

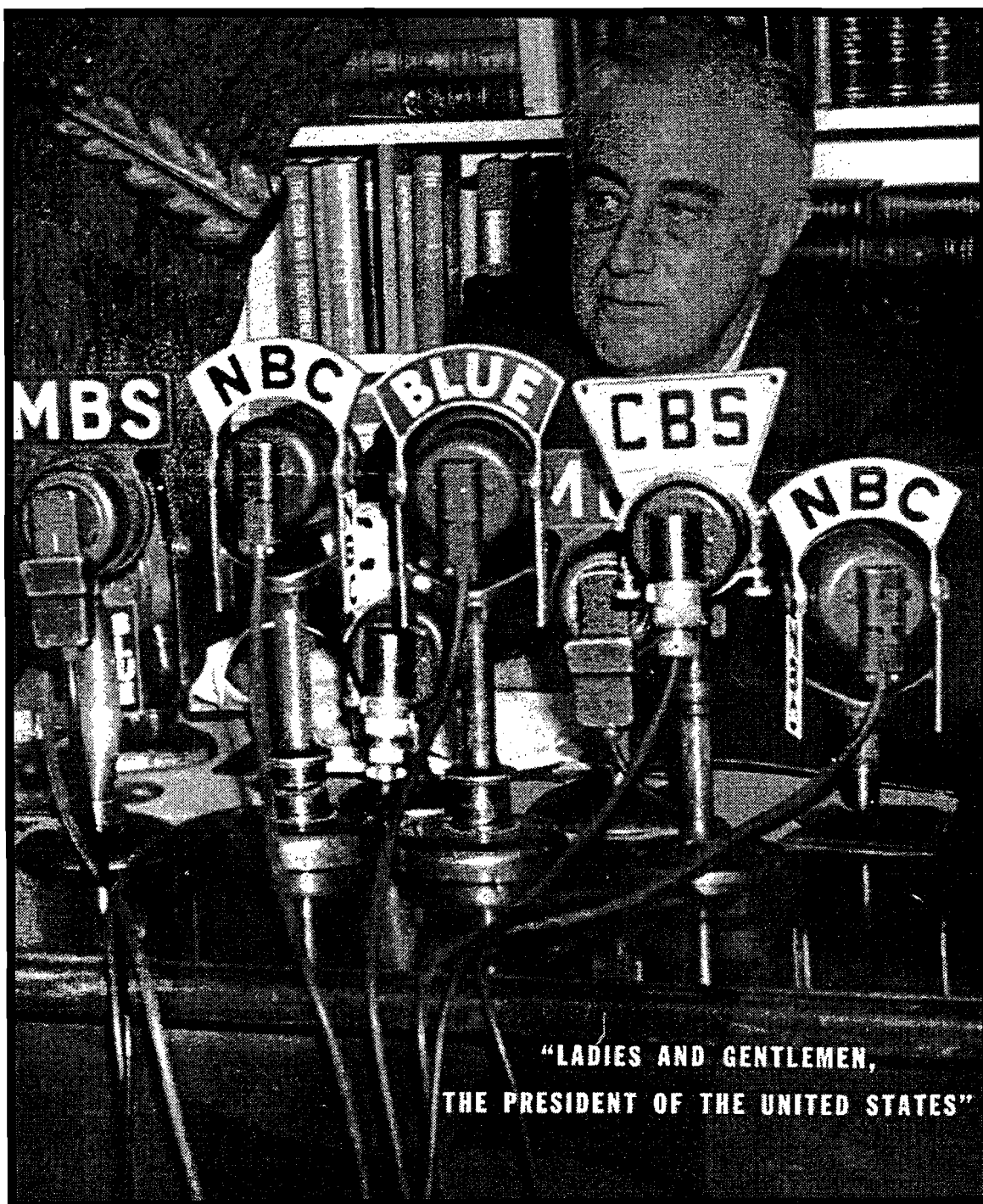
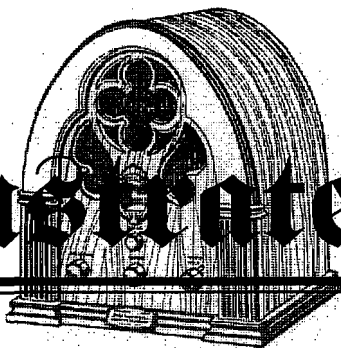
The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

The Illustrated Press

Number 318

March 2004



"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES"

The Illustrated Press

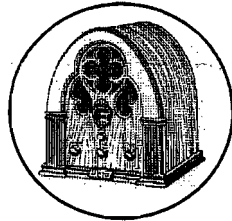
Membership information

New member processing, \$5 plus club membership of \$17.50 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, \$17.50; April-June, \$14; July-September, \$10; October-December, \$7. 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 7:39 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

Old Time Radio Club
56 Christen Ct.
Lancaster, NY 14086

E-Mail Address:
otrclub@localnet.com



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Gene Autry

by TOM CHERRE

Gene Autry was as decent and as nice a guy as you would ever be likely to meet. You might say he did it all. He was a singer-songwriter, movie star, radio star, TV star, and he even got around to owning a major league baseball team. Those who knew him say he deserved all that he achieved.

Gene Autry was born in 1907 in the small border town of Tioga, Texas, the son of Delbert and Elnora Autry. His grandfather was a Baptist preacher, William T. Autry. At five Grandpa Autry taught Gene how to sing and used him in the church choir. The Autry family came to Texas with the early settlers from Tennessee. Along with Davy Crockett, an Autry died at The Alamo. At twelve, Gene got his first guitar from the Sears Roebuck catalog for eight dollars. By fifteen Gene had strummed his way through every stage, school play and cafe in Tioga.

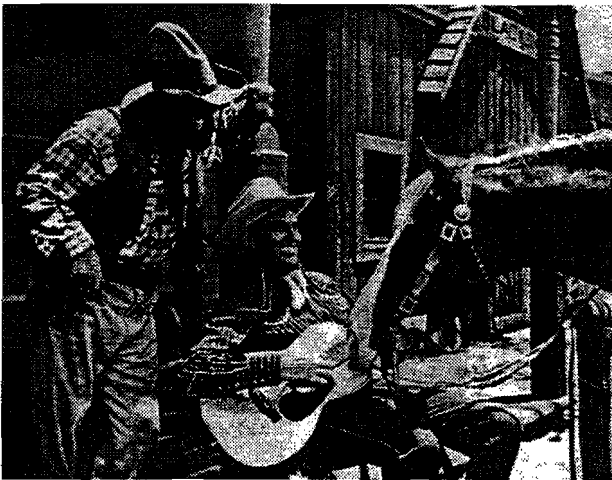
When Gene was working at the local telegraph office playing guitar between messages, the very famous Mr. Will Rogers happen to walk in and hear him playing. Rogers thought he had talent and was wasting his time there. He encouraged Gene to go to New York to pursue the music field. As they say the rest is history. Actually Gene's ride to success had a few bumps along the way. In New York they told him to get into radio, get a little experience and then we'll talk. Gene got into a radio show in Oklahoma singing country and with a little luck made some records that did well on

the country charts. In 1934 Hollywood was looking for someone to take the place of Tom Mix and Hoot Gibson. Ken Maynard had been around for awhile and his films were starting to wear thin. Gene's first movie was "In Old Santa Fe". As Gene recalled, "I sang a song or two and no one got sick", and so thus was born a new Hollywood art form, "The Singing Cowboy". In all, Gene Autry appeared in 93 movies. His movies had as much music in them as gunplay. In virtually all his movies the formula was the same. You had to have a decent story, music, comic relief, a little action, and some romance. That was the format for his "B" westerns or "Oaters" as they were commonly called. Gene also lived by the "Cowboy's Code", always wear a white hat and never kiss the leading lady unless she's your horse.

In 1939 Gene, Champion and crew made a movie promotion tour to England and Ireland. The British and Irish received their American cowboy cousin with immense popularity. In Dublin's fair city a crowd of 300,000 lined up to see Gene and Champion parade down the street. This was thought to be a world's record outside of the Pope's visit. It just so happened, P. K. Wrigley, chewing gum magnet was in town, and was pondering on a radio show to sponsor. In 1940 *The Melody Ranch Show* began on CBS brought to you by Wrigley's Chewing Gum. It would last for 16 years. This show was one of my favorites. It started with the "Back in the Saddle" theme. Gene then sang about two or three songs, and then had a comedy skit with side kick Pat Buttram. The remainder of the show was the story part with Gene giving the narration. The stories had a wholesome ending with a message of the strong morals Gene always abided by.

Gene's career was pre-empted for awhile by something called WWII. Gene became a flight officer and flew with some of the best. He was in the Air Transport Command, and he had the devious thrill of flying "the hump". If you're not familiar with that term ask any pilot who flew out of Asia in that war. When the war was over Gene came back as strong as ever. In 1947 he wrote the popular Christmas song "Here Comes Santa Claus". The following year 1948, Johnny Marks had offered a new song to several major singers of the time. They all refused. Gene's wife thought a song about a poor reindeer named Rudolph was cute and talked Gene into recording it. Need I say more?

In the early 50s tape recording became a reality, readily available for doing *The Melody Ranch*



Pat Buttram and Champion have an ear for good music.

Show. The cast liked the format because you were free to cover any mistakes. Mr. Phil Wrigley preferred the live rendition. He felt it had a more natural flow, mistakes or not. Gene was all but retired from the saddle by 1960. His friend, Walter O'Malley, owner of baseball's Dodgers persuaded Gene to get into another realm, major owner of the California Angels baseball team. After 17 years without a pennant he became a bit disillusioned with players salaries. When a one million dollar contract offer was considered peanuts, Gene started to wonder, he started out making movies for \$500. Gene Autry was considered wealthy, but never felt like a big shot. His wife Ina would never allow Gene's head to grow too big for his Stetson.

Gene Autry passed away about a year or so of his good friend and rival, Roy Rogers. Like Roy, Gene stuck to his grass roots principals. Gene Autry viewed his life favored by friendly winds. He had an illustrious career in movies. In those halcyon days of the 30s and 40s he gave many a young boy and girl a very entertaining afternoon for the mere price of a dime. His radio show was just as popular in the heyday of radio. Along with Hoppy, Roy, and the Lone Ranger his TV show spurred the growth of the Western in the 50s. Best of all, Gene Autry had a great voice and talent for singing and writing. I may not be able to see him riding off in the sunset, but I can sure hear him "Back in the Saddle Again".



With Ann Miller and Jimmy Durante in "Melody Ranch"



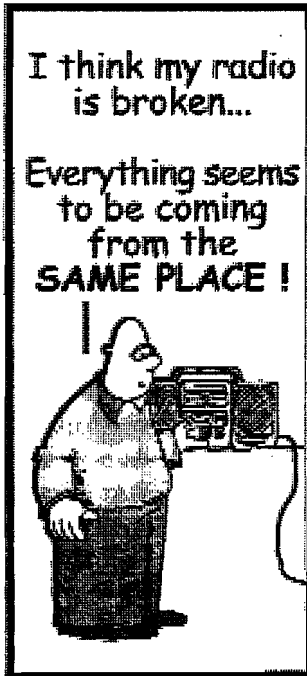
A Quiz for The Old Time Radio Club

by Francis Edward Bork

1. On the *Fibber McGee and Molly Show*, what branch of service was Teenie's father in?
2. What was Gildersleeve's barber's name?
3. On the early *Fibber McGee and Molly Show*, what business was Gildersleeve in?
4. What radio show about sailing did Fran Striker write?
5. On two radio shows the name "Spindrift" was used for a ship's name? Name them.
6. On the early *Shadow* radio show, Blue Coal was the sponsor. What was the parent name of the coal company?
7. The *Shadow* was played by eight actors. Name three.
8. "Manhattan Serenade" was the theme song of what radio show?
9. What radio show featured the "Straight Shooters"?
10. An enemy to those who made him an enemy, and a friend to those who had no friends. Who was he?

Answers

1. U.S. Marines 912/17/46
2. Floyd
3. Girdle factory
4. *Adventure of The Sea Hound*
5. *Jack Armstrong* 3/24/45 - *Mysterious Traveler* 11/40
6. Glen Allen Coal Company
7. James LaCurto, Carl Kroenke, Orson Welles, Bill Johnstone, Bret Morrison, John Archer, Frank Readick and Steve Courtleigh.
8. *The Easy Aces*
9. Tom Mix
10. *Boston Blackie*



What has happened to Local Radio?

Imagine a time traveler from, say, 1972, arriving in town in 2004, listening to the morning show on WWKB 1520. Like always, Dan Neaverth is the DJ, and partner Tom Donahue is reading "KB Radio Pulse Beat News" which is basically the headlines. Okay, so maybe

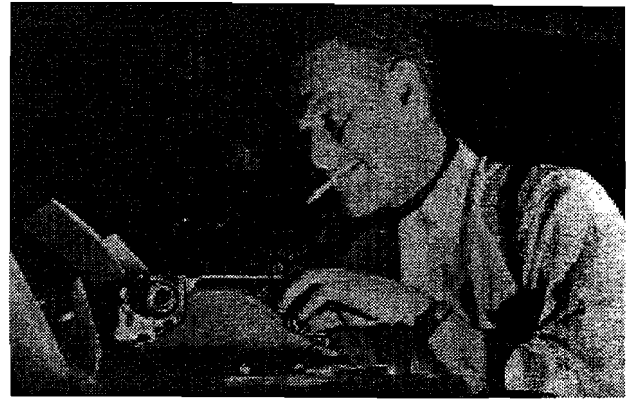
Donahue wasn't around doing news in 1972, but our time traveler realizes radio people come and go, so he's not totally shocked.

Until the end of the newscast that is.

That's when Donahue tells listeners that for details on these and other stories they should tune to NewsRadio 930, WBEN. What? He's actually telling people to turn to another station? Shock and horror — in 1972 maybe, but not so in 2004. Donahue might also tell you to tune to WGR for sports scores. All three stations are owned by one company.

As a matter of fact, most of the radio stations around here are owned by three out-of-town mega-media companies. All together they own a total of 16 local stations a good number of them the most-listened-to stations in town. If this bothers you — and it should — be aware that it could get worse, as the Federal Communications Commission last June tried broadening the ownership rules, which would allow these out-of-towners to control 45 percent of the local media outlets in any given community (it's presently limited to 35 percent). Under threat of President Bush's first veto since entering office, a compromise of 39 percent was recently reached. But don't expect it to end there.

Let your Congressional representatives know how you feel about giving away our airwaves — before we're down to one out-of-town owner who gives us his or her version of our news.



Gleam in eye, the typical *Shadow* script-writer plots against his luckless characters—and the public's peace of mind.

THE SHADOW KNOWS

There's Method in the Madness of the Veteran Mystery Show

The theatre was hushed and dark. Eight hundred people held their breaths in the eerie blackness, as *The Shadow* unfolded its latest tale of terror. The only sound to be heard was the menacing voice of an actor onstage. Suddenly, a scream rang out—no unusual occurrence on *The Shadow*—but this scream wasn't in the script. It wasn't even on the stage. It came from the audience itself, where an imaginative woman was having a mild attack of horror-show hysteria.

That was the first time the omniscient *Shadow* was ever surprised on his own broadcast. It was also the first time that the cast had ever experimented with performing in such utter darkness that they had to use flashlights to read their scripts. They never tried it again. They wanted their studio audience to have fun, but they didn't want to frighten it into fits.

Since then, *Shadow* broadcasts have been conducted from a well-lighted stage, where the audience can see that the villains and vampires are only actors and actresses in business suits and bright dresses—that the howling winds and dynamite explosions are coming from streamlined equipment handled by two rather bored-looking sound engineers..

But the scripts and performances are still spine-chilling, and the sound effects are every bit as impressive as they're intended to be, even when one can see how they are achieved. As a matter of fact, "live" sound is used as much as possible, and recordings are resorted to only for such studio impossibilities as weather conditions, trains, traffic and other mechanical noises.

The Illustrated Press

For one thing, the guns are real—even if they only shoot blanks. The favorite weapon for striking down unsuspecting victims, over the air, used to be .22 caliber, but the war has made it impossible to get shells this size. Now the shots are usually fired from a .38—which soundmen say doesn't give as sharp, a crack but is more satisfactory because its report has more "body."

Stranglings are about the only sound effects that the players create for themselves—with the victim choking himself (or, usually, herself) with his own hands, to get that constricted *timbre* into his voice. Stabbings and falling bodies are imitated by one of the soundmen, who thumps his own chest—or the back of his buddy—for the former, and takes it on the chin himself for the latter. Not quite on the chin, perhaps, since he breaks his fall with his outstretched arms—but at least one *Shadow* sound engineer has developed water-on-the-elbow from impersonating too many falling bodies! The sound of breaking bones (a macabre yet frequent note in the series) is achieved with classic simplicity. The boom-bang boys merely crunch Life Savers in their teeth. The resultant sound is painfully realistic.

For studio audiences, such prosaic goings-on dispel a great deal of the mystery. But there's one effect which is just as weird to onlookers as to listeners-in, and that's hero Lamont Cranston's non-appearance when he becomes the *Shadow*. At such times, the apparently panic-stricken performers are really pleading with the empty air around their microphone—for the *Shadow* is out of sight, in a soundproof booth, speaking through the "filter" mike which gives that eerie quality to his voice.

Time was when radio's *Shadow* existed only as this disembodied voice. From the very start, back in 1931, readers of Maxwell Grant's magazine stories about this nebulous character knew that he was really Lamont Cranston, a seemingly carefree playboy who knew how to hypnotize people so that he was "invisible" to them.

But, for some years, the *Shadow* wasn't even a character in his own radio series. He was only the narrator of sundry dire happenings, a malevolent spirit who gloated over the misfortunes of others and was the very symbol of evil. It wasn't until Mutual adopted him, in 1936, that he became *Cranston* on the air—a *Cranston-Shadow* portrayed by none other than the ebullient Orson Welles.

Now the role belongs to blond, bulky Bret Morrison and is a very reformed character indeed. Today, the part played by the velvet-voiced, 31-year-old former Chicagoan is a veritable one-man posse, bent on seeing that justice is done and proving that Crime Doesn't Pay.

There's another, most important sound effect on the show—the scream of *Margot Lane*, *Cranston's* long-suffering but ever-faithful girl friend. Slight, copper-haired Marjorie Anderson, who plays this harassed heroine, has the reputation of being the best screamer in radio. After her five years in the role, it's probably true.

The Washington-born actress's own life hasn't lacked excitement. Accidents have a way of following her around, just waiting to happen. She has even fallen through an open manhole—on her way home from church! Somehow, she has always escaped serious injury, despite numerous automobile mishaps, everywhere from the Naples-Rome highway (while living abroad with her parents) to the back roads of Connecticut (where she now has her home).

The former Powers model confesses that she dreads the moment when *Cranston* might miss a broadcast cue and fail to "rescue" her in time. It would be, she says, too bad for her mother and five-year-old daughter Lynne—who both believe she needs a *Shadow* to protect her in her private life!
(April 1944)



Central figures are the Commissioner (Kenneth Delmar), Margot (Marjorie Anderson) and The Shadow (Bret Morrison)

Two Sides to Every Story

Before *Amos 'n' Andy* days, Freeman F. Godson and Charles J. Correll had a mild fame as a singing team on both radio and records. Their platter sales were only so-so — except for one disc that went like hot cakes. Hoping to learn the secret of their success, the NBC duo carefully examined their best-seller. They found out, as soon as they turned it over. On the other side was a recording by GENE AUSTIN, the CROSBY-SINATRA of that day.



The blackface comedians see themselves in a mirror as they really are — Correll fixing his tie, Gosden laughing.

MANY HAPPY RETURNS

WHEN *Amos 'n' Andy* took leave of the airwaves last spring, they broke the heart—or at least the time schedule—of nearly a third of the nation. Surveys show that, at their peak, this popular pair commanded a radio audience of some 40,000,000 listeners a week!

Workmen used to hurry home from their factories, farmers rushed through their end-of-day chores, housewives set their schedules for the evening meal, just so they wouldn't miss a word of the day's *Amos 'n' Andy* episode. Even motion picture theaters interrupted their shows for the broadcast, in order not to lose their customers to one of the biggest home audiences in history.

Then—blackout for the blackface comedians. Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, the men behind the burnt cork, took their first long vacation in fourteen years.

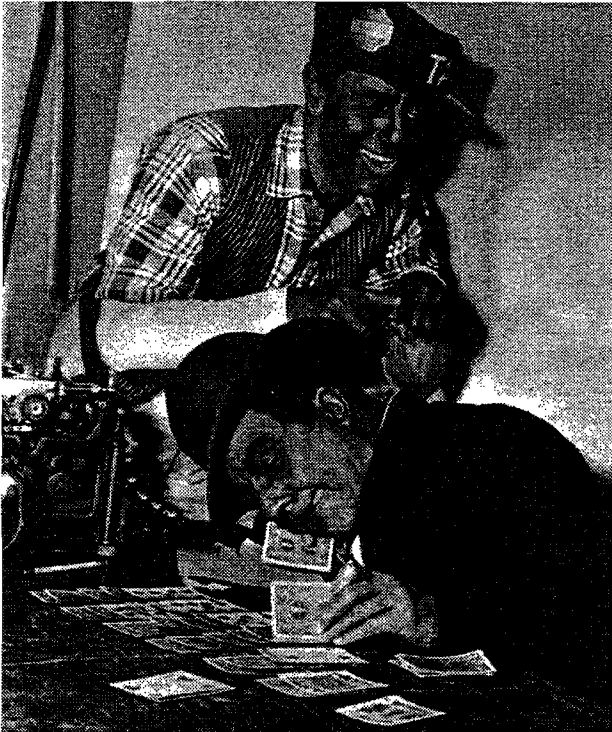
But now the frowns of their forsaken fans can be turned into laugh-wrinkles again. The radio clocks can be reset. *Amos and Andy* are back again, doing business at their first stand—National Broadcasting Company, where Gosden and Correll first introduced *Amos 'n' Andy*, way back in 1929, when the network itself was only three years old.

The characterizations then were the outgrowth of another blackface team, *Sam 'n' Henry* which the two performers had created in a Chicago studio as early as 1926. But it was the birth of *Amos 'n' Andy* which really set the Correll-Gosden career clicking on sixteen cylinders—no matter how bad business might be, according to their own script, for the taxi company run by *Andrew H. Brown* and *Amos Jones*.

They wrote all their own stories and dialogue—Correll usually at the typewriter, Gosden perched on a corner of the desk—and created many other characters. The *Kingfish*, *Madame Queen*, *Brother Crawford*, *Ruby* and *Lightnin'* became almost as widely quoted as *Amos and Andy* themselves.

Many of their creations are back with them, on the new show, but long-time fans are finding some startling changes, made in the interests of streamlining five fifteen-minute spots a week into a well-rounded half-hour on Fridays only. Most unusual change, for listeners, is the presence of guest stars each week. These are written into the script, but they still break a precedent for a cast which has been virtually a two-man institution for a decade and a half.

Another innovation is the studio audience. Correll and Gosden have never had one before. Outsiders saw them



Amos 'n' Andy have existed for fourteen years, but their new show is their first to show their faces to an audience.

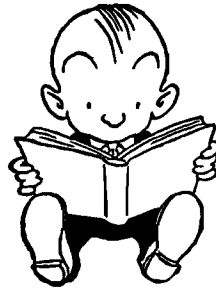
As Amos and Andy in the flesh only at charity benefits and rallies. Now, for the first time, they will see how Gosden switches his voice from that of Amos to *Kingfish* or *Brother Crarwford*, how Correll transforms himself from *Andy* into the landlord or *Henry Van Porter*.

These portrayals have been criticized in the past by casual listeners who have missed the comic overtone and remarked that they weren't true to either the dialect or the character of the American Negro. Actually, the writer-actors are only following minstrel-show tradition, and both men are Southern.

Freeman Gosden—born May 5, 1899, in Richmond, Virginia—is the son of a Civil War veteran. His father was one of the Confederate soldiers who refused to give up when General Lee surrendered.

Charles Correll—though born in Peoria, Illinois, February 3, 1890—is Southern by descent. His great-grandmother was a cousin of Confederate President Jeff Davis.

It was surely fate that brought these two together in a theater in Durham, North Carolina, and made them what NBC President Niles Trammell has aptly called "the first radio program to become an American institution," (November 1943)



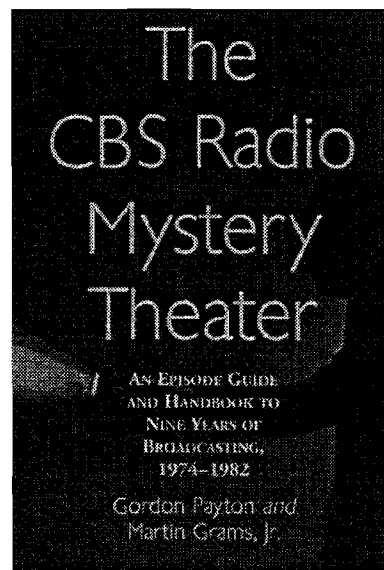
A BOOK REVIEW

The CBS Radio Mystery Theater *An Episode Guide and Handbook to Nine Years of Broadcasting, 1974-1982*

By Gordon Payton & Martin Grams, Jr.

A Review by Frank C. Boncore

I have had the pleasure of meeting Gordon Payton, The Sci Fi Guy and Martin Grams, Jr. at the Cincinnati and Newark OTR Conventions. Both of them are class guys and put out quality products "The CBS Radio Mystery Theater. An Episode Guide and Handbook to Nine Years of Broadcasting, 1974-1982" published in paperback by McFarland is not only a mouthful for a title but in my opinion this book is a must if you are a fan of this show or a serious old time radio collector.



More than a log, this is an encyclopedia of CBS Mystery Theater listing each show number, title, broadcast and rebroadcast date, cast and synopsis of each show. Did you know that Sarah Parker (of HBO's "Sex In The City" fame) appeared on the CBS - RMT episode 1228 entitled "The Cat's Paw" on May 17, 1977. OTR stars such as

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Mandel Kramer, Mason Adams, Jackson Beck, Mercedes McCambridge, Grace Mathews, Bret Morrison, Arnold Moss, Marvin Miller, Hans Conried, Howard DiSilva, Rosemary Rice, Alan Reed, Richard Crenna, etc., etc. appeared in this series over the years. "Licensed To Kill" was a title of a CBS - RMT show in 1975 long before it became a James Bond flick. "A Christmas Carol" was broadcast on Christmas Eve from 1974 to 1981.

I have Martin Gram Jr.'s book on *Suspense* and let me tell you this book is just as good. I could go on and on but I think you get the message—buy the book and you'll be pleasantly pleased.

485 Pages, Softcover, Appendices, Index

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Site For Sore Eyes

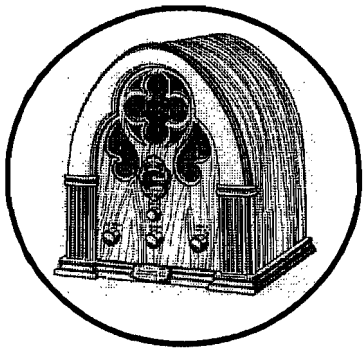
Home from the Broadway Market, where we bought a duck and a loaf of Cohen rye, Buzz found the most wondrous Web site, www.biniasz.com. The exhaustive creation of WNED-TV's Marty Biniasz, as if anyone had to ask, the site is a tribute to old working-class Buffalo. "Lost Buffalo" is a gallery of shut-down shops, from Ruda's Records to Kaminski's Deli. "Classic Pubs" pictures righteous bars and also contains info on what Biniasz drinks. (At Gene McCarthy's in the First Ward it's Genny. "If out, as frequently happens, O.V. splits," he confides) The site's long intro is in English, Polish, German and French. What a project! Finally, someone in Buffalo who gets something done.

LATEST ADDITIONS TO THE CASSETTE LIBRARY

- 3330 Big Story "Justice & A Guy Named Joe" 5/5/48
Big Story "Minneapolis Star Tribune" 5/19/48
- 3331 Richard Diamond "Lady In Distress" 2/23/51
Richard Diamond "Red Rose" 3/2/51
- 3332 CBS Radio Mystery Theater "The Land of
Dreams" 9/18/81
- 3334 Eddie Cantor Show with Dinah Shore 10/29/48
Eddie Cantor Show with Caesar Romero 11/12/48
- 3335 Quiet Please "Nothing Behind The Door" 6/15/47
Quiet Please "I've Been Looking For You" 6/15/47
- 3336 Boston Blackie "Phonograph Murder"
Boston Blackie "Millicent Bromley Kidnapped"
- 3337 Mayor of The Town "Enemy Agents Try To Steal
Cane" 12/9/42
Mayor of The Town "Janie Williams' Baby" 1/6/43
- 3338 Let George Do It "The Seven Dead Years"
10/25/48
Let George Do It "Chance And Probability"
9/29/52
- 3339 Dark Fantasy "The Headless Dead" 1/23/42
Dark Fantasy "Death Is A Savage Deity" 1/30/42
- 3340 Big Town "Nightmare House" 1/11/49
Big Town "A Date With Death" 1/18/49
- 3341 Molle Mystery Theatre "Goodbye Darling" 5/24/46
Molle Mystery Theatre "Solo Performance"
5/21/48
- 3342 Philo Vance "The Chicken Murder Case" 2/7/50
Philo Vance "The Sacrifice Murder Case" 2/14/50
- 3343 Philo Vance "The Murdock Murder Case" 12/14/48
Philo Vance "The Vanilla Murder Case" 12/21/48
- 3344 Fibber McGee And Molly "McGee's Fish Fry"
9/5/39
Fibber McGee And Molly "Elopement On 15th
Wedding Anniversary" 9/12/39
- 3345 Fibber McGee And Molly "Newspaper Columnist"
9/19/39
Fibber McGee And Molly "Fibber Is Too Ill To Do
Housework" 9/26/39
- 3346 Mercury Theatre "The Immortal Sherlock
Holmes" 9/25/38
- 3347 Theatre Five "Mr. Horn's Holiday" 1/26/65
Theatre Five "Tomorrow 6-1212" 1/27/65
- 3348 Theatre Five "A Bad Day's Work" 6/15/65
Theatre Five "Incident At Simbarundi" 6/16/65
- 3349 Red Skelton Show "Inventions" 2/28/52
Red Skelton Show "Hawaii" 3/4/52
- 3350 Red Skelton Show "The Three Cent Stamp"
1/14/51
Red Skelton Show "The Big Business Venture"
1/28/51
- 3351 Movie Town Theatre "Concerto"
Movie Town Theatre "I Give You Maggie"
- 3352 Philo Vance "Murdock Murder Case" 12/14/48
Philo Vance "The Vanilla Murder Case" 12/21/48
- 3353 Academy Award Theatre "The Informer" 5/25/46
Academy Award Theatre "Arise My Love" 6/1/46

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