadcast is related to the Great Gildersleeve show of December 21, 1941, presented earlier this afternoon.* Johnson's Wax, NBC. (30 min)

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL** (12-25-49) Lionel Barrymore stars as Ebenezer Scrooge in his annual presentation of the Charles Dickens Christmas story. Supporting cast includes Bill Johnstone, Shirley Mitchell, Byron Kane, Eric Snowden, Joseph Kearns. Dick Mack announces. Capehart Radio and TV Dealers, MBS. (30 min)

*...and for more good listening...*

**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 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, 2002 Schedule

MON/6-3	Nightbeat 4-17-50 <i>Tong War</i> Frank Lovejoy; Phil Harris-Alice Faye 11-20-49 Pt 1
TUE/6-4	Phil Harris-Alice Faye Pt 2; X Minus One 3-13-57 <i>Lights on Precipice Peak</i>
WED/6-5	Damon Runyon Theatre 4-3-49 <i>Bride Goes Home</i> ; Jack Benny 4 26-42 Pt 1
THU/6-6	Jack Benny Pt 2 <i>Happy Hour Tea Room</i> ; Dragnet 5-17-53 <i>Big False Mistake</i>
FRI/6-7	The Shadow 7-17-38 <i>Steamship Amazon</i> ; The Unexpected 1950s <i>The Reverse Cup</i>
MON/6-10	Richard Diamond 12-17-49 <i>John Blackwell Case</i> ; A Date with Judy 2-6 45 Pt 1
TUE/6-11	A Date with Judy Pt 2; Screen Guild Players 11-18 48 <i>Rebecca</i> Loretta Young
WED/6-12	Lone Ranger 7 16-54 <i>Billy Tilden's Mission</i> Great Gildersleeve 9-9-45 Pt 1
THU/6-13	Great Gildersleeve <i>Leroy's Teacher</i> Pt 2; Boston Blackie 7-23-45 <i>Three Way Split</i>
FRI/6-14	Suspense 2-8-45 <i>Tale of Two Sisters</i> Claire Trevor; Bill Stern 11-26-48 Frankie Carle
MON/6-17	Nick Carter 1-17-45 <i>Murder by Fire</i> ; Burns & Allen 2-29-44 Pt 1 Dorothy Lamour
TUE/6-18	Burns & Allen Pt 2; Gunsmoke 4-15-56 <i>The Executioner</i> William Conrad
WED/6-19	Green Hornet 1 20-48 <i>Matter of Evidence</i> ; Archie Andrews 5-7 46 Pt 1 <i>Day at Camp</i>
THU/6-20	Archie Andrews Pt 2; Escape 3-21-48 <i>Misfortune's Isle</i> Paul Frees
FRI/6-21	The Shadow 7-24-38 <i>Murders in Wax</i> ; Blackstone, Magic Detective 10-10-48
MON/6-24	This is Your FBI 11-23-51 <i>Flying Felon</i> ; Stan Freberg 8-18-57 Pgm 6/15 Pt 1
TUE/6-25	Stan Freberg Pt 2; Tales of Texas Rangers 1-21 51 <i>Blood Harvest</i> Joel McCrea
WED/6-26	Calling All Cars 9-7-37 <i>Tobaccoville Road</i> ; Our Miss Brooks 9-18-49 Pt 1
THU/6-27	Our Miss Brooks Pt 2 <i>Faculty cheerleader</i> ; Frontier Gentleman 2-9-58 <i>Charlie Meeker</i>
FRI/6-28	Suspense 1-12-43 <i>Pit and the Pendulum</i> ; Vic & Sade 8-24-42 Rush's school clothes

### July, 2002 Schedule

MON/7-1	Dimension X 6-3-50 <i>The Embassy</i> ; Red Skelton 10-1-50 Pt 1
TUE/7-2	Red Skelton Pt 2; Crime Classics 12-3-52 <i>Bathsheba Spooner</i> Lou Merrill
WED/7-3	Mr. Keen 4-23-52 <i>Mother's Plea Murder Case</i> ; Fibber McGee 11 24-42 Pt 1
THU/7-4	Fibber McGee Pt 2 <i>Physically fit</i> ; Philo Vance 1-25 49 <i>Idol Murder Case</i> Jackson Beck
FRI/7-5	The Shadow 8-28-38 <i>Tomb of Terror</i> ; Couple Next Door 1 3 58 <i>Betsy wants a dog</i>
MON/7-8	Casey, Crime Photographer 3-1-47 <i>King of the Apes</i> ; Jack Benny 3-12-39 Pt 1
TUE/7-9	Jack Benny Pt 2 <i>Raises</i> ; The Whistler 4-22-46 <i>Waterford Case</i>
WED/7-10	Dragnet 12-7-52 <i>The Big Mole</i> ; Great Gildersleeve 6-13-43 Pt 1 <i>Honeymoon plans</i>
THU/7-11	Great Gildersleeve Pt 2; Murder By Experts 6-13-49 <i>Summer Heat</i>
FRI/7-12	Suspense 3-8-45 <i>Love's Lovely Counterfeit</i> Humphrey Bogart; The Bickersons 1940s
MON/7-15	Lone Ranger 7-19-54 <i>The Silver Colt</i> ; My Favorite Husband 8-6-48 Pt 1 <i>Liz' Portrait</i>
TUE/7-16	My Favorite Husband Pt 2; Murder at Midnight 10-4-46 <i>Murder Out of Mind</i>
WED/7-17	Escape 3-21 47 <i>Dead of Night</i> Art Carney; Life of Riley 4-27-46 Pt 1 <i>Gambler Riley</i>
THU/7-18	Life of Riley Pt 2; Inner Sanctum 4-4 49 <i>Death Wears a Lonely Smile</i> M. McCambridge
FRI/7-19	The Shadow 10-24-37 <i>Temple Bells of Neban</i> ; Baby Snooks & Daddy 1940s
MON/7-22	Richard Diamond 6-19-49 <i>Fred Sears Murder Case</i> ; Burns & Allen 3-7-44 Pt 1 Alan Ladd
TUE/7-23	Burns & Allen Pt 2; Mollie Mystery Theatre 4-19-46 <i>Follow that Cab</i>
WED/7-24	Gunsmoke 3 26 55 <i>The Horse Deal</i> ; Our Miss Brooks 10-24-48 Pt 1 <i>Surprise party</i>
THU/7-25	Our Miss Brooks Pt 2; Rocky Fortune 2-16-54 <i>Too Many Husbands</i> Frank Sinatra
FRI/7-26	Suspense 1-17-46 <i>Pasteboard Box</i> Joseph Cotten; Calling All Detectives
MON/7-29	Lights Out 8-25-45 <i>Man in the Middle</i> ; Life with Luigi 1-24-50 <i>Business is slow</i>
TUE/7-30	Life with Luigi Pt 2; Tales of Texas Rangers 5-29-50 <i>Soft Touch</i> Joel McCrea
WED/7-31	Humphrey Bogart Theatre 8-17-49 <i>Dead Man</i> ; Stan Freberg 8-25-57 Pgm 7/15 Pt 1

# CEREAL BOX-TOP MANIA

BY ED KNAPP

Nowadays, when mother goes to the grocery store to buy boxes of cereal for her young charges, she looks for a product that's nutritious, liked by her children, and falls into a price range she can afford.

A wide range of choices in ready-to-eat cereal includes those with colorful flakes, marshmallows, nuts, cookie bites, raisins, sugar-coating, fruit, and... well, you name it. The full-color cartoon-like box faces and the "sweet" contents of same are all that matters with today's kids.

The top cover of the cereal box—the box-top—offers no purpose beyond keeping its contents from spilling all over the kitchen table or floor.

There was a time six or seven decades ago when the cereal box-top itself was the most desired and valuable part of the entire ten-or fifteen-cent package.

Looking back on my 1930s' pre-teen high-torque radio listening years, when I would be listening to the adventure shows in the late afternoon, after returning home from grade school, I am still unable to forget my impassioned efforts to grasp every cereal box-top I could tear off.

Every kids' adventure radio show sponsor offered, on many occasions, related gifts to its youthful listeners. These gifts, or premiums, could be obtained in exchange for a box-top, an inner-seal, or a strip, proving that the listener had purchased the sponsor's product.

Most generally the gift was tied in with the plot of the daily airing which made it

even more exciting for the child to be able to hold in his hand, realistically making him a part of the action taking place on the air. I, of course, fell for the announcer's premium sales pitch and found myself sending in for anything and everything I had enough box-tops to order by mail.

I soon developed a sixth sense about when a new radio premium was about to be heralded over the air and my pulse quickened at the thought. I knew it was coming when, after the adventure show's signature opening, the excited voice of the announcer chimed: "Now, boys and girls, be sure to stay tuned in at the end of today's exciting adventure for a SPECIAL announcement you won't want to miss. Be sure to have pencil and paper nearby so you won't miss any of the exciting details." I was always ready with the necessary tools, shaking with anticipation.

As a red-blooded, depression-era youngster, I craved tales of intrigue, peril and uncertainty on those 15-minute action-packed programs. Every weekday afternoon I listened to a King's share of the lineup that began almost the minute I got home from school. Every adventure show, at one time or another, hawked an attractive tie-in premium I just could not resist sending in to get. Since most of those broadcasts were sponsored by cereal companies, the cereal box-top was the "ticket" to getting one of those highly desired radio premiums. Those box-tops became, to me, the most valuable and necessary item in the package.

My desire to collect box-tops began at around the age of seven with the introduction of one of the first 15-minute radio adventure shows for children, *Little Orphan*

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

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# • • HOW TO A SILVER STAR

OF Radio Orphan Annie's

And Learn the Special Secrets

# BECOME MEMBER

Secret Society



That Only a Silver Star Member Can Know



HERE'S  
THE WAY  
TO DO IT!



From the top right corner of the page, the girl in the hat is pointing to the group of people. This is the first step in the process of becoming a Silver Star member.



Get them to talk to you. This is the second step in the process. You should be friendly and approachable.



Now you are talking to the group. This is the third step. You should be a good listener and a good talker.



Now you are talking to the man. This is the fourth step. You should be a good listener and a good talker.



Now you are smiling. This is the fifth step. You should be a good listener and a good talker.

**It's Easy and Lots of Fun**  
—Start Asking Your Friends Today

Getting to be a Silver Star member is really easy. All you have to do is ask your friends if they would like to join the Secret Society. They will be happy to do so. This is the sixth step. You should be a good listener and a good talker.

Original and fine material, stories, and more than all their previous work. This is the seventh step. You should be a good listener and a good talker.

So make up your mind right now to be one of the first in your town to get your Silver Star. This is the eighth step. You should be a good listener and a good talker.

A much sought-after premium in 1934 from radio's most popular Ovaltine sponsored show: **Radio Orphan Annie**. Annie was one of the largest suppliers of give-away premiums.

Annie in 1931. Over the years, Annie became one of the greatest dispensers of send-in-for-premium gadgets. Since her sponsor was Ovaltine, a powdered crystal mix in a can, the box-top had not come into its own yet. Young listeners were obliged to send in the shiny aluminum inner-seal from that can (later, a jar).

Every day at 5:45 p.m. (EST) I posted myself in front of the radio speaker for Annie's newest adventure, not wanting to miss a beat or the announcement for a new premium. Naturally, obtaining those inner-seals became my highest priority. My fondness for the drink itself was not at the top of my list, but I kept at it with my wish to own the Annie give-aways. In a few years, the company introduced a new, chocolate-flavored Ovaltine which made it easier for me to collect more of those inner-seals with less effort.

The inner-seals I sent to 360 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois in care of

Radio Orphan Annie netted me many desirable premiums: a life-like, full color mask of Annie's face; a large color map of her rural Simmon's Corners hometown; Secret Society decoders; rings; a gold luck coin; an attractive Ovaltine shake-up mug with Annie and Sandy pictured on it's side (good to make ice-cold Ovaltine shake-ups).

In 1933 a new radio western adventure show joined a growing number of children's weekday afternoon spots: *The Tom Mix Ralston Straight-Shooters*. Tom Mix, a famous movie cowboy, came with an instant following of kids who had seen him in action on the silver screen. Now they could hear their hero on the airwaves at home.

Tom's sponsor, next to Annie in the early years, was one of the most prolific in the number of premiums offered to the young backaroos listening in. The hot Ralston cereal came in a checker-board box that

ED KNAPP COLLECTION

started me on the box-top grabbing craze. So many TM-Bar (the name of Tom's ranch) gadgets were hacked over the air for box-tops, I could hardly keep up.

I spooned a lot of the hot, high-grained cereal, sending in those box covers to St. Louis, Missouri for many items: a break-away wooden six-shooter; a spiffy collapsible pocket telescope; dual pocket compass and magnifier; TM-Bar kerchief and ring; a real picture of Tom and his wonder horse, Tony. Between drinking Ovaltine and eating Ralston, I found myself stuffed — and this was only the half of it.

I was attracted to many other adventure shows that came along in the next few years in those great 15-minute after-school time slots. They, too, offered a generous share of premiums: *Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy*, *Dick Tracy*, *Frank Buck*, *Don Winslow of the Navy*, *Tarzan*, *The Lone Wolf Indian Tribe*, *Og*, *Son of Fire*, and still others. Each program was sponsored by a different cereal or powdered drink company.

*Jack Armstrong* was sponsored by

**For Strength and Energy**

**Cocomalt**

A DELICIOUS FOOD DRINK  
CHOCOLATE FLAVOR

—the Vitamin B food drink

Cocomalt sponsored *Buck Rogers*

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Wheaties, a likeable breakfast treat I enjoyed and I was happy to get the required box-tops. Now I was drinking Ovaltine with milk, eating Ralston with milk, and Wheaties with milk. Still, I sent for Jack's hike-o-meter, football game board, film and viewer, a "Dragon's Eye" ring, and more.

Radio premiums were the "thing" at my age and I kept eating and drinking my way through bowls and glasses of milk product supplements.

The kitchen cupboards at our house were filled with cereal boxes and powdered drink cans and jars. They were minus box-tops, inner-seals, and

**Don Winslow**  
SQUADRON OF PEACE

**MEMBERSHIP CARD**  
SQUADRON OF PEACE

This is to certify that

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

is a member of the Squadron of Peace and is registered at Intelligence Headquarters in Berlin, Crank, Madagasc.

Squadron No. \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Number: **17679**

*Don Winslow*

Kellogg's mailing envelope and official membership card for *Don Winslow's Squadron of Peace* premium, 1939.

ED KNAPP COLLECTION

the like and most of them were yet half-filled. As the radio program premium offers continued, I would ask my mother to buy more of a certain product because of the "ticket" I had to send in to obtain the latest gadget being offered. She advised me it was necessary to finish the top-less products on the shelves before she bought any more.

Already being a Tom Mix "Straight-Shooter," a trusting Orphan Annie "Secret Society" member, and a good sportsmanship Jack Armstrong follower, I had to live up to the standards of those memberships. That meant playing the game fair and truthful. Had it not been for those standards set by my radio heroes, I might have tried to hide the half-filled boxes in order to get more of those badly-needed box-tops. I even thought about feeding the overages to our dog or cats, but that would not be following the merits set forth by the radio clubs of which I was an official member.

I did think of a new twist to have enough box-tops to satisfy my desire for a radio send-away offer for something I just had to have. I got the bright idea of sending in the "bottom" lid from the already used cereal boxes, and maybe they would not know the difference. Or, they might think, "This is just a young dumb kid who doesn't know the difference between the top and the bottom, so we'll just send the premium anyway." As far as I can recall, it must have worked.

You would think with having these program favorites, each an abundant premium-offering radio show, I couldn't possibly

This is to certify that SECRET NUMBER

*George Murphy* 8118

a qualified member of

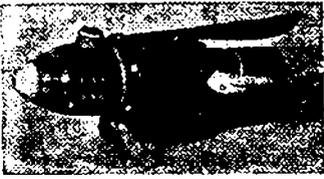
**BUCK ROGERS SOLAR SCOUTS**

Every applicant is to be extended to him upon whatever planet he may happen to land. All inter-planetary Police, Rocket Patrols, and Military Space Forces are instructed to render every aid and assistance possible to this Solar Scout upon demand, to furtherance of his Official Duties.

Signed -

*Buck Rogers*

Commanding Officer, B. R. S. S., Earth G. H. Q., Niagara.



BUCK ROGERS' OWN INTER-PLANETARY BATTLE CRUISER - CARRY 2000 FIGHTING MEN

**Buck Rogers Solar Scouts Membership Card issued to young radio listeners in the 1930s**

ED KNAPP COLLECTION

stand another. But I did. It was *Buck Rogers in the Twenty-Fifth Century*, with all its thrilling, interplanetary space adventures, rocket ships, space belts, rocket pistols, and trips to Mars, Pluto, Venus, the Moon, Jupiter, and Saturn. I was won over listening to this most unusual of programs. And they offered many, many premiums.

To get them, I had to drink chocolate-flavored Cocomalt and eat bowls and bowls of Kellogg's cereal until it was coming out of my ears, especially since I was eating and drinking every other adventure program sponsor's products, too. I kept the faith and joined the Buck Rogers Solar Space Scouts (through box-tops), sent for and received many desirable items: a Solar Scout badge and official manual; a color map of space where Buck and Wilma had all their radio travels; a Buck Rogers Big Little Book; paper rocket pistol; Buck and Wilma face masks; a set of miniature figurines of my space friends.

Cereal box-tops had a special place in my life as they did in the lives of many thousands of other young radio listeners from the same period, all of whom, I'm sure, struggled as much as I did to find those almighty necessary "tickets" for those captivating premiums we loved. ■

# FDR and the Media Pool

BY WILLIAM J. RYAN

We've all seen photos of President Franklin D. Roosevelt ready to deliver one of his famous Fireside Chats with a cluster of microphones covering his desk. These pictures can be identified as being from the early days of his administration. Later pictures show him speaking into only one microphone while his address was carried by several radio networks, plus newsreels. What happened?

The answer was given a few years ago by the late Bill Smay, an audio engineer at ABC-TV in Hollywood.

"In those days, everything was heavy equipment," Smay said. "We carried our own power supplies... ND10's, which were monsters powered by a power pack that was as big and heavy as two automobile batteries and always contained in a big oak box, making that power pack weigh about 200 pounds.

"Each network and each station and each newsreel company would go into the Oval Office or wherever they were going to do a Roosevelt Fireside and set up our equipment."

Smay said the equipment would be readied in the afternoon.

"Everything had to be completely set up by the time they were going to bring in the president to give us a level and make sure everything was okay.

"They would wheel Roosevelt in. In those days, he was very shy about people

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*William J. Ryan is a retired journalist who spent 17 years with United Press International. He was also a college teacher and administrator. This article originally appeared in Radio World newspaper and is used with permission. For information visit [www.rwonline.com](http://www.rwonline.com)*

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seeing him in a wheelchair or on crutches, and he needed both. They would wheel him in and he would say, 'Are you ready, gentlemen?' and we would say 'Yes,' and he would give us a speech for a level. They would wheel him back and we were all set then for the broadcast at six or seven o'clock."

Smay said NBC, CBS and Mutual would be there, along with several newsreel services and many independent stations.

"It was amazing that Roosevelt would know who everybody was, and he made it a point if there was a new person who came in, he would have (Postmaster General) Jim Farley find out if there were any new people so the president would know their name," he said.

Asked if the president remembered *his* name, Smay said, "He called me by name once when we were covering (an inaugural) parade.

It was raining and I took off my hat because I liked the old gentleman. I was standing with NBC reporter Morgan Beatty, and Roosevelt saw me as he was waving to the crowd and said, "Put on your hat, Bill," real loud.

"I could have melted."

Smay went to work for NBC in 1943, and the following year joined NBC's Blue Network, which became ABC Radio.

He moved to Hollywood around 1950 and got in on the grass roots of ABC television on the West Coast, eventually working in the studio for the *Lawrence Welk Show*, *General Hospital*, the Academy Awards shows, the Olympic Games and other programs.

The idea of a pool broadcast of FDR's speeches came almost by accident, Smay said.



"He had been out on the Potomac and an emergency arose. They called the yacht back to the Navy yard in southwest Washington. We wanted to do this thing as quickly as possible, so somebody devised a way of rigging up a great big plank with everybody's microphones and all the cables attached that could be lifted and put across in front of him (FDR) on the back seat of the limo. It was a forest of microphones you couldn't believe.

"But the president noticed all of the struggle getting this big plank up on the car and the cables. He said, 'Surely, with all of our know-how, we could do something about this. This is ridiculous.'

"As a result, the networks started the pool system, with one person doing the feed." He said networks, newsreels and the independent stations cooperated, with the networks working on a rotating basis.

Smay said the White House later installed and supplied the equipment for the pool broadcasts.

In describing the equipment used in the 1930s and '40s, Smay said the pool engi-

neer, when traveling on assignment by plane or train, always kept the microphones, mixers, cords and power supplies at his side.

"We would never trust it to a baggage compartment," and would buy an extra set if necessary, he said.

"When we carried all this equipment, we would go into a station like Union Station in Washington and the porters got to know us. They would see all the equipment that had NBC on it in big letters, and the porters... would run, they wouldn't walk... away from us. We were handling all this baggage, and it weighed half a ton when you got it together. The Red Caps wouldn't touch it."

Bill Smay retired after a long career with ABC and died in 1974 at the age of 74. ■

*William Ryan wrote this article at the request of his friend, ABC-TV audio man Gene Larson of Upland, California. Larson interviewed Bill Smay and recorded the conversation a few years prior to Smay's death.*

# An American Quixote

BY WAYNE KLATT

*The Lone Ranger*, with three-times-a-week adventures on the airwaves from 1933-1956, became one of the everlasting symbols of the golden age of radio.

The television version of *The Lone Ranger* also became a part of Americana when Jack (Clayton) Moore strapped on the revolver, wore a black mask, and rode a white horse. This surely was not because Moore was such a good actor, but because the actor had found a role that personally ennobled him to the point that he never let go of it.

Clayton Moore was born in Chicago on September 14, 1914 and grew up on the North Side. He attended Senn High School and worked out at the Illinois Athletic Club downtown, where he performed a flying trapeze act with future *Tarzan* Johnny Weismuller. With his good looks and strong physique, Moore tried being a male model but soon became bored and headed for Hollywood in 1938.

Moore was a stock villain for Republic Westerns, usually wearing a black hat and being slugged by Gene Autry. But he was tired of being the bad guy and eagerly accepted the lead in the *Lone Ranger* television series which debuted on ABC on September 15, 1949.

One of the reasons the show was a hit was that it was filmed outdoors, in contrast to the preponderance of live programming. Another was that although there was always a potential for violence, the hero never killed anyone and wounded only

when absolutely necessary, so that it was a family program that even had the endorsement of educators.

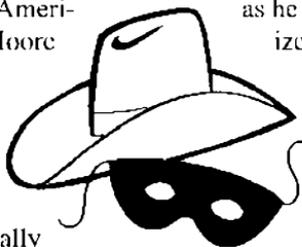
As a boy, Moore had wanted to be a policeman or a cowboy, and with the new role, as he would say years later, "I realized all my dreams." To bring it conviction, Moore imitated the deep, steady delivery of Bracc Bearer, the actor who had played the role on radio, even if this self-consciousness made Moore's performance a little stiff.

Each TV episode began with Moore as the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains on his rearing white horse as an announcer said: "Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear, when out of the West comes the thundering hoofbeats and the mighty cry of..." And then, "Hi-Yo, Silver, Awayyyy!" It was the most famous fictional utterance since *Tarzan's* yell!

Although in the first few television episodes the *Lone Ranger* wore a red shirt, by 1951 the color was changed to a mythic powder blue, as if the character really did represent an idea rather than a person.

Despite the formula imposed by the format, the stories, written or supervised by *Lone Ranger* creator Fran Striker, remained probably the cleverest Westerns on the air until *Gunsmoke* came along, since every week posed a challenge for finding a way to quell violence without overt violence.

The two extremes of the idealistic *Lone Ranger* and the realistic *Gunsmoke* showed producers what Westerns could do and, instead of petering out, the genre galloped across the home screen. In 1958, the fall television lineup listed 28 Westerns, some



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Wayne Klatt is an editor at the City News Service of the Chicago Tribune and a free-lance writer.

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of them with surly heroes and increasing gunplay. *The Lone Ranger* seemed passé, yet fans were so loyal that reruns continued on CBS, NBC, and then back to ABC until 1961.

By then, fans were treasuring nearly 750 types of *Lone Ranger* collectibles, including plastic banks, guitars, radios, phonographs, harmonicas, first-aid kits, lunch boxes, dishes, suspenders, flashlights, chaps, toothbrush holders, and ball-point pens shaped like silver bullets.

Series co-star Jay Silverheels, who was never able to shake his Tonto image despite small roles in several films, died in 1979. But Clayton Moore didn't want to let the character of *The Lone Ranger* die, and that same year he fought the courts for the right to continue wearing his black mask as part of his costume at public events. Producers of the big-screen, big-budget disaster *The Legend of the Lone Ranger* told a judge they needed to wrest the character away from him in favor of an actor unknown then and now, Clint Eastwood.

This was the only fight Moore ever lost. But even then he continued making per-

sonal appearances with wraparound dark sunglasses. You only had to hear one word from him to imagine his white hat, black mask, and powder blue shirt. Those who met Moore in the 1970s and '80s were astonished to find a man still trim, still speaking in that famous deep voice, and still looking ready to fight injustice.

Moore admitted that it was often difficult for him to separate his personality from the character. "Yes, sir, I guess we are one and the same," he told a reporter.

When a court lifted the ban on his mask, he felt whole again. As an American Don Quixote, Moore showed up at numerous events wearing his mask and a gun belt with silver bullets at state fairs and grand openings before returning home to his working ranch in the San Fernando Valley.

The character was such a force for inspiring good behavior that reruns of *The Lone Ranger* were aired on cable TV's Christian Broadcasting Network in 1985. "Kids have been my biggest audience down through the years," Moore said that year, when he was 71 and looking barely changed from those thrilling days of yesteryear. "They're the future leaders of tomorrow, and they've always looked up to the Lone Ranger."

He was still carrying spare silver bullets in the back of his car.

In 1986, a motorcyclist was hurt in an accident on a California highway. He lifted his head and saw Moore helping him while Moore's wife, a nurse, was looking him over for injuries. Seeing that the victim would be all right, Moore handed him an autographed photo of the Lone Ranger on Silver. Across the photo, Moore had written: "You're a very lucky man. Always wear your helmet, pard."

Clayton Moore died of a heart attack in a hospital near Los Angeles on December 29, 1999.

The last noble hero had died. ■

# I Was A Teen-Age Radio Actor

BY GEORGE LITTLEFIELD

Recently, our Glen Ellyn (Illinois) Bible Study group was seated in the church rec room, studying the Book of Job. Near the end of the session, our leader handed out some small scripts to us; we were going to perform a "Job" playlet. But which one of us would play Job?

"Let George do it!" was the familiar cry.

I found myself staring down at the lines I would be saying as Job, and suddenly the years just seemed to melt away. I was back in Austin High School, on the West Side of Chicago, in the spring of 1958. I was a junior, just getting a late start in the Drama Club, checking over a bit part I had in "A Date with Judy."

Then Mrs. Patricia Lewkowicz, our drama coach, walked into the room.

"All right, everyone," she announced, "pay attention! I've just gotten word that the Radio Workshop at public radio station WBEZ is going to hold auditions for new actors. And nearly all the actors in Radio Workshop are high school students!

"This is big-time, kids! If you get into Radio Workshop, you'll be heard in public schools and homes all over Chicagoland. I've got registration forms for the auditions right here. Now, who would like to sign up?"

My eyes glazed over. A chance to act on the radio! I'd been a radio fan since I heard my first *Superman* broadcast at age three in 1945. And even now, in 1958, I

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*George Littlefield is a retired trade magazine writer and editor. He last wrote for us in the April-May 2001 issue, telling the story of his father's days working at the Chicago Century of Progress Exhibition.*

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George Littlefield in 1958

still listened loyally to *X Minus One*, *Gun-smoke*, *Dimension X* and whatever other programs I could still find on the dial.

The only fellow from Austin who was already in Radio Workshop was Charlie Harris — the best actor in the school. If that was what they were looking for, I knew I didn't stand a chance. But maybe you didn't *have* to be a Charlie Harris to get into Radio Workshop. Maybe they would be satisfied with an enthusiastic beginner.

I raised my hand. "I'll take one of those forms, Mrs. Lewkowicz," I said.

For the next few days, I just went on with my job of being a professional teen-ager: school, homework, church, tutoring a child in reading, TV, radio, records, pizza and fun.

Then, about a week later, I found a white postcard from the Chicago Board of education in our mailbox. The card said that I had been accepted to audition for Radio

Workshop, and told me a date and evening time that I was to report to the WBEZ studios to try out.

To say I was happy was putting it mildly! I could hardly count the hours til my audition.

Finally, the big day—actually the big evening—came. I walked from my home to the Lake Street El, and rode it to the State Street stop. From there it was just a short distance to the skyscraper that the Chicago Board of Education called home.

Quickly, an elevator whisked me upward fifteen stories or so. When it finally stopped and the doors opened, I stepped out into what was for me a new world—the world of radio.

There were around twenty kids waiting ahead of me and I could see that they were as nervous as I was—except for one lad who kept boasting about the radio commercials he could be heard in. So I was going up against a real pro!

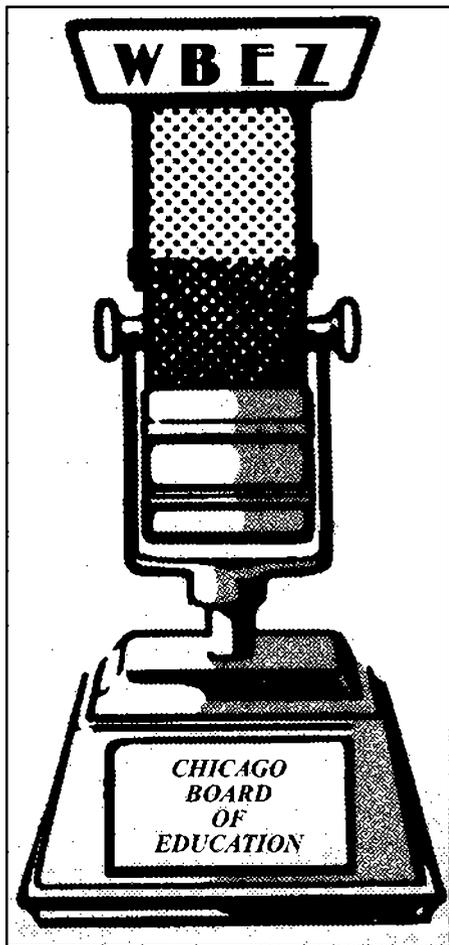
There was nothing to do now but sit in my chair and wait for my turn.

I was savvy enough to realize that my hoped-for career in radio now depended on what sort of script I was given to read. If I was lucky enough to play a character and situation I could identify with, things would go much easier for me.

Finally, my turn came. A friendly-looking woman handed me a script. "Here," she said, "you've got ten minutes to familiarize yourself with this."

Ten minutes?? That was practically a cold reading! I knew that the real shows like *Gunsmoke* had at least two full rehearsals before they went on the air. Here I was with just ten minutes to prepare myself!

I looked down at the script and as I started reading my nervousness and anxiety changed to joy. The subjects of the scene were Martin and Osa Johnson, two world-class adventurers who had traveled the unexplored areas of the world by air-



plane in the 1920s, always with movie cameras at the ready.

Way back in seventh grade I had read Osa Johnson's book, "I Married Adventure," and I had seen many of the duo's films on after-school TV since then. Martin Johnson—now there was a part I could really sink my teeth into!

Before I knew it, they called my name and I was escorted into a small room. Its walls were covered with something like corkboard, and there was a big window on one side. Behind the glass, a man wearing headphones sat staring out at me.

Right on my heels, a girl with blond hair and blue eyes followed me into the little

room. She had a copy of the same script I did.

"Who the heck is Osa Johnson?" she whispered, as we stepped before two big floor mikes.

"It's a long story," I replied. "You see..." But then the director up in the window spoke into a mike in front of him.

"Please remove your shoes," he said, and his voice came out from seven or eight speakers around the room. "We don't want to pick up footsteps. These mikes are very sensitive. And another thing: take the staples out of your scripts. When you finish reading a page, drop it on the carpet. I don't want to hear paper rustling, either."

He pointed to a small box next to him. "When this red light goes on, it means we're recording. Watch me. When I point at you, start the scene."

I looked over at my partner in what I hoped was a reassuring manner and she smiled back in return. Then the red light came on. The director pointed straight at us. This was it: do or die!

I started speaking my first line. "But Osa, you've got to believe me, this trip will be sensational..."

As I said these words, the studio walls vanished. I was standing in a green jungle clearing, next to my airplane, talking to my wife, Osa, who somehow was blue-eyed and blond. For a few precious minutes, I was Martin Johnson, and I played him to the hilt!

I really had no idea how much time actually went by before the director cut in with, "All right, kids, that's enough. That was fine. You'll be hearing from us in about ten days. Be careful on the way home."

And with that the two of us were ushered out the door. As I left the studio I saw two other kids with scripts step inside, where we had just been. So many kids! So many performances! How would they ever remember who was good and who was bad?

The next morning I resumed what I now thought of as my very mundane normal life. I knew I had given the best performance I could. Now the question remained: was my best good enough? I tried not to think about it, even as I checked the mailbox every afternoon.

Then, exactly ten days later, a very official-looking white business envelope arrived, addressed to me, with the return address of the Chicago Board of Education. Finally, my answer had come!

Inside was a formal business letter on very expensive paper.

*Dear Mr. Littlefield. This is to inform you that you have been accepted into the Radio Workshop of station WBEZ, Chicago, for a period of one semester. Please report to the next rehearsal, on this coming Thursday at 7:00 p.m.*

I was so happy that I jumped up into the air and clicked my heels for joy!

And I remained in that state of happiness for the rest of the semester as I attended rehearsals, took part in radio shows, listened to lectures and radio programs, met professional actors who came up to talk to us, and even saw downtown plays at a big discount!

At the end of the semester, I was sorry that my new schedule didn't allow me to go back and audition for more airtime next fall. The whole experience of being a member of Radio Workshop had been like a dream. But nothing matched the thrills and intensity of the few moments on that first day, when I was Martin Johnson...

"George? George? That's your line, George—you're Job, remember?"

I shook away my recovery and scanned down the lines of my script. Then I began speaking. Suddenly, the rec room walls vanished, and I was lying in a heap of ashes, dressed in rags and covered with painful boils. Suddenly, somehow, I was Job!

Once an actor, always an actor! ■

# BOB AND RAY IN BOSTON

BY RICHARD W. O'DONNELL

Had there been night baseball in Boston in 1946, it is possible Bob and Ray might never have become the radio legends they are today.

Five years before they became nationally famous in New York, Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding were on an afternoon show on Boston's WHDH, which was put on primarily to have something to fill the air before the Red Sox games came on.

In those days, they did not have night baseball in The Hub City. The afternoon contests started at two o'clock. Prior to

that, at 1:30 p.m., there was a five minute news spot followed by a baseball interview show which was on until the games started

WIIDII had a popular noon hour lineup. But from one to one-thirty the station had absolutely nothing ready. Let it also be remembered this was the first year WHDH broadcast the baseball games. They did not want to lose their large noon-time audience.

All of which brings us to Bob and Ray. At the time they were not really a comedy

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

---

team in the style of Abbott and Costello.

In 1945 both men were veterans of the second world war, both came from the Boston area, and both were working in separate jobs at the station. Bob was a



Ray Goulding and Bob Elliott

morning disc jockey, and a good one. He arrived at the station first. Goulding was hired a few months later to read the news. Almost immediately the pair began swapping jokes and doing humorous bits. Elliott wasn't playing the latest records but the audience didn't seem to mind. Their banter attracted more listeners.

Some genius at WIIDII had a brainstorm and decided to use Bob and Ray to fill the 1 to 1:30 afternoon spot. Now, bear in mind, the pair was not brought in on a permanent basis. They were just filling the time spot until some true star could be found to take command.

In short order *Matinee with Bob and Ray* started charming the listeners. The ratings soared, easily matching the noon hour's popularity and then some. All of a sudden, the show became permanent and no big name was needed.

In time, sports fans tuned in, too, while waiting for the baseball games and the sports interview. WHDH became a hot spot

on the radio dial around Boston.

While doing their disc jockey routines, Elliott and Goulding had little time to develop characters. In addition to the comedy, they had news, commercials and, of course, music, to do.

On the afternoon show they had a half-hour of uninterrupted nonsense to provide. At the start there were few commercials; later, there were an abundance on them.

In short order, Bob and Ray did their spoofs of radio's soap operas and created a collection of memorable characters. For those who are unaware, they made up their comedy routines off the top of their heads. They didn't use a script; their own amazing senses of humor and perfect timing allowed them to play off the other's lines.

During those afternoon shows they created Mary McGoon, Charley the Poet, Wally Ballou, Mary Backstayge, and countless other hilarious characters. Their humor was not heavy; you had to pay attention to keep up with them. Both performers were brilliant and it reflected in the quality of their comedy routines.

In time the afternoon sessions ended. Bob and Ray were needed elsewhere. They did a morning show and the ratings soared. Countless Bostonians, stuck in traffic, chuckled on their way to work.

Then, in 1951, there was an offer from a New York station, an offer that could not be refused. Now the comedy team was on the air in New York and on the way to national popularity.

The rest, as they say, is history. Still, one does have to wonder. Supposing there had been night baseball in Boston. Would Bob and Ray have been lost forever?

Probably not. Such talent was certain to achieve greatness. ■

And Bob and Ray did just that.

*NOTE—Tune in TWTD June 22 to hear a 1949 broadcast of Matinee with Bob & Ray from WHDH, Boston.*



## WE GET MAIL

**BROOKFIELD, IL--** We have been enjoying what appears to be a permanent Saturday afternoon "team" of you and Ken Alexander. Ken's newspaper reminiscences are particularly interesting. It's a nice addition to the overall show. Hearing the Dick Lawrence revue once again, on the Pearl Harbor show last December, was indeed a treat! Thanks for providing all the good listening. --MIKE DOOLEY

**DES PLAINES, IL--** Having been born in 1947, you and Ken Alexander hit a nerve with me (in a good way) discussing Hillman's, 29 West Washington, on the February 16th show. The great candy counter has popped up in my memory often over my lifetime, although my brain lost the name of the store at some point. But I almost instantly knew what you were talking about when you first said "Hillman's." Thank you for rejuvenating a very fond memory from my childhood. If Ken Alexander's basement is ever burglarized, he should give my name to the police as a prime suspect. That newspaper collection is terrific. I kind of hope your studio tape player breaks about 1:05 pm one Saturday, so you two will have to spend the time improvising and reading more of the papers! --PAUL STEINHAUER

**CHICAGO--** The weekly team of Chuck and Ken just gets better and better! I know you often had Ken Alexander on the air with you (or substituting for you) during your WNIB era, but it is simply great to have both of you every Saturday! I'm not the radio history expert that you are, but I think that your terrific team might be making radio history with the special kinship your duo has developed. The standard host and announcer set-up has become something unique with your younger/older man relationship, fond teasing, shared feelings and memories. Having both of you on *TWTD* doubles the pleasure, doubles the fun! --EVANNE MARIE CHRISTIAN

**WAUCONDA, IL--** I have been listening to your show now for quite a while and enjoy it

very much. I especially enjoy your shows about the radio broadcasts of the big bands from the long gone venues of Chicago. My aunt and I dine quite regularly at Don Roth's because of your show. She has many fond memories of the old Blackhawk downtown when she dined with my uncle. I also plan to visit the Player Piano Clinic on your recommendation to see what interesting things I can add to my home. I very much enjoy Metro Golden Memories and never get tired of browsing. I think it's great to shop there for people who you think have everything but...! Thanks for all your hard work. --MARK ANDRZEJEWSKI

**ADDISON, IL--** When I called to renew my subscription I was shocked when you answered the phone yourself. I should have said something like how much I enjoy your show, how long I've been listening, the fact that old-time radio is a big part of my life, but no, all I did was renew my subscription. What I want to say now, is that your show is very important to me and how happy I am that WDCB picked you up. I actually have not had much trouble since their tower collapsed, since I only live about 12-13 miles from the College of DuPage. --SHARON STEWART

**GRAYSLAKE, IL--** I can't tell you how happy I was to get the April-May issue of *Nostalgia Digest* explaining why I haven't been able to hear *TWTD* since that fateful day in December when I was out running errands, came out of Wal-Mart, and couldn't hear you anymore! I kept thinking I should find your e-mail address from an older issue and write and ask, but I never did. I wondered if something awful (like an antenna falling down!) had happened and now I know for sure. I'm SO glad you'll be back soon. I haven't tried to get you on the Web yet, I will this Saturday if you're not back on the radio waves by then. The reception since you moved to Glen Ellyn is not very good --I have been able to listen only in my car-- since we are so close to the Wisconsin border. Thank you so much for providing me with such great entertainment for all these years. --LIBBY PASZTOR

**HOFFMAN ESTATES, IL--** I just finished reading the latest issue of *Nostalgia Digest* from cover to cover and, as always, enjoyed the contents. I believe it has gotten thicker throughout the years with more well-written articles than in the early years. I look forward to each issue. Like so many others I wondered what had happened on the day the tower went down and was concerned until reading in the paper of the collapsed tower. Fortunately no one was injured, and work is under way to restore a stronger signal. I was able to use my Grundig

## THE TALE OF THE WDCB TOWER

As we go to press (in mid-April) with this June-July issue of *Nostalgia Digest*, radio station WDCB continues to broadcast from a temporary antenna at greatly reduced power.

High winds and aging support cables caused the station's transmitter tower to collapse last December.

Plans for the construction of a new, state-of-the-art transmitter tower have been temporarily delayed by design and construction changes.

The delay --which is both necessary and timely-- has been frustrating, but the changes are expected to result in clearer reception and less static in the station's fringe broadcast areas.

In the meantime, however, we are unable to provide a specific date for the resumption of a full-power broadcast signal on WDCB.

*Those Were The Days* listeners are asked to bear with us as we patiently await the construction and completion of the new tower.

--Chuck Schaden

multi-band radio to get a good signal, but that limits my recording the programs. I've got Internet access, but I do my listening in the studio where my painting takes on a special joy for the four hours of the old shows. It's enough for now that the little Grundig gives me all the pleasure I need. Saturday afternoons from one until five remains my favorite time to work. I'm also happy for you as you observe another anniversary of broadcasting memories of past times (the good old days). I get great satisfaction out of painting little pictures and therefore know how meaningful it is to do something you love to do. --ED COOK



## MORE MAIL

**SCHAUMBURG, IL--** I must have been on the moon because I just found out about the WDCB antenna problem when the April-May issue of *Nostalgia Digest* arrived. I called WDCB and made a donation to them. I hope other fans of yours will do the same to show our appreciation for all the years of pleasure you have brought to us. You are a great credit to the broadcasting industry.  
--FRANK FREDRIKSEN

**HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA--** I found you years ago on your old stations. I grew up listening to you and am so glad to have found you again. I was about 10 years old when I started listening about 24 years ago. Also started collecting shows myself thanks to you. Now I am in Alabama and you have always had the best old time radio shows on the air ever. You still sound just like you did when I was 10. --DENNIS CORNELISON

**HOMEWOOD, IL--** I discovered WDCB was streaming their programming on their Web site. I have cobbled a connection to my stereo with my laptop. It works great and I can continue my 20-plus years of listening to you. It sure is nice to have you back!  
--JERRY PINZINO

**CUDAHY, WISCONSIN--** We are now able to hear your show on the Internet. Our Saturday afternoons will be filled with wonderful old time radio shows. We haven't heard the show since WNIB stopped broadcasting in February, 2001.  
--JIM & CHRIS STRINGFELLOW

**ROCKFORD, IL--** While reading my April-May *Nostalgia Digest*, I saw that you were on the Internet. After many tries to log on, I finally got to listen to *TWTD* two weeks ago. Of course, it brings back many memories of when my brother would sit and I would lay down on the rug listening to the old radio programs. Radio was our entertainment at that time. I am 63 years old now and have forgotten some things about old time radio. As I listen to the stories, I would use my imagination and picture the story in my mind the way I wanted it to be at that time.

Some of my best memories are from the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holidays in the late 1940s. My brother and sisters were preparing to go out to parties or movies and my brother and I would get our pop corn, cookies and pop and settle down to listen to all the holiday programs while the snow would be falling and the holiday lights would glisten. I sure do miss those enjoyable days. I am very happy that I am able to pick up your programs on the Internet and hope you never go off the air.  
--JOHN CRESCENZO

**KNOXVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA--** I now have my computer synchronized to connect to WDCB. I lived in Hinsdale from 1998-2000 and your program was part of my Saturday routine. I would run errands in downtown Hinsdale, then head back to my apartment (walking past The Framemakers on the way). Saturday chores were saved for 1-5 pm so I could listen to your show. I have so many good memories from those afternoons. --MARIE L. LEDDY

**GRAYSLAKE, IL--** You hooked me on Old Time Radio when I was 16 years old when you visited Highland Park High School to give a presentation to the local nostalgia club. I was thinking of the many things that I have to be thankful for and I felt compelled to send you a note of thanks for your love and passion for OTR. You have enriched my life and I hope the lives of my children. I have kept every *Nostalgia Digest* that you have published for the past 25 years.  
--JOHN ENRIETTO

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