

Closed Circuit THE WGN FAMILY LETTER

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March 10, 1978

ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE ON WGN-TV

Jim Conway, Roseanne Finnegan Are Commentators

The annual pageantry of Chicago's St. Patrick's Day Parade will be televised from State Street by WGN Television 9 on Friday, March 17, from 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Jim Conway will commentate the parade along with Roseanne Finnegan, Queen of the 1972 parade.

More than 70,000 marchers will join 70 floats and 50 marching bands in "Treasures of the Irish" - the theme of this year's pageant.

Grand Marshall will be Chief Justice Daniel P. Ward, who along with Chicago Mayor Michael Bilandic and WGN Television star PHIL DONAHUE, will lead the parade down famous state Street.

The telecast will be on a delayed basis this year due to the IHSA Basketball Tournament that will air on Channel 9 from noon to 3:30 p.m.



20TH NATIONAL WGN-ILLINOIS OPERA GUILD

"AUDITIONS OF THE AIR" FINALS SET FOR

CHICAGO CIVIC OPERA HOUSE MARCH 13

AWARDS TOTALING \$10,000

The National Finals of the 20th Annual WGN-Illinois Opera Guild "Auditions of the Air" - the nation's only major operatic vocal competition to be presented by a major broadcasting company -- will be held on stage of the Chicago Civic Opera House, Monday, March 13, beginning at 11 a.m.

Nineteen finalists from across the nation, selected from a total of 525 auditions held in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago since last December, will compete for \$10,000 in cash awards, plus broadcast and public appearances.

The National Grand Award Winner will receive \$4,000 and a solo appearance at one of Chicago's famed Grant Park Summer Concerts. The Second Place Award is for \$3,000, and a Third Place Award of \$2,000 - plus three Honorable Mentions who will receive \$500, \$250 and \$250, respectively. The awards are offered through the generosity of Mrs. Thomas B. Burke.

In addition, the three National Award Winners will be held on the WGN-Illinois Opera Guild "Auditions of the Air" Grand Awards Presentation. Date to be announced.

The distinguished panel of judges this year is comprised of three opera authorities, namely: Sherrill Milnes, leading baritone of the Metropolitan Opera; Lili Chookasian, contralto of the Metropolitan Opera, and Nicola Rescigno, Conductor and Artistic Director of the Dallas Civic Opera Company.

(more)

RICHARD D. JONES, Program Manager of WGN-Radio, continues as Executive Producer/
Director/Writer of the "Auditions of the Air" - a post he has held since its
inception in 1958-59.

Representing the Illinois Opera Guild is Mrs. Donald J. Simpson, President, and
Mrs. Everett W. Hertline, Chairperson of the "Auditions." William Browning is the
official accompanist.

The "Auditions of the Air" contest has proven a springboard to success for many
former winners. The international opera star and leading baritone of the Metropolitan,
Sherrill Milnes, won the "Auditions in 1960.

Other successful National Award Winners who are appearing in leading roles with
American and European opera companies are:

Dominic Cossa - Met, New York City
Kathleen Battle - San Francisco, Houston, Met
Jeannine Altmeyer - Zurich, Vienna, Cologne
William Cochran - Vienna, Munich, San Francisco
Brent Ellis - San Francisco, Glyndebourne, Hamburg
Linda Zoghby - Glyndebourne, Dallas, Santa Fe
David Kuebler - Cologne, Vienna, Houston
Ana Riera - Strasbourg, Barcelona
Vinson Cole - San Francisco, Santa Fe

The public is invited to attend the finals at the Civic Opera House beginning at
3:00 p.m. when the first call-backs will be held.

IHSA CLASS "A" AND CLASS "AA" BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

BEGIN ON WGN-TV MARCH 11

The annual thrills and excitement of the Illinois High School Association Boys Basketball Championships will again be covered live by WGN Television 9 from the 16,000-seat Assembly Hall on the University of Illinois campus in Champaign on March 11, 17, and 18.

The Class A Championships, featuring teams from schools with less than 750 students, will air Saturday, March 11 with the semi-finals from Noon to 3:30 p.m. and the finals from 7 to 10:30 p.m.

Announcers for the telecasts are Tom Kelly (working his 19th State Tournament telecast) and Jim Turpin sharing play-by-play duties, with Chuck Rolinski providing color commentary.

The Class AA coverage on Channel 9 begins Friday, March 17 with two quarter-final games from Noon to 3:30 p.m. and the quarter-final round starting at 7 p.m.

On Saturday, March 18, Class AA continues with the semi-finals from Noon to 3:30 p.m. followed by the "third place" and Championship games from 7 - 10:30 p.m.

Class AA play-by-play announcers are Tom Kelly and WGN's Floyd Brown (who will be working his fifth basketball tournament), with

(more)

ADD-1 IHSA BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

former Evanston High School coach Jack Burmaster supplying the color analysis.

More than 25 WGN personnel will be utilized for the 21 hours of IHSA coverage. They will be using WGN's 1.4 million dollar color mobile unit with six cameras, including a mini-cam and complete slo-mo and stop-action facilities.

The Class A telecasts are being sponsored by Country Companies Insurance, True Value Hardware Stores and Eagle Food Stores.

The Class AA sponsors are Illinois Bell Telephone Company, True Value Hardware Stores and Eagle Food Stores.

Credits for the telecasts are:

Class A: Rick Hawley, IHSA, executive producer; Don Arries, N.W. Ayer Inc., producer; Bill Helms, WCIA, director, for WGN Television 9, Bill Lotzer, production manager and Fred Geyer, administrative engineer.

Class AA: Rick Hawley, IHSA, executive producer; Don Arries, N.W. Ayer, Inc., producer; for WGN Television 9, Bill Lotzer and Arne Harris, directors; Al Hall, associate director; Fred Geyer, administrative engineer.

KATHRYN CROSBY SUPERSTAR GOLF CLASSIC

ON WGN TELEVISION MARCH 18 & 19

The Second Annual "Kathryn Crosby Superstar Golf Classic," a sanctioned event on the LPGA Tour, will be telecast by WGN Television 9 on Saturday, March 18 from 3:30 - 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, March 19 from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

Superstar celebrities already signed to play include: Clint Eastwood, Bob Hope, Peter Falk, MacLean Stevenson, James Garner, Cliff Robertson, Joe DiMaggio, Willie Mays, Johnny Bench and ex-President Gerald Ford. They will play teamed with the LPGA pros.

All Major women golfers will compete, including: Laura Baugh, Judy Rankin, Jan Stephenson, Sandra Palmer, Carol Mann, Kathy Whitworth, Hollis Stacy and Sally Little.

The Golf Classic will be held at Rancho Bernardo in San Diego and will have the second largest purse on the Women's Tour, with more than \$200,000 in prize money, including pro/celebrity team prizes.

A completely innovative scoring system has been designed, with the LPGA pros competing individually in medalist play, while at the same time the pro/celebrity teams compete against each other.

PRO SOCCER COMES TO WGN TELEVISION APRIL 1

Six-Game Minimum Set for Chicago Sting

WGN Television reached an agreement with the Chicago Sting professional soccer team to televise a minimum of six road games this year, beginning with the season opener April 1 in Dallas. JACK P. JACOBSON, vice president and manager of Television operations, made the announcement.

Play-by-play announcer for all games will be Howard Balson. Balson was the radio voice of the Sting for the past two seasons and has also done play-by-play for the Chicago Cougars hockey team, Loyola University basketball and both football and baseball for the Armed Forces Radio Network.

The games scheduled for telecasting back to Chicago on WGN-TV 9 are:

April 1 at Dallas
April 9 at Washington
June 25 at Denver
July 12 at Memphis
July 15 at Ft. Lauderdale
July 19 at Tampa

WGN Television first carried professional soccer games of the old Chicago Spurs back in the late 1960's.

PHIL DONAHUE -MARLO THOMAS - King & Queen of Celebrity Ball

The annual Variety Club Celebrity Ball will be held April 7 at the Regency-Chicago Hotel in conjunction with PHIL DONAHUE's 10th anniversary of his television show. PHIL DONAHUE will be the King of the Variety Ball and MARLO THOMAS the Queen. The Ball is a benefit for the Variety Club's childrens charities..

A special feature of this year's event will be the appearance of celebrities who are flying in to salute Donahue. PAUL ANKA will be performing and some of the guests include BILLY CARTER, ANN LANDERS, F. LEE BAILEY and JESSE JACKSON. In addition, there will be the annual contingent of celebrities who will be appearing in the area and who will be guests of the Variety Club.

CONGRATULATIONS to the following WGN PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

First Place Award:	MAXINE JOACHIM, Arts & Facilities	"Spouting Water"
Second Place Award:	BOB BAIRD, (Retired)	"Clydesdales"
Third Place Award:	HELEN GROH, Engineering Office	"Untitled"

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to: DAVE KOBAK-March 15, FRANK ROG-March 15, ALVIN JONES-March 16, FRANK BONDZINSKI-March 17, JOHN SCHAEFER-March 17, JOHN SEBASTIAN-March 17,, ARMANDO FIGUEROA-March 17, JIM FRENCH-March 18, ED DOLIK-March 18, CAROLYN GREENE-March 19, KEVIN KAVANAUGH-March 19, GEORGE ERVO-March 21, GEORGE GORZELANCZYK-March 21, PATRICK REYNOLDS-March 21, BOB BILTGEN-March 21, BOB ELSON-March 22. NORMA BARNES-March 22, ADRIENNE KAPLAN-March 22, RAY GRAY-March 23, Linda McLaughlin-March 23, JOAN SCHANMIER-March 23, JOSE VALENTIN-March 23, TERRY BUTZ-March 25, GREG LEE, March 25 and DAVID PFAFF-March 26.

COMPANY ANNIVERSARIES - CONGRATULATIONS!

CARL (Jack) MEYERS (Arts & Facilities) marked 30 years with WGN Continental Broadcasting Company on March 8. Jack and his family reside in Dundee.

ALFRED ALDRIDGE (Am Engineer) celebrates his 30th year with WGN Continental Broadcasting Company on March 10. Al and his wife, Mitzi, live in Libertyville.

ALEXANDER BURKHOLDER (Newswriter/TV) will celebrate 15 years with WGN Continental Broadcasting Company on March 22. Al presently resides in Chicago.

LUCILLE ANTONIK (Auditing) celebrates 5 years with WGN Continental Broadcasting Company on March 26. She resides in Chicago.

ROBERT CURRIER (TV Engineer) marks 30 years with WGN Continental Broadcasting Company on March 31. Bob lives in DesPlaines.

GEORGE HOOKER (TV Engineer) will celebrate his 30th year with WGN Continental Broadcasting Company on March 31. George and his wife, Helen, reside in Crystal Lake.

NEW EMPLOYEES: RICHARD KUEKER (Film/Editor/News)

PROMOTIONS: BARBARA SHIKAMI to TV Production

TRANSFERS: MAXINE SCHULTZ to TV Programming

MERRI DEE ON AFTRA BOARD

MERRI DEE has been elected to the Board of Directors of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, according to Herbert H. Neuer, Executive Secretary. MERRI will take office on March 20, when AFTRA has its first Chicago local Board meeting. DON HARRIS (WGN Newsmen) already serves on the Board.

ORLANDO WHITE will be the guest of the Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars at the National Congressional Award Dinner and Voice of Democracy finals in Washington, D.C.

NEW ARRIVALS

Congratulations to ARLA WARD on the birth of a grandson to her son JOHN R. WARD & wife, DORISE, born March 10, weighting 7 lb. 4 oz. The new arrivals name is Christopher Edward.

SYMPATHY

Condolences to JACK SCHULTZ on the death of his father in Iowa.

FOR SALE - Leather Coach (6') - White Formice Table (round) Dual 8 (Super and regular 8) Projector. Orlando White - ext. 326.

FOR SALE

2/3 bedroom RANCH HOME, 1-1/2 car detached garage, corner lot. Recently remodeled kitchen with all appliances including 14,000 BTU window air conditioner. All hardwood floors - 24 years old. Beautiful location, 1 block west of River Road on Howard St. to Cedar (2003 So. Cedar St., DesPlaines). Low Taxes - \$57,900. Ray Sheehy - ext. 358 or 298-4013.

FOR SALE

3 bedroom - 1-1/2 BRICK & CEDAR BI-LEVEL. Attached 1 car heated garage, C/A finished family room, oak floors. Located close to shopping, schools, parks. Mt. Prospect. John R. Bobera - 439-2859.

FOR SALE

MASON-HAMLIN 5'8" GRAND PLAYER PIANO with 300 plus music rolls. \$8,000.00. Rolls valued at over \$2,000.00.

ALSO- MASON-HAMLIN 6'2" GRAND PIANO. Completely rebuilt - Fruitwood Fimish. \$5,000.00 Dick Fenzke ext 400 or 871-3533 - 275-2023

Instead of discarding those old birthday, anniversary or Christmas cards..... send them to either one of the following addresses:

Resurrection Day Care Center
1849 No. Hermitage
Chicago, Ill. 60622

Guardian Angel Center
4600 So. McDowell
Chicago, Ill. 60609

St. Nicoli Church
3014 No. Kedzie
Chicago, Illinois 60641

WGN DEFEATS DAILY NEWS

WGN's basketball team defeated the Chicago Daily News, 64 to 42, on February 22 to clinch first place in the Park District Media League.

Don Harris reports that WGN's record is 13 and 1 and it is the first time any organized WGN team has won first place in any league, which also includes CBS, ABC, Chicago Tribune, Foote, Cone & Belding and the Daily News. WMAQ did not participate this year.

A News-winning goal

The Daily News is gone, but its basketball team continues under the same name — and winningly. The Daily Newsmen edged the Tribune last Wednesday, 52-50, and entered the Media League playoffs with a 14-won, 2-lost record. The Newsmen meet the Trib again Wednesday evening at Lake Shore Park, and the winner plays WGN for the championship. The News honor roll includes Otis (Radar) Neace, Garland Bailey, Clark Bell, Don DeBat, Brian Hewitt and Alex Richardson.

Sun-Times March 8, 1978

'A Funny Thing' makes a terrific show

By Richard Christiansen *Critic at Large*

"A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" really is a funny show, and in its current revival at the Candlelight Dinner Playhouse in Summit, it really is, like the song says, "something for everyone, a comedy tonight."

Producer-director William Pullinsi, who has a flair for farce and musicals, has happily brought his best talents to bear on this farcical musical, gathering for it some of the best zany now working in Chicago area theater.

In case you've forgotten, this is the 1962 show that launched Stephen Sondheim as a composer-lyricist and won a Tony Award for its star, Zero Mostel. Based on the Roman comedies of Plautus, it is a marvelous tale of silly slaves, beautiful young maidens, dirty old men, battle ax wives, fatuous heroes, mistaken identity, double entendres and triple takes.

Oh, those hilarious lines!

Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbart, who put the whole thing together, created some hilarious lines, as when Pseudolus, the scheming slave, explains that his master's mother-in-law "is 104 years old, and not one single organ in working condition!"

Or when Hysterium, Pseudolus' fellow slave, moans, "If my father knew this, he would turn over in his grave."

Says Pseudolus, "But your father's alive." And Hysterium replies, "This would kill him." Sondheim matched the gags with his witty lyrics, particularly in the show-stopping ditty, "Everybody Ought to Have a Maid," in which a lascivious quartet of males praises the virtues of a maid. "Living in and giving out."

Pullinsi's in-the-square production, crisp and

fresh in every aspect, consistently makes the most, and sometimes more, of every good line, thanks to the engaging cast he has assembled.

Grocho and Ollie rolled into one

Ray Rayner, as the sly Pseudolus, is a blend of Groucho Marx and Oliver Hardy in his work, one minute eagerly burrowing his head in the bosom of a tall showgirl (Jennifer Curtiss) and the next frantically devising complicated new plans to gain his freedom.

Dale Benson, the only Roman slave I've ever heard speak with a British accent, is a stitch as Hysterium, dressing up as a virgin and then letting his prune face break into a delighted smile when he discovers that he's lovely.

Frank Galati, as Lycus, a gentleman and procurer, waggles across the stage, waving his ringed fingers and flinging his greasy locks. And William Munchow, as Senex, the henpecked husband with a yen for virgins, toddles about in a costume that looks vaguely like droopy long underwear.

Close behind them are Patricia Jamison, very strong as the shrewish wife, Paula Scrofano as the classic dumb blond, and Philip Courington as a Roman warrior so in love with himself that he sings, "I am a parade!"

Each and every one in the cast, including the four statuesque chorus girls, is obviously having a glorious time in the show, and this sense of fun radiates outward to the delighted audience.

It's a happy, tuneful, entertaining romp, a "comedy tonight" that is guaranteed to make you forget "tragedy tomorrow."

Beginning Monday, March 6, Richard Christiansen's reviews will appear regularly in *The Chicago Sun-Times*.



Ray Rayner (foreground) and Dale Benson star in "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," at Candlelight Dinner Playhouse.

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM
A musical based on the Roman comedies of Plautus, by Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbart, with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. Directed by William Pullinsi, with settings by Dennis Conway, costumes by Nicole LaBruja, lighting by Ed Krieger, musical direction by Don Miller and choreography by James Harms.

The Cast
Ray Rayner, Dale Benson, Frank Galati, William Munchow, Patricia Jamison, Paula Scrofano, John Reeger, Philip Courington, James Harms, Jeanne White, Richay Winters, Lauren Valuch, Jennifer Curtiss, Brian Lynch, Gary Smiley.

The Schedule
Presented at Candlelight Dinner Playhouse, 5620 S. Harlem, Summit, at 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 6 and 10:45 p.m. Saturday and 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. Sunday. Dinner service starts approximately two hours before curtain time. Dinner/theater combinations from \$17.50. Free parking in the theater lot. Phone 428-722.

Entertainment

Chicago Sun-Times, Saturday, March 4, 1978

35

A great dish of pure ham

Theater / Glenna Syse

When Ray Rayner and Dale Benson went into their final frantic duet Thursday evening at Candlelight Dinner Playhouse, a customer next to me literally pounded the table with pleasure.

In fact if you haven't heard the sound of hilarity lately, do try "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" at the popular dinner playhouse in Summit.

It's a sappy, silly, sassy, snappy, nutsy, madcap, zany, zesty, clownish, gaudy, bawdy, idiotic, crazy, wacky show. And I can't remember watching a cast have a better time. Everyone is trying to out-ham everyone else and that makes for some thick slices. But it's served up with such glee, that you'll clean your plate.

As the opening and closing number goes—"Gravity tomorrow, but comedy tonight."

The setting is a Roman square (artfully pillared by designer Dennis Conway) and the time is definitely B.C. On one side there is a house full of courtesans; on the other there's a virgin on the roof and in between is the home of Erronius, who is looking for his two children stolen by pirates.

That's just for starters in this grab bag musical farce that includes some pretty strong potions, including one with mare's sweat and eel eyes for its principal ingredients.

Leading the bedlam is Rayner as the slave trying to get his freedom. And he's wonderful. The man knows every trick in the trade, and he looks as though he is having the time of his life.

Benson, a mainstay at Shady Lane Playhouse, is another slave. "I live to grovel." And he gets laughs just standing there.

William Munchow is Benson's master, a man who

'A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum'

Pseudolus	Ray Rayner
Protean	Brian Lynch
Protean	Gary Smiley
Senex	William Munchow
Domina	Patricia Jamison
Hysterium	Dale Benson
Hero	John Reeger
Lycus	Frank Galati
Tintinabula	Richay Winters
Panacea	Lauren Valuch
Vibrata	Jeanne White
Gymnasia	Jennifer Curtiss
Philia	Paula Scrofano
Erronius	James Harms
Miles Gloriosus	Philip Courington

A musical produced and directed by William Pullinsi. Music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, book by Larry Gelbart and Burt Shevelove. Choreography by James Harms, musical direction by Don Miller, costumes by Nicole LaBruja, settings by Dennis Conway, lighting by Ed Krieger. At the Candlelight Dinner Playhouse.

is more than ready to sew his last oar. He even breaks up waiters. And then there's Frank Galati as the nervous procurer.

And when the four of them launch into "Everybody Ought to Have a Maid," they really mop up the joint.

Paula Scrofano is the vacuous virgin who can't add. But it doesn't matter because she knows she's lovely. John Reeger is her lovesick suitor, and Philip Courington is the pompous warrior who has contracted for her hand.

And then there are the courtesans. Lookers all. And one of them, Jennifer Curtiss, looks all the way up to approximately six feet.

To borrow a line from Rayner: "I am a soothsayer and I am about to say sooth." And I say, it's low comedy all right, but you'll have a high old time.



Ray Rayner (left) and Dale Benson have a high old time in the musical "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum."

Tune In To NWF Radio Show For Women

Northwest Federal Directions
February 1978

A weekly, three-hour radio program designed for women, "The Joan McGrath Show" is now being co-sponsored by North West Federal Savings.

Heard every Sunday afternoon from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on WGN radio (720-AM), the show focuses on pertinent issues that confront today's women and their lifestyles. Open telephone lines are available to the listening audience for comments and questions.

Joan McGrath explores issues like Equal Rights for Women, conducts interviews with newsmakers, and offers special features such as home decorating, single parenthood, cosmetology, recipes, and dieting.

As president of her own public relations firm in Chicago, Joan brings a solid background in communications to her weekly radio series. She currently is seen on two television programs; as co-host of "Gamut," a weekly public affairs talk show sponsored by the Archdiocese of Chicago on WMAQ-TV, and as alternate host of "Dimensions," a weekly, issue-oriented talk show on WSNS-TV.



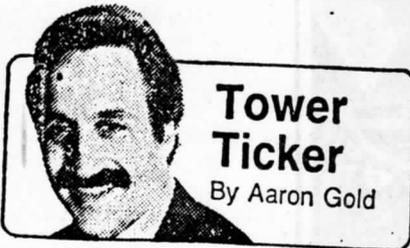
Joan McGrath is hostess of a Sunday afternoon radio show for women on WGN, sponsored by NWF.

You're invited to tune in and call in to "The Joan McGrath Show" every Sunday afternoon on WGN Radio.

THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1978

2 Section 2 Chicago Tribune, Tuesday, March 7, 1978

Tempo People



Tower Ticker

By Aaron Gold

HARRY VOLKMAN was the first entry in the look-alike contest being held in conjunction with the April 3 Academy Awards party at Faces. (All proceeds go to the Special Children's Charities.) The Channel 9 weatherman sent in his picture saying he looked like character actor Leslie Howard, who probably would have liked to have been as well known as Volkman. . . . Pianist **George Shearing** will make a guest appearance at the March 29 Easter Seals fashion show at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza. The show is being underwritten by the four downtown Holiday Inns.

Chicago Daily News

Public eye / Bob Herguth

Kup the columnist was startled when a sweet young thing came up to him at a recent dinner and said "I just re-did your cage." Kup does live in a well-kept apartment but there is an explanation: Lincoln Park Zoo has a pair of spectacled bears, Brick and Kup. They're named for Kup and his broadcasting pal, Jack Brickhouse. Kup's female informant works at the zoo.

Suburban Trib Sports

Friday, March 3, 1978

WGN to telecast boys', girls' state basketball finals

ILLINOIS HIGH SCHOOL Association Class A, AA, and girls' basketball finals will be telecast on WGN-TV. Tom Kelly, the voice of the University of Southern California, will be joined by Jim Turpin and Chuck Rolinski on the Class A telecasts next Friday and Saturday. Floyd

Brown and former Evanston coach Jack Burmaster will assist Kelly on the Class AA coverage March 17-18, and Buffalo Grove coach Ann Penstone will join Kelly and Brown for the girls' tournament coverage March 31-April 1.



Jeff Lowenthal—Newsweek

Donahue and his crowd: His limo is a Chevy, his taste in clothes is J.C. Penney, but his talk show is the nation's hottest

Heere's . . . Phil Donahue!

He comes to work wearing old jeans or baggy corduroys, and only because designer Oleg Cassini once drew a chart showing him which suit went with what tie does he manage to look slick on television. That's the star. Then there's the audience—194 neatly dressed housewives from suburbia and six husbands looking as if they'd been dragged to the opera. As for the "guests"—Liz? Paul? Maybe Sophia? Try Cathy and Arlene, single women who are going to discuss raising their out-of-wedlock children. For an hour. If it all sounds like a morning talk show out of Dayton—well, that's precisely where it might still be—if Phil Donahue's phenomenal ratings hadn't catapulted him out of Dayton, into Chicago and right to the top of the charts.

With the hesitant yet charming manner of a father who shows up at a PTA meeting—and then finds himself suddenly chairing it—Phil Donahue presides over a program that is hailed as the hottest talk show in America. He has an audience of about 8 million viewers a day, he is now syndicated in 49 of the nation's top 50 markets—135 stations in all—and in 68 per cent of them, the Nielsen ratings show he's No. 1. Even in New York, he's outdistancing the competition: WABC's outspoken Stanley Siegel is fading fast and the newly arrived Jim Nabors has yet to pose a threat.

'The Finest': At 42, Phil Donahue is no overnight star. He's been on the air for a decade. But reports that he might replace Tom Brokaw on the "Today" show (NBC says it's unlikely for now) and his widely publicized romance with actress Marlo Thomas have sprinkled him with fresh stardust. "Phil Donahue is simply the finest talk-show emcee in the business," says Gary Deeb, the normally acerbic TV critic for The Chicago Tribune. "His

daily program reduces the Mervs and Mikes and Dinahs to the level of Tupperware parties."

Donahue's format is unique: usually, one guest homes in on one controversial topic, with bursts of questions from the audience. There are no bands, no stand-up routines, not even a solitary song. Donahue's topics are often touchy. He has done shows on artificial insemination—using a couple who arranged with a friend to carry the unborn child—as well as on homosexuals and impotence, before most TV personalities dared to. And a recent program showing a film of a childbirth at home was considered too offensive to carry by his Chicago station.

Relentless: A ruddy-faced, blue-eyed leprechaun with a mop of gray hair, Donahue comes across like a "gee whiz" Midwestern kid, but he is a relentless interrogator, able to extract interesting tidbits from his guests. Julie Nixon Eisenhower revealed that Mamie Eisenhower had "an addiction to racy novels and fudge." Don Rickles dropped his façade long enough to confess that he adopted his sarcastic style because "I can't tell a joke. So I guess you could say I developed my style out of frustration." Frequently, it's someone in the audience who prompts the telling response. Unlike the hysterical females who patronize game shows, Donahue's women—some of whom call up beforehand to find out the subject—deliver questions that would put an investigative reporter to shame. "Women are smarter than men because they listen," says Donahue of his female following.

Donahue hit upon his approach partly out of ingenuity—and partly out of desperation. A graduate of Notre Dame, he became a local morning interview host for WLWD-TV in Dayton in 1967.

Though the show was an instant success, when his syndicator decided to market him nationally two years later, other stations did not rush to sign on. Then there was the problem of broadcasting out of Dayton, not exactly the mecca of the celebrity circuit. But with the brashness of someone who doesn't know his own peril, Donahue went after whatever was available. Among the results: a week of broadcasts inside the Ohio State Penitentiary and the first-time-ever head-to-head confrontation between the late Edward Cole of General Motors and his *bête noire*, Ralph Nader. The latter was Donahue's first "biggie." Waylaying him at 2 o'clock one morning as he got off a plane in Cincinnati, Donahue chauffeured Nader to his other appointments in exchange for a guest spot in Dayton. Since then he's landed most of the Watergate gang, many Carters and Marlo Thomas, which is how they met. "I'd love to get the Pope," he says with a grin revealing a perfect set of white teeth.

'Ambitious': Much of Donahue's appeal is that he is what he seems—a TV star who lives in the suburbs, drives to work in a Chevy and, according to a staff member, has a taste in clothes that is "strictly J.C. Penney." The divorced father of four sons and a daughter (who lives with his former wife), Donahue admits to having been "terribly career-oriented and ambitious" in the early years of his show. He also hints that this may have contributed to his divorce. Now he says he is trying to devote more time to his children. "You don't know how important it is to me just to have noise around the house," he confesses. "I need my kids more than they need me." What about his future? Says Donahue, "I used to worry about things like that. But I'm enjoying my life. Right now I feel as secure as any 42-year-old divorced Irish Catholic with five kids can be."

—DIANE K. SHAH with FRANK MAIER in Chicago

Frank Swertlow

Phil Donahue shuns network temptation

Phil Donahue is not going network.

Donahue, the 42-year-old Emmy-winning interviewer, has signed a six-year contract to continue his syndicated talk show, which is based in Chicago. The deal is worth more than \$1 million, and it ends any possibility that Donahue will move to an anchor spot on NBC's Today show as a replacement for Tom Brokaw.

"I have signed a new contract that allows me to do one or two other things a year beyond my 240 shows," said Donahue, in a telephone interview from San Diego, Calif., where his hour-long show is on location.

He said some of those "other things" might be one or two documentary specials. Donahue's show now is carried by 132 stations, including Channel 9, which airs his show daily at 11 a.m.

"I really like what I am doing," said Donahue. "If I am canceled in Peoria, I am still on in Indianapolis; and if I am canceled in Indianapolis, I am still on in Chicago. At a network, a vice president could cancel you while he is shaving. It's nice not having all your eggs in one basket."



Even so, it sounds a bit as if he was frightened by the network challenge. "I don't think I was afraid," he insisted. "If I bring David Frost on for an hour interview, I can go after him if he waffles. I can spend the time to do that. On the Today show, I would get all of eight minutes for an interview."

"Look," he continued, "I don't want to diminish the Today show job (NBC made a few inquiries about his availability); I grew up as the booth anchorman at the station in South Bend, which was owned by Notre Dame, and I watched Dave Garroway. To be considered for that show was nice. And I am vain enough to have enjoyed doing it."

While Donahue has spent the past 10 years as the host of his own show, he is amazed at the attention the media has lavished on him since word leaked out about NBC's interest in him.

"My phone just started ringing like crazy," he recalled. "The power of a network is enormous. They are king-makers and queenmakers."

Much of his recent celebrity comes from his exposure on WNBC, the NBC flagship station in New York, Donahue added. "For nine years we tried to get attention," he said. "Now we have made a connection with the New York and Los Angeles hype. It just seems that it took us six times as long to get to where we suddenly are now."

In retrospect, Donahue, who is divorced, said that as the gossip increased about his replacing Tom Brokaw on the Today show, he wondered more about having to uproot his life in the Chicago area, where he lives with his four sons.

"Even though the Today show thing was an inquiry," he said, "the more I looked into matter, the more I wanted to walk away from it. Did I want to live in a New York apartment with four sons? Would I have to send them to private schools and then get canceled in a year?" Obviously, the answer is no.

It's nice to see someone in broadcasting choose quality of life over a big ego-boosting job.



Phil Donahue

Phil Donahue

Woodward and Bernstein said he was, along with Martha Mitchell, "the best interviewer we've matched wits with . . . the most relentless interrogator." Not that the Chicago-based, national-Emmy-winning host of the syndicated [135 markets] program is always so heavy. His self-styled "dog and pony show"—aimed at "the average housewife, a bright, alert individual who doesn't want to be treated as a mental midget"—has zapped in on topics ranging from breast augmentation to lesbian marriages to thumb-sucking. "One of our longest suits," he says, "is that we aren't the 8-by-10 glossy show-biz har-har show. We're not going to bring out Charo, who'll say to the guest next to her, 'Oh, I watch you all the time and I don't even know who you are,' and then the woman who comes out with the Pe-kingese that speaks Chinese."



'People are like sponges'

By Gail Cooper-Evans
Gazette staff writer

Do people really need all the consumer reporting on which the media concentrates so heavily?

"Yes, they do," says Merri Dee, energetic newscaster for WGN-TV, Chicago's largest independent television station. Dee was in Cedar Rapids last week to speak at Coe College.

"The buying public needs to be more informed. We don't demand enough of manufacturers. If we want top notch products, we have to make loud noises and demand it."

Following a morning newscast, Merri Dee airs what she calls an "unusual" slot, "Merri Dee's Idea Break." She gives tips directed toward women listeners in the daily categories of household, health, fashion, food and recipes, and beauty and grooming.

Doesn't settle disputes

Her comments gain retorts from as many men listeners as women. As part of her job at WGN, she does the

Merri
Dee



1 p.m. major newscast before Chicago Cubs baseball games and is familiar to viewers as a well-versed reporter and producer.

When she airs something a little controversial, "I hear from entertainers, ballplayers, people who want me to settle a dispute they are having with their spouses. I try not to get involved in disputes, but it is interesting to see what is on people's minds."

The role of the consumer report-

er, said Dee, is appreciated by the public. "They write and call me, challenge me, ask questions . . . And I learn from them, too. Much of what I do is research of what they tell me.

"People are like sponges. So often, in giving the news, we are cold — reporting what murders or robberies took place today. We need to cover the human side, too."

Over the two years she has been reporting consumer news (she's been reporting for 12 years), Dee has seen big changes in the consumer.

"They've become more vocal; they've learned to negotiate, to question, and I'm happy about it, too.

"We are the consumer. We control the money. We keep the manufacturer going. Consumers need all the information they can get to make wise purchases."

Dee shows obvious respect for the consumer. She's not so kind to the manufacturer.

"Manufacturers want to make a product the cheapest way they can in order to gain more money. That's the American way. I don't disagree

with it. But wages are not keeping pace with rising prices."

More women

The future of consumer reporters is gaining importance, said Dee. "The media will belong to women the next five years," said Dee, who thinks a government mandate will make media focus on hiring more women.

To prepare for this, she said, women should "get in school and learn everything there is to learn. Learn on the job, too, everything about your business — advertising, middle management, economics of how a station works, even the electrician's union."

Dee, a graduate of St. Xavier College, New Orleans, and the Midwestern School of Broadcasting, said she has always been a "rebel" in her field, "six years before anyone started talking about equality."

"My drive was instilled in me by my father. He told me, 'You can't say can't in this house.' The thought permeated my life."

Chicago Tribune, Saturday, February 25, 1978

WGN to televise 6 Sting contests

By Mike Conklin

THE STING AND WGN-TV, Channel 9, have worked out an agreement for televising six soccer matches this season, beginning with the April 1 opener in Dallas.

The arrangement marks the first time the four-year-old Sting has been able to put together a TV package, something owner Lee Stern has felt would be a big step in selling pro soccer to Chicagoans.

Stern reportedly will have to dig into his pocket to make up any deficit in production costs—a gamble the Black Hawks, the only Chicago pro team without a TV package, apparently haven't been willing to make.

But Sting General Manager Jim Walker, whose club is responsible for finding sponsors, predicted the agreement with WGN-TV will be an excellent move.

"IT OPENS A LOT of doors for us," Walker said, "especially with people at the corporate level. A lot of them are very interested in soccer involvement, but one of the first things they always ask is: 'Do you have television?'"

"They've got big money to spend, and they know a lot more people are going to be watching if they can get television."

The schedule of games to be televised—all road dates—includes Dallas, April 1; Washington, April 9; Colorado [Denver], June 25; Memphis, July 12; Ft. Lauderdale, July 15; and Tampa Bay, July 19.

The Dallas and Washington games will be delayed because of WGN-TV's prior commitments. The others will be live.

HOWARD BALSON, the Sting's marketing chief who has considerable broadcast experience, is the probable play-by-play announcer.

The agreement is a three-pronged arrangement between the team, WGN-TV, and Marvin Sugarman Productions, Inc., a New York firm that will be handling local television broadcasts for a number of North American Soccer League clubs this season.

Stern's team made two appearances on Chicago television last season. A game in New York was shown on WTTW, Channel 11, and another in San Jose, Cal., was aired on WMAQ, Channel 5, as part of the Television Sports contract to broadcast six NASL contests.

Walker said TVS will do "7 to 10" again this season, and it's possible the Sting could appear. But, he said, it would not be one of the WGN-TV dates.

'Cafe' is a TV throwback that can't catch old magic

Some vintage television shows remain dear to the viewer's heart in black and white reruns, but never seem to make the grade in a colorful modern-day resurrection.

"International Cafe" may be just such a show.

During the 1950s and '60s, the locally produced WGN-TV show was a popular hour of folk and ethnic music showcased in a spirited cafe setting.

It gave internationally famous artists an unusual chance to sing and



PETER, PAUL AND MARY found "International Cafe" to be the perfect showcase for their folk art which changed the face of popular music in the '50s and '60s.

Today on TV

Diane Mermigas
TV-radio critic



dance in a language and manner characteristic of their homelands and, in so doing, the show appealed to much of Chicago's ethnic melting pot.

BUT BIG cities, technology and tastes have changed. The '60s with their ultra mobility, unrest and explosive openness put an end to America's ethnic purity.

It has reached the point where "International Cafe" couldn't be aired in Montgomery, Ala., or even Los Angeles. It just wouldn't work.

But, Chicago is one of the few big U.S. cities where an ethnic identity remains as strong as the contrasting neighborhoods that claim to be a little Italy or little Poland.

Hal Stein thinks so, too. He wrote and produced "International Cafe" when it was a live, black and white production that attracted the same kind of viewers who tuned in "Lawrence Welk" and his bubble machine every week. They were people who loved music and people who were proud of their ethnicity.

It was an hour of Sunday night magic where all sorts of strange but intriguing foreign tongues could be heard, where the Clancys and Poulouses sat side-by-side at small, round tables, and where the cultural message of the Flamenco dance and gypsy violin could be exchanged.

The itching for the good old times started slowly a year ago and soon had Stein working on a rebirth of the show that gave him his start in the business.

HE'S BROUGHT the old setting, the former hosts and the same ethnic diversity together again for an encore special airing at 7 p.m. today on Channel 9.

"I had to bring it back again, and this just seemed like a good time. There is a renewed interest people have in their roots these days. People have broadened their horizons and have become familiar with and fond of music and culture from other lands," Stein said.

"But these people, these internationally acclaimed artists have nowhere to go on American television. There is no showcase for them anymore," he said.

The first "International Cafe" he produced for WGN in 1954 was Stein's big break into local television. For that reason, the show remained his "first love" during the '50s and '60s, and while it was aired periodically in the early '70s.

THE MYTHICAL cabaret that Stein originated is still the only one of its kind on television. The diversity of music is something he still views as "an equalizer" and "something that can be shared by all people even though they speak different languages."

Rudy Orisek and Greek singer Jimmy Markulis return as the show's co-hosts, looking as though time has taken its toll but interchanging as naturally as if it were yesterday.

Tonight's special features mostly Greek music and dancing. Belly dancer Bella Stella delivers a fairly exotic, even enticing, round of dances while Bob Koulaxizis and the Athenian Dancers, backed by the Athens Quintet, offer a demonstration of Greek line dances.

Film of Greek actor Alexis Minotis portraying "Oedipus Rex" in an ancient open-air theater in Greece, old "International Cafe" segments of Peter, Paul and Mary performing their hit "If I Had a Hammer," music by the strolling gypsy violinist David Romaine and Mexican singing by Chabelita and the Acapulco Trio are woven together in a free-form order.



GEORGE KOULAXIZIIS was one of many regular "International Cafe" stars whose golden string sounds were part of each week's changing ethnic fare. He will perform numbers on his bouzouki on the encore special Saturday.