

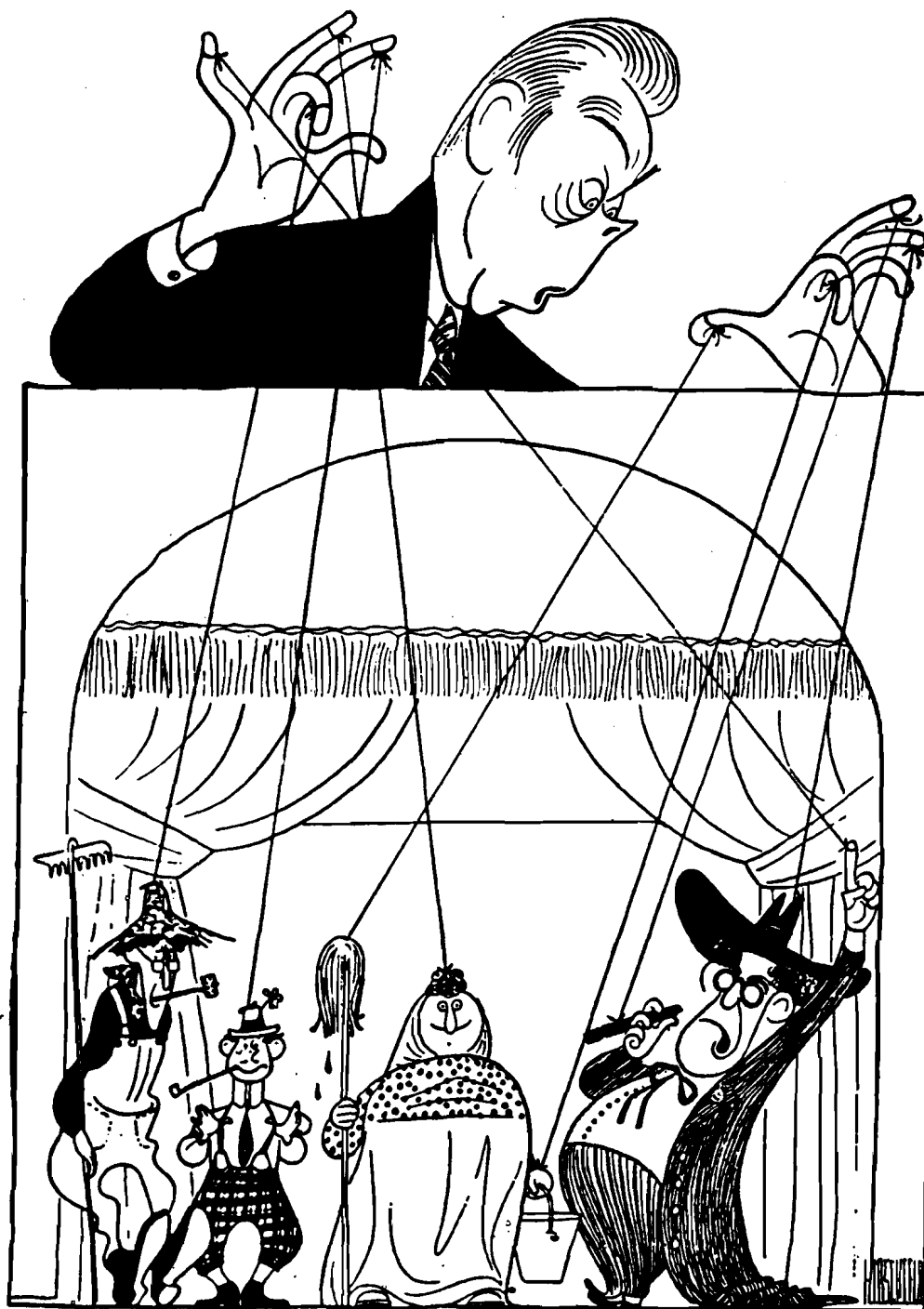
*The Old Time Radio Club*

Established 1975

# THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS

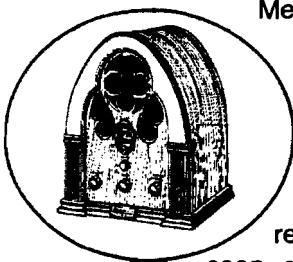
Number 215

August 1994



**Membership Information**

New member processing, \$5.00 plus club membership of \$15.00 per year from Jan 1 to Dec 31.



Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing, and a monthly newsletter.

Memberships are as follows:  
If you join Jan-Mar, \$15.00;  
Apr-Jun, \$12.00; Jul-Sep,  
\$8.00; Oct-Dec, \$5.00. All

renewals should be sent in as soon as possible to avoid missing issues. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The **Old Time Radio Club** meets the first Monday of every month at 7:30 P.M. during the months of September to June at 393 George Urban Blvd. Cheektowaga, N.Y. 14225. The club meets informally during the months of July and August at the same address. Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome. The **Old Time Radio Club** is affiliated with The Old Time Radio Network.

**Club Mailing Address**

Old Time Radio Club  
P.O. Box 426  
Lancaster, N. Y. 14086

Back issues of the *Illustrated Press* are \$1.50 postpaid. Publications out of print may be borrowed from our Reference Library.

**Deadline for The *Illustrated Press* is the 1st of each month prior to publication.**

The *Illustrated Press* is a monthly newsletter of The **Old Time Radio Club**, headquartered in Western New York State. Contents except where noted, are copyright 1994 by the OTRC.

Send all articles, letters, exchange newsletters, etc. to:  
The *Illustrated Press*  
c/o Peter Bellanca, editor  
1620 Ferry Road  
Grand Island NY 14072

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**Membership Inquires, and OTR Network Related Items**

Richard Olday (716) 684-1604  
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Lancaster, N.Y. 14086

**Tape Libraries**

**Cassettes**

Don Friedrich (716) 626-9164  
21 Southcrest  
Cheektowaga, NY 14225

**Reel to Reel and Reference Library**

Ed Wanat Sr.  
393 George Urban Blvd.  
Cheektowaga NY 14225

Tape Library Rates: All reels and video cassettes are \$1.85 per month; audio cassettes and records are \$0.85 per month. Rates include postage and handling. Canadian rates are the same as above, but in Canadian funds.

## *From Bags to Riches: the one and only Fred Allen*

by Dom Parisi

**"He traveled into this world carrying his own "bags" not under his arms, but under his eyes."**

Fred Allen was born on May 31, 1894 in Boston's Irish district. When he was four years old, his mother passed away and his father's sister became his second mother. James Henry Sullivan, the father of the man who would later be known as Fred Allen, was a Boston Bookbinder. He didn't earn much money, but he was a fun loving man. Allen often remarked that he thought he inherited his father's wit, but would then add, "Of course, I my only be fifty percent correct."

Before he became a comedian, Allen tried his hand at juggling. He got into juggling quite by accident. While attending the Boston High School of Commerce, a school geared to mold students into useful citizens of industry, Allen took a part time job at the local public library. He read books and then tried juggling them. I would guess that quite a few books were stacked on the shelves in a slightly battered condition!

One day Allen decided that he was good enough to try out his act in a local amateur vaudeville show. Allen discovered that he performed somewhat better at the library than on stage! Nonetheless, with the help of Mr. Sol Cohen, a theatrical booking agent who took the young Allen under his wing, Fred slowly made it to the big time.

The young Allen assumed many names during his climb up the ladder to fame. He was called Young Sullivan, Paul Huckle, Freddy James, and in the end, Settled for Fred Allen.

His big break came in 1922, the year that established him as a comedian of importance.

That was the year he appeared in the Shubert Musical, "The Passing Show of 1922." It was while performing in this show that he met a pretty dancer named Portland Hoffa. Of her name, Allen remarked, "That's a ridiculous name, Portland Hoffa!" The young girl replied, "You should meet my sisters Lebanon, Period, and Lastone." After a brief romance, ridiculous name and all, they were married, went into radio in 1932, and stayed there to become a big success.

The medium of radio was perfect for Fred Allen. His skill was the use of words. He wrote a number of the radio scripts himself, and he had a knack for pulling words out of the air. For example, when Jack Benny's name came up, Allen once remarked: "Benny couldn't ad-lib a belch at a Hungarian banquet." If a joke from a script failed to go over, perhaps gaining only one guffaw from the audience, Fred would remark: "As that one lone laugh goes ricocheting around the studio, we move to a selection by Al Goodman and the orchestra."

"Allen's Alley" was an immediate success on the Allen show. There were characters such as Senator Claghorn (Kenny Delmar), "Somebody, Ah say somebody's knockin' on mah door"; Mrs. Nussbaum (Minerva Pious), "You were expecting maybe the Fink Spots?"; Titus Moody (Parker Fennelly) "Howdy, Bub"; Falstaff Openshaw (Alan Reed), "Take your feet off the table, mother, or you'll get a sock in the mush"; Ajax Cassidy (Peter Donald), and Socrates Mulligan, who was portrayed by Charles Cantor (no relation to Eddie). I think it would be safe to mention that Cantor's Socrates did not compare with the Greek Socrates, not by a long shot. In fact, Cantor was a most un-Socrates Socrates. Mr. Cantor later moved to *Duffy's Tavern*, where he played the dull witted Finnigan, "Duhhh, chee, t'anks, Arch!" Now

that's Charles Cantor!

Another feature of Allen's Ally was the weekly important question (I never did find out to whom the questions were important). As the question was asked to the various denizens of the Alley, the old Atwater Kent and Philco radio speakers shot out the hilarious responses:

Allen: "What modern invention do you most dislike?"

Mrs. Nussbaum: "Well...present company excluded ..."

Allen: "Thank you"

Mrs. Nussbaum: "Excluding present company, I would venture I most dislike the telephone."

Allen: "The telephone?"

Mrs. Nussbaum: "I am remarking that it is remarkable..."

Mrs. Nussbaum went on to tell a straight forward story of how a telephone call interrupted her cooking. In a fit of anger, she had thrown her telephone out the window as far as the cord would let it go. She continued ....

Mrs. Nussbaum: "Then I am hearing from the patio beneath the window, "Sorry, you time is up on the Pot O' Gold twenty five thousand dollar question! Ay-yi-yi!"

Allen: "That does seem a good reason to hate the telephone."

Mrs. Nussbaum: "Yes, most of all I hate the telephone because it is always ringing while I have my head in the oven cooking."

And on and on it went, week after week.

In 1952, a tribute of kindness to Fred Allen took place. Members of his old radio show cast, along with his long time friend Jack Benny, gathered together to help the then retired Allen re-create his program on the television show, *Omnibus*. Benny remarked, "A lot of people never realized that the feud between Allen and myself was a joke. Unfortunately, one of the people who never realized it was Fred!" On the *Omnibus* broadcast, Allen strolled down his

recreated "Alley" for the last time. I did not see the *Omnibus* show, but I would be willing to bet that it was a real warm send off to a great comedian.

A heart condition had put a damper on Allen ever doing a full scale comedy show on television. He was, however, a panelist on *What's My Line* for a good many years. Allen would never perform again with his old cast from radio. His final radio broadcast was on June 26, 1949, with Jack Benny as his guest. He passed away in 1956.

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## The Bright Lights Grow Dim

Reprint from *Who's Who in TV and Radio*, 1954

After more than 16 years of good entertainment, the voice of CBS's *Grand Central Station* is no longer heard in the land. What stilled it was not any sudden drying up of human interest drama in Manhattan's great railroad terminal, but rather the fact that *Grand Central* on the radio just couldn't compete any longer with the overwhelming force of TV playhouses. No doubt about it, the radio theaters are dwindling. Which is too bad because many of them deserved longer life, and because the very fact that they were heard and not seen enabled them to appeal to the listener's imagination in ways that TV cannot, and to achieve dramatic effects that TV rarely can match. The oldest radio playhouse of all, 20 year old *Lux Radio Theatre*, is still going strong, however, and the big news this year is its switch from CBS to NBC, where it continues to present Hollywood's big names and big stories. NBC also continues with the year old *Royal Theatre*, which Sir Laurence Olivier got off to a good start last October by presenting adaptations of the work of such eminent writers as Pushkin, Maughan and Graham Greene.

CBS, even after relinquishing the Lux series, still has the greatest variety of shows in the

field, headed by *Stars Over Hollywood*, which is going strong after 13 years in which dozens of others have come and gone. Columbia's offerings range from the whodunit field (*Crime Classics*) and adventure (*Escape and Suspense*) to the *Hallmark Hall of Fame* which honors heroes of U. S. history and Cathy and Elliott Lewis *On Stage*, starring the husband and wife team in high quality originals and classics. Finally, Mutual concentrates on *Family Theatre*, now age 7, offering a big array of Hollywood talent in stories by top radio and movie writers. It'll be interesting to see how many of these hardy perennials can weather the fierce competition of TV for national audiences and will still be with us a year from now.

### Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons

by Dom Parisi

*Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons* began in the thirties as a fifteen minute serial broadcast, Tuesday through Thursday evening (the other weekdays were filled by *Easy Aces*). In the early forties Mr. Keen had become a half-hour, once a week mystery sponsored by Kolynos Tooth Powder. But then in the early fifties it reverted back to the fifteen minute format. The show was around into the the late fifties when it again went back to the thirty minute format. (with so many changes it's a wonder Mr. Keen had time to find the missing people!).

The program was created and produced by those soap opera artists, Frank and Anne Hummert who also created *Ma Perkins* and *Just Plain Bill* and the *Romance of Helen Trent* to name a few. In the early fifteen minute format the program was like a soap opera with Mr. Keen looking for a wife who left her husband because he did not understand her. However when the show was in the half-hour time slot, he really tracked down murders. Mr. Keen always got his man.

Usually, men the age of the gray-haired investigator would seek nothing more than peace and quiet. Not our Mr. Keen, he was more likely to be confronted by an ax murderer with his ax at the ready. Most times Mike Clancy, Mr. Keen's partner, would be there to disarm the madman.

There wasn't any doubt that the tracer lived up to his name. When he can up with a brilliant deduction (at least one per week) Mike would state in complete awe, "sakes alive, Mr. Keen!"

Mr. Keen was often described as the "kindly old investigator." He often had a kind and comforting word for the girl whose boyfriend had mysteriously disappeared just before their wedding. Even if Mr. Keen was forced to shoot a wife poisoner, he would sigh and wonder aloud why so



**Drive the Monday Blues  
Away with Swingin' Swayin'  
Sammy Kaye!**

Everybody has a secret desire to be a band leader. Sammy Kaye gives his audience the chance to try it tonight. It's a musical laugh riot! **9:30 P.M.**

★★★★★★★★★★

It's "**The Beulah Show**" with Bob Corley to make you smile, Penny Piper to make you hum a tune, and Basil Adlam's smooth music. **9:00 P.M.**

★★★★★★★★★★

Nigel Bruce stars in the most recent "**Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.**" It's "**Cue for Murder.**" Quick Dr. Watson, dial to 1520. **8:30 P.M.**

Dial 1520  
**WKBW**  
ABC Network [1947]

many boys took the wrong turn on the highway of life. After all, didn't we all know that "crime does not pay!"

**American Home Products Presents**  
**MR. KEEN,**  
**Tracer of Lost Persons**  
in the  
**"Telephone Book Murder Case"**  
at  
**8:30 P.M.**  
Starring  
**Bennett Kilpack**  
**WHEC** always out in front in Rochester!

**A Word from the Oval Office**

I wish to extend my gratitude to our two tape librarians. Our last three librarians resigned their positions in quick succession. Don Friedrich and Ed Wanat quickly stepped forward and assumed these positions. I wish to pay tribute to Ed Wanat, who has taken over the work of two librarians. Ed found a number of orders that had not been filled. He quickly organized both collections and filled all orders. This was all in addition to his other job as reference librarian.

To honor both Don and Ed and to show our appreciation for their efforts, we have come up with a special offer for all our members. For every order of four (4) cassettes or four (4) reels, you may select a free reel or cassette. This offer will be in effect throughout the month of August and September.

Jerry Collins,  
President, Old Time Radio Club

**TONIGHT and every Friday**  
**The Fat Man**  
**8:00 P.M.** [1949]  
**WKBW 1520 on your dial**

**Code Operator on Job All the While That Station Broadcasts**

*Radio World*, October 4, 1924

Few radio listeners know that behind the scenes in a radio casting station there is a licensed code operator whose only duty during the period the station is on the air, is to listen in for distress signals

While music and addresses are going out from an adjoining set that is tuned to 600 meters, the wavelength of ship and coast stations. At the first signal of distress he notifies the engineer in charge and the broadcasting stops at once, the air is left free for the unobstructed transmission of SOS signals.

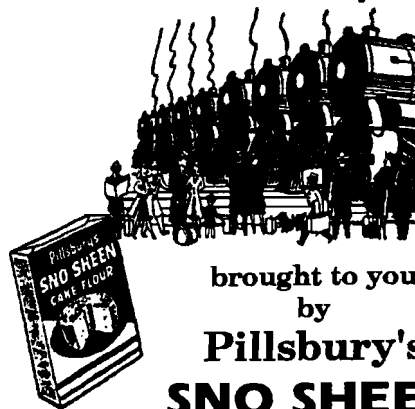
On Friday, September 19, shortly before 10 p. m., while WGY, the Schenectady, N. Y., station, was in the midst of a dance program from Albany, an SOS was picked up from a ship at sea. Instantly WGY left the "air."

**IT'S BACK ON THE AIR**  
**Grand Central Station**

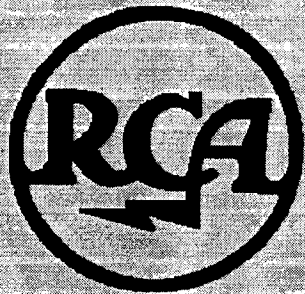
**Crossroads of a million private lives!**

**WJR**

1:00 P.M. Saturday



brought to you  
by  
**Pillsbury's**  
**SNO SHEEN**  
CAKE FLOUR



**Why  
RCA ALL THE WAY  
means more for your money**

**RCA engineers have continuous practical experience in every branch of radio. Through the National Broadcasting Company, RCA creates and broadcasts the majority of network programs. Through Victor, RCA has the benefit of 39 years' leadership in sound production. RCA engineering, NBC broadcasting skill, Victor mastery of tone are combined in every RCA Victor radio. They bring you radio that is RCA All the Way -- an extra value that is yours only with an RCA Victor.**

**RADIO CORPORATION OF AMERICA**



**RADIO CITY, U.S.A.  
RCA Manufacturing Co., Inc.  
RCA Communications Inc.  
National Broadcasting Co.  
RCA Institutes, Inc.  
Radiomarine Corp. of America**

*From the Editor's Chair*

Received a nice note pertaining to the *Illustrated Press* from Gene Leitner, Co-Founder of **The Golden Radio Buffs of Maryland**. Gene had some encouraging words, which are always nice to hear.



Member Paul Everett of St. Paul, Minnesota sent in a copy of a six page RCA advertisement insert from a November, 1937 *Life Magazine*. The insert is titled *Listen, RCA All the Way* and is number four in a series of five. The ad on this page is from that insert, and you will be seeing more information and ads in future IP's. Paul also informed me that RCA called their table radios "chest type" table radios. I guess we are always learning something new about old time radio.

Member Jeff Hagerty from Grants Pass, Oregon writes that quality reel tape (1800') is still available for those who are having a hard time finding it. He said both Ampex and Sony are available from Ron Baron, 63-09 108th St., Apt 2P, Forest Hills, NY 11375. A business size SASE would be appreciated.

With all the sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, etc. doing research on the psychic and psychosis of the American masses, I wish someone would do a study on the graying of people who belong to Old Time Radio clubs. I don't think that our organization is much different than other clubs in the makeup of our membership. We do have a number of younger members, but let's face the facts, most members if not already receiving benefits, are pushing closer and closer to retirement and Social Security. The number of **YOUNG**, new members to the hobby is extremely small.

Our club will be celebrating its twentieth birthday in less than a year. The projection for the next twenty is not very promising. We will have enormous tape and reference libraries and a few members with walkers and hearing aids. Some how, some way, we must recruit young people into our hobby. Perhaps Roger Hill of NARA is on the right track, maybe we should be pooling our talents in some sort of confederation to get our message of Old Time Radio out to the masses. I do know that Chuck Schaden's radio program from Chicago has a positive effect on recruiting new people to our hobby. Think about it.

**H. & H. RADIO CO.**  
 P. O. Box 22, CLINTON HILL STA.  
 NEWARK, N. J.

Dept. 104

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 by parcel post. When ordering mention type.

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**Every Tube Guaranteed**

Amplifier Standard Base  
 TYPE 199—3-4 Volt, .06 Amp. Detector and  
 TYPE 12—1½ Volt, .25 Amp. Detector and Amplifier  
 TYPE 201A—5 Volt, .25 Amp. Detector and Amplifier  
 TYPE 200—6 Volt, 1 Amp. Detector

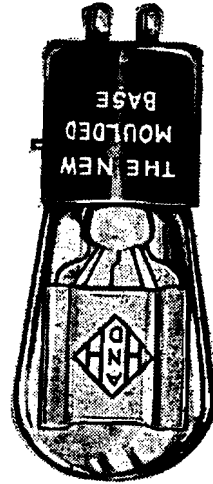
at the present time can possess.  
 speak for quality, volume and all other character-  
 istics demanded of a Radio Tube. Designed and manu-  
 factured to give the highest efficiency that a Tube

**AIR-TRON TUBES**

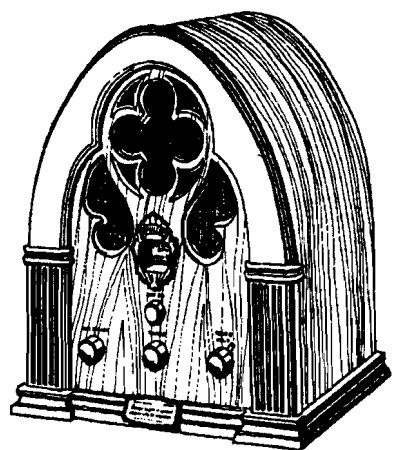
With the new highly developed dielectric  
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 kinds of electrical losses.

**AIR-TRON RADIO TUBES**

Type 201A



**Old Time Radio Club**  
**Box 426**  
**Lancaster, NY 14086**



**FIRST CLASS MAIL**