

The Old Time Radio Club

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“Good Night and
May God Bless”

Membership Information

New member processing, \$5 plus club membership of \$15 per year from January 1 to December 31. Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing, and a monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows: If you join January-March, \$15; April-June, \$12; July-September, \$8; October-December, \$5. 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 PM during the months of September to June at 393 George Urban Blvd., Cheektowaga, NY 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

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P.O. Box 426
Lancaster, NY 14086



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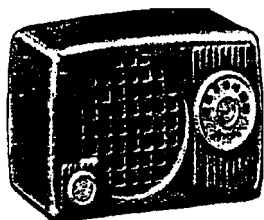
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SAME TIME, SAME STATION

by Jim Cox

LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL

Few serials enjoyed the kind of ratings that *Life Can Be Beautiful* achieved. For several years it held third or fourth place among all daytime features. For two years, 1939-41, it was aired twice daily, on the CBS and NBC Red networks, with the audience reaching a combined 14.7. Broadcasting on a single network (CBS) in 1941-42, its figures topped out at 9.0. In only two of the series' 16 seasons did the numbers fall below 5.0. The drama maintained a large and loyal following from its inception September 5, 1938 almost until it was withdrawn June 25, 1954. It was consistently recognized as one of the most popular programs on daytime radio.

Because of its long title, the soap opera was referred to by people within the industry by an acronym, "Elsie Beebe," from the initials of the show's title (LCBB).

Distinguished radio thespian Ralph Locke, who played the protagonist, Papa David Solomon, the entire run, was a native of Eastern Europe. His thick, readily identified brogue won for him many ethnic-Jewish parts in radio in the 30s and 40s, including recurring roles on two early daytime serials, *Dot and Will* and *Second Husband*.

But it was as the beloved old proprietor of the Slightly Read Book Shop on *Beautiful* that he was affectionately recalled by millions of listeners. As an elderly, compassionate Jewish intellect, he became the conscience of a metropolis. No matter how dismal things might seem, on this soap opera Papa David reminded the disconsolate that life could be beautiful again — a reference he repetitiously employed thousands of times. It was an upper that millions of middle class Americans, still trying to recover from the economic catastrophes of a national depression, while facing the ravages of a second world war and the Korean conflict, would reflect upon again and again. Even in the harshest of times, Papa David reminded us, life could be worth living.

Into this pleasant reverie arrived a teenager, Chichi Conrad, a victim of the urban ghettos, seeking a safety net from the perils of the streets. Papa David came to her rescue, providing not only a place where she could sleep on a cot in a rear room of his small business, but—

— perhaps more important, in time — the benefit of the wise old man's experience. "The future is like a thick veil between us and the tomorrows that are yet to come," he told her one early autumn day in 1939 when she was having no luck in finding a job. "What's coming, we don't know . . . only what we can see and touch and put our hands on . . . Don't sit down and hold the hands and wait for life to get beautiful. You got to do something!"

Papa David instilled his values into young Stephen Hamilton, too, a physical cripple, though bright in mind and spirit, Stephen helped Papa David in his little business while aspiring toward a law degree. By 1945, Papa David's two young wards were drawn to one another and decided to marry. A year later, on Christmas day, 1946, they became the parents of a healthy baby boy.

But the serial took a decidedly dark turn a short time later. Stephen, acting foolhardy, carried the infant into a cold rain without the child having proper clothing. As a result, the baby contacted pneumonia and died. At about the same time, Stephen became romantically involved with another woman, then became a participant in a jewel heist. Before any of this could be resolved, he unexpectedly suffered a heart attack and died.

In a short while, one of daytime radio's great empathy characters had divorced himself from the values which had been instilled in him by Papa David. It was a crushing blow to Chichi and Papa David and millions of their fans.

But with an opportunity to start afresh, series creators/writers Don Bixby and Bill Becker would have Chichi pursued by some of the city's most eligible young bachelors. One, Toby Nelson, had idolized her for years, but it became obvious to him that he could never be more than a confidante to her. In the end, it turned out the suitors she seemed to really want as a husband she never got; and those who possessed little to distinguish them were easy to woo.

Alice Reinheart, veteran of stage, screen, radio and eventually television, played Chichi from 1938-46. Her radio repertoire included parts on *One Man's Family*; *Casey, Crime Photographer*; *John's Other Wife*; *Her Honor, Nancy James*; *The Adventures of the Abbotts* and others. She was succeeded as Chichi by Terry Keane, who appeared in the role for the rest of the run. Keane, heroine of *The Second Mrs. Burton*, would go on to a major role in television's *The Edge of Night* after radio faded.

Actors John Holbrook and Earl Larimore played the

part of Stephen Hamilton at different times. Others in the cast included Richard Kollmar, Roger DeKoven, Peggy Allenby, Ruth Yorke, Agnes Moorehead, Clayton 'Bud' Collyer, Ed Begley, Ethel Owen, Minerva Pious and Joseph Julian.

Announcers included some of radio's most stalwart names — Ralph Edwards, Don Hancock, Ed Herlihy, Ron Rawson, Hugh Conover and Bob Dixon.

Life Can Be Beautiful originally aired at 1:15 p.m. ET on CBS, 1938-40 it broadcast on the same network at 1 o'clock. (Its dual broadcasts on NBC Red were at 9:45 a.m. in 1939-40 and 5:45 p.m. in 1940-41.) When the program joined NBC permanently in 1946, it always aired at 3 o'clock.

Throughout its long history the series was underwritten by Procter & Gamble. Across the years it touted such commodities as Spic 'n Span cleanser, Ivory and Camay soap bars, Crisco all-vegetable shortening and at least three detergents — Ivory Flakes, Ivory Snow and Tide.

Did You Know That . . .

By Dom Parisi

Did you know that of the 587 *SHADOW* broadcasts listed in the *SHADOW LOG* by Radiovox in Ypsilanti, Michigan, dated 1972:

Murder/Murderer appears in 58 titles

Death appears in 163 titles

Dead/Deadly appears in 24 titles, and Ghost appears in 10 titles?

Editor: A while back I wrote a short article in our club newsletter *The Illustrated Press* telling how I started collecting OTR shows. At that time I asked other members to write-in and tell how they became an OTR buff. No one responded? Come-on people, let's hear from you!

Dom Parisi

When Radio Was King

IN THIS MOVIE ERA OF COMPUTER GENERATED special effects, the idea of using one's imagination may seem to very young moviegoers, bizarre. But for decades, when radio was king, the listener was served by sound geniuses who made radio the place to be.

In his new book, *The Great American Broadcast* (Dutton, due for October release), Leonard Maltin, *Modern Maturity's* video reviewer introduces us to the writers, actors, directors, sound-effects artists and announcers who created a unique world of sound. "Radio demands your participation," says Maltin. "You have to put yourself in the setting. You cannot be a passive listener."

Maltin's labor of love spanned 11 years and hundreds of hours of interviews, resulting in tales both amusing and touching. "The thing that struck me the most," says Maltin, "was the really extraordinary camaraderie that developed among these people. Sound effects guys, musicians, writers, actors — they all hung out together, lived their lives together. I find that very appealing."

Then there was the appeal of learning all those behind-the-scenes secrets. To suggest the sewers of Paris in a broadcast of *Les Miserables*, for example, Orson Welles and John Houseman put their actors in the studio men's room where their voices echoed. And of course, said writer-director Arch Oboler, there's nothing like chopping into a watermelon to simulate the sound of an ax chopping open somebody's head.

Maltin insists that knowing the tricks of the trade has not dispelled his awe of the medium. "Sometimes I might try to listen clinically, but I fail miserably," Maltin says. "Before long I'm in the Amazonian jungle or on a Western street or in a detective's office. You can't help but be caught up in the illusion." —S.C. Tyler



An Ode to Era of Radio

By Tom Hennessy

This is written with love to the old Philco radio that stood in the house where I grew up.

The Philco arrived before I was born. It graced a corner of our living room, a massive floor-model radio with walnut housing and amber dials that could serve up Edward R. Murrow from London or Al Jolson from Hollywood.

It is impossible to describe the Philco's impact on family life to someone who missed the golden age of radio. Those who grew up with (and perhaps have been jaded by) television, cannot fathom a time when families sat around a box with no screen, wondering how Basil Rathbone could possibly trap Professor Moriarty in the remaining six minutes of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

Radio was, as Jack Benny once said, "do-it-yourself television." The world that came to us through the Philco's speaker was bounded only by the parameters of your imagination. It could transport you to Benny's vault or Fibber McGee's closet or the creaking door of the *Inner Sanctum*, but the actual appearance of those fabled places was determined only by your own cerebral vision.

When Sgt. Preston of the Yukon shouted, "On King, on, you huskies," no machines were needed to whip fake snow onto the shoulders of his scarlet Royal Mounties jacket. You could picture Preston, tall and undaunted against the ice and snow, and even shiver a bit beside the Philco until that final moment when his commanding officer said, "Well done, Preston. The Yukon still belongs to the Crown. This case is closed."

The old Philco helped us laugh our way through the Depression and, later, through those dark weeks when no letter came from my brother who was piloting a B-17 over Germany. You could forget your troubles when Fred Allen took you down "Allen's Alley" and allowed himself to be taunted by Senator Claghorn. ("Son, your tongue's wagging like a blind dog in a meat market.")

And when a hold-up man confronted Jack Benny with "Your money or your life." the silence that followed had to be one of the funniest moments ever.

The Philco gave us role models, heroes who did not seem trite when they unabashedly stood up for America. The Philco did not glorify connivers like television's J.R. or self-centered ninnies like *Charlie's Angels*. Instead, it gave us crusaders like *Boston Blackie*, "friend to those who have no friend, enemy to those who make him an enemy," and the *Green Hornet*, who hunted "the biggest of all game — public enemies who try to destroy our America."

The Philco gave my mother *Lorenzo Jones* and *One Man's Family* and *Mary Noble, Backstage Wife*. It gave Dad *Gabriel Heater* and *H. V. Kaltenborn* and *Walter Winchell*. The sounds filtered through the heating vents to my bedroom. "Good evening, Mr. and Mrs. North and South America and all the ships at sea" was often the last thing I heard before falling asleep on Sunday nights.)

Recently I read an account of the Louds, the California family whose lives were portrayed on public television in the early '70s. When the Loud was shattered by trauma, including the divorce of Bill and Pat Loud, Bill blamed television for much of his family's disintegration.

If he were starting over again, he said, he would throw all their television sets into the Pacific Ocean.

Maybe that underscores the difference between the ears of radio and TV. I do not know what became of our old Philco. But I do know my father did not throw it into the ocean.

Do You Remember . . . ?

By Stu Mann

Just as the strains of an old song have power to transport us back in time, so the mention of a name, perhaps long forgotten, can take us back to another day, or another place. Do you remember will try to let you know what happened to some of these people you may remember.

MRS. NUSSBAUM

One of the more famous dialect comedienne from the golden age of radio was born Minerva Pious in Odessa, Russia in 1909. She came to this country when she was three years old and settled with her parents in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

She came to Fred Allen's Show in 1933 through one of his writers, she was in her own words, "A complete amateur". She used her "Nussbaum" voice on the show for some time before "Allen's Alley" was formed and the character got a name. She stayed with the program until 1949, doing all the female voices.

Radio performers were not seen, and received scanty billing unless they were stars, few listeners therefore realized that the lady that entertained much of America as Pansy Nussbaum was also being heard on several other shows as well, playing different roles. On the *Kate Smith Show*, Minerva was a debutante with a broad New York accent. For Al Jolson, she was paired in sketches with Monty Woolly.

She was a frequent guest on *Easy Aces*, the *Philip Morris Playhouse* and *Duffy's Tavern*. She made about 7 movies from 1941 to 1964 including *It's In The Bag* with Jack Benny and Fred Allen, *The Ambassador's Daughter* and *Love In The Afternoon*.

Minerva was married briefly in the forties to Bernie Henighen, the songwriter and lyricist. She had a foster son who was orphaned during World War II. She also did character parts on *Edge of Night* and *Another World*.



(Editor's Note:) On September 17, 1997 the world lost one of its most multi-talented entertainers. A Vaudeville comic, movie star, radio and television comedian and in the latter part of his life a talented artist specializing in paintings of clowns, both happy and sad-faced.

Radio fans will forever remember Red Skelton's portrayal of several characters: Junior, the mean widdle kid who constantly tricked Verna Felton as *Namaw*, into admitting some sort of past indiscretion; Calliflower McPugg, the punch drunk prize fighter; Sheriff Dead-eye, *aw come on horse . . . whoa*; Willy Lump Lump and Clem Kadiddlehopper, plus many others.

I for one remember with pride his rendition of the United States Pledge of Allegiance and offer its reprinting as a tribute to the man who gave us so much.

As a schoolboy, one of Red Skelton's teachers explained the words and meaning of the Pledge of Allegiance to his class. Skelton later wrote down, and eventually recorded, his recollection of this lecture. It is followed by an observation of his own.

Commentary on the Pledge of Allegiance

by Red Skelton

I . . . Me; an individual; a committee of one.

Pledge . . . Dedicate all of my worldly goods to give without self-pity.

Allegiance . . . My love and my devotion.

To the Flag . . . Our standard; *Old Glory*; a symbol of Freedom; wherever she waves there is respect, because your loyalty has given her a dignity that shouts, Freedom is everybody's job

of the United . . . That means that we have all come together.

States . . . Individual communities that have united into forty-eight great states. Forty-eight individual communities with pride and dignity and purpose. All divided with imaginary boundaries, yet united to a common purpose, and that is love for country.

And to the Republic . . . Republic - a state in which sovereign power is invested in representatives chosen by the people to govern. And government is the people; and it's from the people to the leaders, not from the leaders to the people.

For which it stands; One Nation . . .

One Nation - meaning, so blessed by God.

Indivisible . . . Incapable of being divided.

With Liberty . . . Which is Freedom; the right to live one's own life, without threats, fear, or some sort of retaliation.

And Justice . . . The principle, or qualities, of dealing fairly with others.

For All . . . For All - which means, boys and girls, it's as much your country as it is mine.

And now, boys and girls, let me hear you recite the Pledge of Allegiance:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic, for which it stands; one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Since I was a small boy, two states have been added to our country, and two words have been added to the Pledge of Allegiance: Under God. Wouldn't it be a pity if someone said that is a prayer, and that would be eliminated from schools, too?

— Red Skelton

Member's Mike



Dear Ken,

While I enjoyed Stu Mann's piece, "Do You Remember?," he gives Clifton Fadiman credit for an OTR assignment he never had. Specifically Stu credits Mr. Fadiman with being "the emcee and quizmaster of radio's QUIZ KIDS." As most OTR fans know, Joe Kelly, a grade-school dropout, was the quizmaster on that series for its entire run.

Since the show was on the air for approximately 13 years, Kelly missed a few shows and a substitute quizmaster took over. Radio comedians were the first choice and Jack Benny and Fred Allen were often on the show. (In fact, the latter was asked enough times that he started inviting the Quiz Kids to be on his show.) Others who were in that role once or twice include: Bing Crosby, Phil Baker, Bob Hope, Ralph Edwards, Eddie Cantor and even Tallulah Bankhead. While it is possible that Fadiman (who was based in New York City) may have guested on this Chicago show very infrequently, I can find no authentication for such.

I suspect that Stu may have been led astray by a reference in Ron Lackmann's book "Same Time, Same Station" which erroneously claims that "Fadiman also moderated the QUIZ KIDS whenever the regular host of that show, Joe Kelly, was unavailable." Fadiman, as an educated intellectual, was exactly the type of quizmaster the show's producers were trying to avoid.

Best regards,

Jack French

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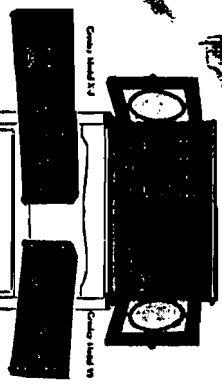
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