



MILTON BERLE

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 the 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 newsletter issues. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The Old Time Radio Club meets on the first Monday of the month at 7:30 PM during the months of September through June at St. Alovsius School Hall, Cleveland Drive and Century Road, Cheektowaga, NY. There is no meeting during the month of July, and an informal meeting is held in 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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Great Baseball Feats and Facts by David Nemec

You are probably thinking what is wrong with this guy? He is reviewing another sports book again. Well let me review the book first and then show you what I am attempting to do. If you are a baseball fan and you like statistics, records and trivia; this is the book for you. It contains everything from what teenager pitcher won the most games (Wally Bunker -19) to what switch hitter was the first player to hit homeruns from both sides of the plate in the same game (Wally Schang from East Aurora, New York).

With that put aside, let me relate some of the broadcasting firsts related to baseball.

The first moving picture of a baseball game is made featuring Napolean Lajoie and Harry Bay of Cleveland during a post-season series with Cincinnati, (1903)

George Baird of Chicago invents electronic scoreboard. (1908)

The National Baseball Commission received \$500 for 1910 World Series movie rights. The fee increased to \$3,500 for the 1911 World Series. (1910)

Harry Aiken of the Mutual Film Corporation gains permission from John McGraw to film his players during spring training for instructional purposes. (1915)

On August 25, 1921, Harold Arlen, the voice of KDKA in Pittsburgh, broadcast the first baseball game on the air from Philadelphia. Pittsburgh defeated Philadelphia in the game. (1921)

In the fall of 1921, KDKA installed a wire from Pittsburgh to New York, which allowed Grantland Rice to issue World Series reports on the New York Yankees-New York Giants from the Polo Grounds. Another radio station, WJZ in Newark, New Jersey, broadcast the Series in its entirety by relay, as Sandy Hunt of the <u>Newark Sunday Call</u> reported play-by-play action from his seat in the Polo Grounds to the WJZ radio shack, where Tommy Cowan then broadcast over the air. (1921)

Graham McNamee began his radio broadcasting career in 1923. He was selected to broadcast the World Series that same year. (1923)

WMAQ of Chicago broadcast the home games of both the Cubs and the White Sox. Hal Totten was selected to broadcast the games. Pat Flaherty later joined the announcing team. (1924)

On July 3, 1929 the New York Giants used the first public address system in a ballpark. (1929)

William Wrigley of the Cubs became the first Major League owner to allow all of its games to broadcast. (1935)

The Dodgers, Giants and Yankees allowed their home game to be broadcast on a regular basis. The Yankees hired Mel Allen, who would later team with Arch McDonald to form the Yankees first broadcasting team (1938)

On May 17, 1939 W2XBS of New York televised the first college game between Princeton and Columbia. (1939)

On August 26, 1939, a game beatween Brooklyn and Cincinnati was televised from Ebbetts Field. (1939)

Between 1949 and 1951 three baseball announcers would forever be associated with the phrases that they uttered.

Mel Allen first said, "How About that." (1949)

Rosie Rosewell, after a Ralph Kiner homerun, said, "Open the window, Aunt Minnie, here it comes." (1949)

After Bobby Thompson's homerun, Russ Hodges uttered the famous words, "The Giants win the pennant, the Giants win the pennant." (1951)



Peoria Remembers Fibber McGee & Molly

by LEO JORDAN and TOM MIKULECKY

The magical #79 Wistful Vista was the home of one of the favorite families from the "golden age of radio." *Fibber McGee & Molly* radio programs satisfied the radio addiction of 20 million Tuesday night radio listeners.

Jim Jordan was born on a farm on Farmington Road near the city of Peoria. He was one of eight children. He attended Norwood and St. Mark's Grade Schools and Spalding High School. His family moved to 601 Bradley in Peoria (a house that has since been cleared).

Marian Driscoll was one of thirteen children who lived on the south side of Peoria. Marion attended the Academy of Our Lady across the street from Spalding. Marian and Jim met at choir practice at St. John's Church (now St. Ann's) in 1915. After they were married in 1918, Jim entered the army and served in World War I.

Just prior to the end of the war, he was serving in France, and met up with his brother Byron. Together they entertained the troops in army facilities. During this time, Marian taught piano in Peoria.

After the war, Jim and Marian were increasingly serious about the entertainment industry and the new craze that was vaudeville. From vaudeville they moved to radio.

During a visit to Chicago, they heard a radio broadcast of a singer/ piano player couple, and decided that they



would accept Byron's prodding and audition on the radio station, and were hired. They moved their family, now including two small children, to Chicago. This led to Jim's first regular radio network show called Mr. Twister, which built on Jim's propensity for tongue twisters. This evolved into a second network program called Smack-Out where Jim played a storeowner who was "smack-out" of everything any of his customers requested.

One of the couple's most well known advertisers was Johnson Wax. It was that company's owner who recognized the potential of the Jim and Marian team and gave them the needed sponsorship. It was writer Don Quinn who came up with the name *Fibber McGee and Molly*. Quinn stayed as a writer for them throughout the years of the program, beginning in 1931 and the move to California in 1935. More detail on this early development in their careers is contained in the book "Heavenly Days" by Tom Price.

Fibber McGee and Molly entertained us on the radio between 1931 and 1959. At their peak, they had 20 million faithful radio listeners every Tuesday night. The peak audience occurred during the 1940s, and especially during World War II, when they not only entertained but asked their listeners to contribute to the war effort by not disposing of anything that might be recycled for the war effort, such as rubber and metal products. They were intensely patriotic, and assisted in rallying the country around the war effort.

Fibber and Molly also never forgot their Peoria roots, mentioning their home at least once in each broadcast. There are a number of sayings that many of us have used long after the program ended. I remember my dad telling me many times, "Tain't funny, McGee," or one of Molly's favorites—"How's every little old thing, Myrt?" Myrt was the imaginary telephone operator who came on the phone every time Jim made a phone call. Included in their climb up the entertainment ladder of success were numerous recordings and three movies. Fibber McGee and Molly embedded themselves in our culture and profoundly influenced the way we lived.

Jim Jordan's nephew Leo Jordan, a Peoria area resident, has collected considerable memorabilia about his uncle's career. Many of these items will be on exhibit at the Flanagan House during a future run (see below). Leo spent his career of 50 years with Burkland Distributing Co.

Since retiring in 1999, he accepted the challenge of the St. Patrick Society of Peoria to establish an Irish Sister City, thus the relationship of Peoria with Clonmel, County Tipperary, Ireland. He has worked with various

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Irish heritage organizations in Peoria, honoring his and Jim Jordan's heritage. Leo invited Jim to Peoria in 1984 for the St. Patrick's Day parade, at which Jim was to have been the grand marshal. Only the weather prevented that from happening. We have Leo to thank for preserving part of this American heritage and making it available to us.

During August in Peoria, there will be a number of events that will recognize the famous entertainers who hailed from Peoria:

On August 12, the Peoria City Council will read a proclamation declaring August 17-24 as Fibber McGee and Molly Week in the city of Peoria. The proclamation will be received by Gloria LaHood representing the exhibit at the Flanagan House, Jerry Driscoll representing Marian Jordan's side of the family, and Leo Jordan representing Jim Jordan's side.

An exhibit of Fibber McGee and Molly memorabilia will be available for viewing at the Flanagan House at 942 Glen Oak from August 16 through December 30, and will kick off with the traditional ice cream social at the house on August 17 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Admission to the social is \$4 and to the exhibit another \$4, or a combination of the two for \$7.

On August 20, Bill Adams will present the highlights of his interview with Jim Jordan at the Peoria Public Library at 7:00 p.m. Admission is free to the public.

On August 24 (2:00 p.m.), a re-creation of the *Fibber McGee and Molly* broadcasts will take place at the ICC Performing Arts Theater. The performance will include Lee Wenger and Denise Adams doing songs from the era. Starring as Fibber will be Mike Dentino, with Mary Ho England as Molly. They will be joined by many other Peoria favorites in presenting reminders of the "golden age of radio." The tickets are \$10.

On August 22-24, the St. Patrick's Society and the Peoria Park District will celebrate the Irish festival Erin Feis on the Peoria riverfront. There will be plenty of Irish music, dancing, and food. I am reminded that everyone is invited, because the world is made up of those who are Irish and "those who wish they were."

(Reprinted from August 2003 <u>Senior News & Views</u> - Peoria)

Our thanks to Verna B. Priller of Peoria for submitting the above article. By the way, if there are any writers out there who would like to contribute please feel free to contact the editor.



Everybody's Favorite Radio Family

The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet premiered on CBS Radio on the Nelson's 9th wedding anniversary but both Ozzie and Harriet were already familiar voices to the American public.

Ozzie lead one of the best loved dance bands of the 1930s and early 40s and Harriet had been brought up in the theater. Her parents were part of a traveling stock company and by age 5 Harriet (Mary Lou Snyder from Des Moines) was a veteran performer. She and Ozzie met in 1932 when he was looking for a girl vocalist for the band. After three years of singing clever duets, they were married in 1935. Together they were regulars on *Baker's Broadcast* and the *Ripley's Believe It Or Not* shows. Then in 1941 they signed with Red Skelton.

Besides their musical duties both did comedy on the *Skelton Show*. Ozzie would trade quips with Red and did bit parts in many skits. Harriet, a fine comedienne, created the role of Daisy Jane, Clem Kadiddlehopper's girl friend and the mother of "The Mean Widdle Kid."

When Red was drafted in 1944 the Nelson's faced the prospect of returning to the traveling musician's life on the road. With 8-year old David and 4-year old Ricky not a part of the scene, they knew that something more permanent had to be found.

Ozzie decided they were ready for a program of their own so he developed a pilot program that featured the couple as operators of a neighborhood drug store where a series of funny customers would drop by each week. The network and agency liked it and a Sunday night slot of CBS was reserved for the fall of 1944. Throughout the summer Ozzie became more and more uncomfortable about the idea. He was a band leader—not a druggist. People just wouldn't believe it! So, he decided that *The* Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet would present the Nelsons at home, living the good life, but always mixed up in something funny—usually the creation of Ozzie's bumbling. In those early radio shows some reference is made to the orchestra but generally his occupation is not mentioned.

Billy May, fresh from the Glenn Miller and Charlie Barnett orchestras, was appointed musical director of the Ozzie Nelson Orchestra and the popular King Sisters were hired to provide musical relief midway into each show. The International Silver Company sponsored the series from 1944 through most of 1949 and the Nelsons' address was cleverly indicated as 1847 Rogers Road to plug their popular sterling silverware.

Until March of 1949 two young actors were hired to play David and Rick because Ozzie didn't want his boys to face the pressure of big time radio at the ages of 4 and 8.

"The amusing transcribed adventures of America's favorite young couple" continued on network radio until 1954 when they moved on to an even greater fame on TV. Prior to this we had a good look at the family when Universal filmed "HERE COME THE NELSONS" in 1950. It was a funny movie and still gets some play on late night TV.



The Show's title fits Comedian Milton Berle's Personality— As well as the Program He Emcees



That radio has its own way of making the punishment fit the crime is fully proved by *Let Yourself Go*, that zany, exhibitionistic program which couldn't fit comedian-emcee Milton Berle more perfectly if it were tailored for him. Designed to release the inhibitions and satisfy the secret ambitions of otherwise dignified guest stars, the show has as its pace-setter an ebullient entertainer who never had an inhibition in his life, had only one vociferously expressed ambition from infancy—to make people laugh.

The handwriting on the Berle looking-glass was visible from the moment baby Milton was able to climb on a chair and leer at his own reflection, seeing how far he could distort his normally pleasant features. "Get that kid away from the mirror," pleaded an uncle, "or he'll be a silly fool when he grows up." But nothing daunted mamma Berle-a store detective who knew a born scene-stealer when she saw one-proceeded to devote the rest of her life, as well as her offspring's to developing Milton's talents. First public appearance was his informal parade through the Bronx, dressed as Charlie Chaplin, with the neighborhood boys one Halloweenfollowed by a trip to Mount Vernon, New York, where the youthful impersonator won a real theatre contest. Outlay for this initial venture was \$2.50 in train fares. Reward was an alleged silver cup which couldn't have been pawned in any respectable shop for more than a dollar.

But Milton was launched, champagne or no champagne, soon had more professional roles in the old silent movies than almost any other child actor of the day. He's been in the public eye ever since. At 36 he's achieved top billing in nearly every branch of show business—vaudeville, comedy-drama, night clubs, revues, movies, radio. Typical was his success in the recent "Ziegfeld Follies," which ran 82 weeks in New York (some three times as long as any original editions produced by the late, great Ziegfeld himself) because of Berle's own pull as an audience spell-binder.

Milton's justifiably proud of the fact that he's sold bonds and entertained the boys in both World Wars. Highlights of his earlier patrioootic efforts was when he started an act with Irving Berlin, at the latter's request. The year was 1918, the place was the old Mount Morris theatre in uptown Manhattan. The composer was singing his then-new hit, "Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning." Suddenly, at a given signal, the spotlight switched from stage to theatre box where young Milton —decked out in a khaki Boy Scout uniform—stood at salute and warbled the second chorus.

Today, he takes active part in every War Loan drive, has made almost a half-thousand appearances before servicemen. Not only does he take *Let Yourself Go* to camp whenever possible, but he entertains on his own at nearby hospitals and bases every Monday night. In addition to his performances, he writes songs and produces shows. His songs, most recent of which is "Your Not Foolin' Anyone But Yourself," are often hits. His shows are usually flops, though he has the highest of hopes for "Spring In Brazil," a forthcoming \$200,000 musical in which he himself will star.

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Milton's Program enables Sophie Tucker to fulfill a 25-year-long yen to spank a certain brash boy —who grew up to be our hero himself!



More punishment comes his way, as Conover Cover Girls threaten to let themselves go by slapping the sheepish face of "Big Wolf" Berle.

It's no wonder that—with so many chestnuts on the fire—Berle hops around like a man who has just burnt his fingers. It's no wonder that—handsome and highly successful—he's had more than his share of criticism. A broad-shouldered, blue-eyed six-footer, Berle is probably the best-looking clown in the business, has only let himself go around the waistline. But what he's gained in the torso is offset by what he's lost in the face. Recently, he had his nose "bobbed," makes many a crack about his neo-classic features.

Ill-wishers claim that he's an exuberant extrovert who must have the center of the floor, even in private life, will go to any extreme to get it. Sour grapes have long accused him of plagiarizing other people's gags, reluctantly admit he can do more with any material than most comics. In fact, his technique and timing are so nearly perfect that none other than veteran jokester Harry Hersfield has called him "the young comedian I would most like to be."

That's praise from the experts. Uncle may have been right in his prophecy, but—with "silly foolery" paying off at top prices—it looks as though mother really knew best all along!

(March 1945)



Shirley Temple turns the tables on author-lecturer Dale Carnegie by showing him how to win friends and influence people like Milton.

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God bless America

Enough U.S. bashing, says Michael Coren -- for all of its faults, our great southern neighbour still deserves our heartfelt gratitude and support.

By MICHAEL COREN

Shortly after the mass murder of September 11, 2001, I wrote a column about the United States. I said then that I'd never been a particular fan of many of the foreign and domestic policies of the U.S. and I have no reason to change my mind now.

But I have now written an updated version of that column because, frankly, I am sick of the smugness, the hypocrisy and the sheer hatred evinced by so many people-towards the United States.

I've had enough of certain risible Canadians inflating themselves by claiming superiority over their southern neighbours.

I'm tired of the America-bashing from mediocrities the world over, and the blaming of every conceivable problem on Washington.

The last straw was, in itself, not particularly significant. It was when cyclist Lance Armstrong was spat at during the Tour de France. Spat at because he is an American.

Politics didn't matter

We do not know his politics, but his girlfriend, Sheryl Crow, is an opponent of George Bush. That didn't matter. The man was American and thus worthy of disdain.

So, almost three years later, I say it again: God bless America.

For leaving half a million men on the battlefields of Africa, Asia and Europe during the Second World War, a conflict the United States could easily have sat out. For effectively forcing Japan to declare war and thus joining the alliance of light against the gang of darkness. God bless America.

For that farm boy from Nebraska who had never even heard of Normandy or Sicily, who wanted so much to walk back from the hill but continued on, the bullets flying over and around him. For his not turning back. For his determination to do his duty and for his dedication to freedom. God bless America. For being prepared to rip the country apart in a bloody spasm of civil war because, however delayed and reluctant in some quarters, the leaders and people knew that slavery was wrong. For seeing the future dawn when others could only see the enveloping night. God Bless America.

For Lincoln and Roosevelt, Eisenhower and Truman, Kennedy and Franklin, Jefferson and Adams. For Mark Twain and John Steinbeck, Henry James and Scott Fitzgerald, Melville and Whitman. God bless America.

For the legion of Nobel Prizes won with grace, for the medical breakthroughs celebrated with decorum, for the sporting records, the intellectual triumphs, the moral victories, the glory. For embracing "yes" rather than hiding behind "no." God bless America.

For the vibrant pastures and forests, for the mountains and valleys that startle, for the cities and the towns, the highways and back roads. God bless America.

For jazz and pluralism, baseball and religious tolerance, burgers and equality. For inventing and pursuing an ideal that, though not always achieved, is still glorious in the making and pristine in the chasing. God bless America.

For the billions in foreign aid, greater per capita than any other country in the world. For the food, clean water, medicine, machinery given to every continent on Earth. For the Marshall Plan and Marshall Dillon, for Tom Sawyer and Tom Hanks, for New York and for the New Deal. God bless America.

Melting pot

For inviting Irish, Jew, Italian, Pole, German, Hispanic, black, Asian, man and woman, all and every into the highest levels of government. For being the first nation in the world to treat the outsider as a guest rather than a problem. For being a melting pot rather than a melting society. God bless America.

For allowing God and prayer and faith to enter public life and for not running scared of gratitude to the Almighty for all that He has given us. For not lauding the religion of secularism whilst lambasting the religions of the church and synagogue. God bless America.

For being right more often than being wrong. For being the nation that still leads the way in so many ways, still lights the path on so many days. For being you. For being. God bless America.

Michael Coren is a columnist for The Toronto Sun

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Did You Know That . . . ??

•Radio's Brace Beemer, who played the Lone Ranger, also played Sergeant Preston on *Challenge of The Yukon*. And that John Todd who played Tonto was the inspector. We meet again Kemo Sabe!

•Tonto's horses were named White-Feller, Paint and Scout. Whoa Horsey!

•One of the first radio shows to be recorded on tape was Dimension X (Later known as X-Minus One) The recording techniques were so primitive in the early days that one program in the series "Mars is Heaven," had to be re-recorded three times. An engineer at NBC, while in the process of editing the program, erased the tape three times: The performers were all paid their original fee for each re-recording session. Whoops: Sorry about that!

•The late movie actor John Hodiak ("A Bell for Adano") played *Lil Abner* in the radio series of the same name. The show originated in Chicago in 1939 over NBC. Watch out Daisy Mae!

•On the *Lum and Abner* program, the story was centered around the Jot'em Down. Store in Pine Ridge, Arkansas. Pine Ridge was a make-believe town. In 1936 the real town of Waters, Arkansas changed its name to Pine Ridge in honor of *Lum and Abner*.

•Busy Performers: On *Lux Radio Theatre*, Don Ameche appeared more than any other actor, playing leads in eighteen different productions. Fred MacMurray was next with seventeen appearances. Barbara Stanwyck starred in more shows than any other actress—fifteen. Loretta Young and Claudette Colbert tied for second with fourteen each.

•Rumors were flying: One story that has been told the most in relation to the popular children's program

Uncle Don never really happened. Supposedly Uncle Don signed off a broadcast one night, and then, thinking he was off the air, said, "I guess that'll hold the little bastards." It was reported that this went out over the air. It's not true: A newspaper columnist in Baltimore, where the program was not heard, made up the story to fill space on a dull news day. The story got out of hand and mushroomed! Oh the power of the press: (All information used in **"Did You Know That . . . ??"** has been compiled from Frank Buxton and Bill Owens' book, <u>The Big Broadcast</u>. Thanks fellows!)

LATEST ADDITIONS TO THE CASSETTE LIBRARY

- 3427 Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar "The Blackmail Matter"5/5/53
 - Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar "The Blackmail Matter" (Rehearsal) 5/5/53
- 3428 Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar "The Costain Matter" 6/2/53

Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar "The Jones Matter" 6/30/53

- 3429 Suspense "Finishing School" 12/30/43 Suspense "One Way Ride To Nowhere" 1/6/44
- 3430 The Shadow "Death Shows The Way" 12/3/39 The Shadow "The Flight Of The Vulture" 12/10/39
- 3431 Great Gildersleeve "Water Commissioner Is Fired" 9/10/44
- Great Gildersleeve "McGee's Invention" 9/17/44 3432 Jack Benny Program "Who Killed Mr. X?" 6/9/33
- Jack Benny Program "Mary's Birthday" 6/23/33 3433 Romance "Elizabeth Of Austria" 1/25/44
- Romance "Quiet Wedding" 6/27/50
- 3434 Eternal Light "Love: Human Devine #3" 6/11/61 Eternal Light "Love: Human Devine #4" 6/18/61
- 3435 Once Upon A Midnight "Malice Aforethought" 5/11/45
 - Safari "Bull Elephant"
- 3436 Suspense "The Palmer Method" 4/20/44 Suspense "Death Went Along For The Ride" 4/27/44



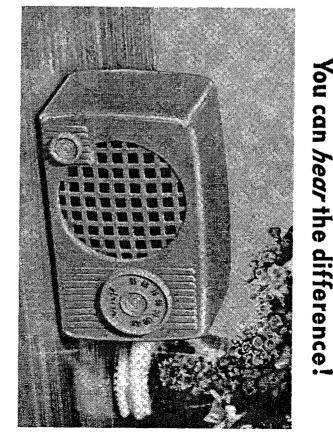
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The Old Time Radio Club

49 Regal Street Depew, NY 14043



FIRST CLASS MAIL



Velvet Voice Radio

ARVIN MODEL 440-T—The perfect personal set—4 tube AC/DC superhet, in a compact, smartly styled shatterproof cabinet. In your choice of six colors—Fox Hunt Red, Burgundy, Banana Yellow, Willow Green, Sand Bronze, Ivory. Underwriters' listed.

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