



# A LITTLE OFF THE NOSE, PLEASE

Old ski-nose Bob Hope better watch out, or the crooning barber—aka Frank Sinatra—will snip his schnozz. The candid studio shot was snapped in 1944.

#### **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. Aloysius 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

Old Time Radio Club 56 Christen Ct. Lancaster, NY 14086 **E-Mail Address:** <u>otrclub@localnet.com</u>



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### Send all articles, letters, exchange newsletters, etc. to: The Illustrated Press

c/o Ken Krug, Editor (716) 684-5290 49 Regal Street Depew, New York 14043 E-Mail address: <u>AnteakEar@aol.com</u>

Web Page Address: members.localnet.com/~robmcd

#### **Club Officers and Librarians**

#### President

Jerry Collins (716) 683-6199 56 Christen Ct. Lancaster, NY 14086 collinsjf@yahoo.com

Vice President & Canadian Branch

Richard Simpson (905) 892-4688 960 16 Road R.R. 3 Fenwick, Ontario Canada, LOS 1C0

#### Treasurer, Videos & Records

Dominic Parisi (716) 884-2004 58 Ardmore Pl. Buffalo, NY 14213

#### Membership Renewals, Change of Address

Peter Bellanca (716) 773-2485 1620 Ferry Road Grand Island, NY 14072 pmb1620@worldnet.att.net

#### Membership Inquires and OTR

Network Related Items Richard Olday (716) 684-1604 171 Parwood Trail Depew, NY 14043-1071 raolday@yahoo.com

#### **Libraries**

#### **Cassettes and Reference Libraries**

Frank Bork (716) 835-8362 209 Cleveland Drive Cheektowaga, NY 14215 febork@localnet.com

#### Video and Record Libraries

Dominic Parisi (716) 884-2004 38 Ardmore Pl. Buffalo, NY 14213

**Library Rates:** Audio cassettes are \$1.95 each and are recorded on a <u>club supplied cassette</u> which is <u>retained</u> by the member; video cassettes are \$1.85 per month; records are \$.85 per month. Rates include postage and handling and are payable in U.S. funds.

### 29th Annual Friends of Old Time Radio Convention

#### by Dick Olday

On Wednesday, Oct. 20, Arlene and I drove to Newark, New Jersey to attend the OTR Convention. We checked into the hotel around 3 PM. (See hotel comments at the end of this article.)

We attended the wine and cheese party in the evening and met several friends from past conventions as well as some new friends, some of which have now joined our club. This convention is packed with things to do from morning to evening. Early Thursday AM, I made my way down to the dealer rooms to check out the various goodies for sale. Unfortunately, several dealers from past conventions were missing but Leo Gawroniak, P.O. Box 248, Glen Gardner, NJ 08826 was there and helped our club with some more tape donations. Leo has a good selection of shows available and is a very dependable dealer. If you order from him, tell him the OTR club sent you.

At 12:15, the presentations started with a panel on OTR publications with Derek Tague moderating a panel consisting of Jack French, Charlie Summers and Yours Truly. This was followed by a presentation on Digital OTR, Hal Stone with Joyce Van Patten, Deems Taylor with James Pegolotti and Tom Powers and friends on Superman.

After dinner, a re-creation of You Are There was presented and "Those Were The Days Radio Players" presented Duffy's Tavern. Friday presentations started at 9 AM with The "Greatest Radio Actor," followed by an excellent tribute to Jackson Beck. There was a great video of Jackson at work that lasted a short 29 minutes. This was followed by What's My Name, Jack Benny in cartoons, Bob and Ray starring Hal Stone and Bob Hastings, Comedy Panel, One on One with Arthur Anderson and the Gotham Radio Players presentation of The Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto.

After dinner, a re-creation of *Great Scenes From Great Plays*, Ted and Ruth Reinhart presented a nostaglia show, *The Bickersons* with Rosemary Rice and Bob Hastings and the evening concluded with a re-creation of *My Favorite Husband* starring Rosmary Rice and Paul Peterson. Saturday morning started with *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* followed by Husband and Wife Detective Teams presented by Jack French. Because the convention was filled with many presentations, we missed a few in order to go back to the dealer rooms. However, we did go back to see the Dave Warren Players present *Baby Snooks* (one of my very favorite shows as a child) and a Children's Shows panel consisting of Soupy Sales (unfortunately Soupy is in ill health, but he was able to "pie" the moderator), Hal Stone, Bob Hastings, Arthur Anderson and Jack Bivans who played Chuck Ramsey on *Captain Midnight* and Clipper King on *Sky King*. Jack recalled doing an Ovaltine commercial on *Little Orphan Annie* when he was 13. He was anxiously awaiting the cast to see "Annie" when this "20 year old bag" arrived to play the part.

We also caught the re-creation of *Sherlock Holmes* in "The Lost Special" before dinner. After dinner, The *Green Hornet* was re-created, Ted and Ruth Reinhart did a Western Show, *The Bickersons* returned and a recreation of "A Crime Letter From Dan Dodge" which sounded like a *Sam Spade* show.

After Sunday morning breakfast, an informal panel of stars talked with the audience until 11 AM. I had the chance to talk with some of the stars in attendence at various times during the convention. Elena Verdugo had fond memories of Marvin Kaplan, Paul Peterson remembered his trip to Buffalo. He was at the Turntable Record Store during the '60s when I was working there. Jimmy Lydon who played Henry Aldrich in several movies recalled the days with NO fondness as he was pushed into the business as his father had retired early due to work getting in the way of his drinking. He has copies of his Henry movies to show his children their grandmother as he married his movie mother's daughter. His movie mother passed away in 1959. I also talked briefly with Hal Stone and Bob Hastings before they left.

Jay did a great job putting this convention together and next year will be the big 30th Convention. It should really be something special although it will be tough to beat this year's. The only "bad" parts of this convention had to do with the hotel. When we checked in, we were given a room already occupied, when I went back to the lobby, they gave me another room. You guessed it, that room was also occupied. I can't believe that a Holiday Inn doesn't know which rooms are available! In addition, somebody had an MP3 player stolen from their room and workmen repairing the outside of the building had sprayed material on my van which they later tried in vain to clean off. I still have not been able to remove this spray.





# Dennis Day

by TOM CHERRE

Most of us OTR fans enjoy listening to the Jack Benny Show. You might say it had a dream cast and a super team of writers. One of the show's characters who I feel never got the credit he truly deserved, and may have been overlooked, was Dennis Day. Born in the Bronx as Patrick Eugene McNulty on May 21st 1917, Day seemed to have been placed on the back burner in the cast. Dennis was the vocalist who replaced Kenny Baker who joined the *Fred Allen Show*. Dennis, however enjoyed a very formidable run as tenor and comedian and remained with the Benny Show until its final show on TV.

As a youngster Dennis enjoyed performing in front of his friends and family at parties and holidays. He could sing and dance, play the accordion, and his tenor voice was a natural for the Bronx Lake Choral Group. He also became a proud member of the choir at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. After graduating from Manhattan College Dennis had his sights set on becoming a lawyer and attending Fordham Law School. Before Fordham he latched on to a part time job at WNYC radio. This ultimately led to working with the CBS netNetwork and working with the Ray Bloch Orchestra. His starting salary was \$21.00 a week. This led him to forego his plans for law school. This set the spark for a music career in radio.

Having heard Jack Benny was looking for a singer to replace Baker, Dennis sent a recording to Mary Livingstone in hopes Benny might hear it. Day was invited to audition for the spot. When Jack called out his name Dennis jumped up and said "Yes please." Benny cracked up and said "that's it, a funny character, and if he could sing that'll be the clincher." Benny gave the new character Dennis Day a two week try-out, first appearing on October 8th 1939 to sing "I'm Afraid The Masquerade Is Over." The actual truth is Dennis may never have had a chance if Mary Livingstone had not put Day's application on the top of the pile. Mary had known Dennis from before and thought he was a nice sweet kid. His two week trial turned into twenty years on the radio.



Dennis Day's real mother, Mary McNulty Is introduced to his radio mother Verna Felton

Dennis, much like Benny, would take many laughs by making himself look like a patsy. He appeared as a young stupid kid. His radio career started as a 22-year old and as he was in his 40s he was still portrayed as the same dumb kid. In the beginning multi-talented Verna Felton was hired to play the stereotyped old battle-axe abusive mother of Day. She would also have her regular spats with Jack. It should be

noted that Day could probably have been a successful singer without having been on the Benny Show.

Dennis eventually enjoyed his own show for a few years called A Day In The Life of Dennis Day. Eugene Patrick McNulty as Dennis Day was a sweet Irish kid with a head full of air. He would drive Jack crazy, much like a young crazy son. Dennis was gifted with an uncanny timing for feed and punch lines. Not many know that Dennis was also a great mimic. Day was the last of the regular characters to be added to the cast. On every show Dennis sang a song, mostly ballads. One of his

favorites was "Danny Boy." Around St. Patrick's Day he'd usually sing an Irish ditty. One of his most popular songs was "Peg O' My Heart." Dennis Day appeared in eight movies. On June 22nd, 1988 the lights dimmed a wee bit in Doublin and also in this country. Eugene Patrick McNulty, or as we knew him, Dennis Day passed away. He was 71 years young.



#### **DICK POWELL**

The Emcee of The "Bandwagon" knows what He's been singing about

When Dick Powell took over the reins of the Fitch Bandwagon last fall, no one could have had a better right to occupy that driver's seat. As a singing emcee of the ether, the Arkansas troubadour has а record stretching back 11 years to Hollywood Hotel. In fact, it was as singing emcee of Pittsburgh's Stanley Theatre that Dick was first discovered for both motion pictures and networks, in 1933.



Even more than this, Richard Ewing Powell is well equipped to be ringmaster for an ever-changing cavalcade of popular dance orchestras, by virtue of his own experience with bands. He was once a bandleader himself, played many an instrument, still enjoys competing with his guest conductors on their chosen musical weapons. Dick started out modestly, while still a freshman at Little Rock College, by mastering the saxophone, cornet and clarinet.

Time was when the blue-eyed, auburn-haired youngster even tackled the banjo. Stranded in Anderson, Indiana, after his first professional band tours, Dick was down to his last forty cents, living precariously on a single hamburger a day. It was manna from heaven when he got a wire from Charley Davis offering a job with his band—if he could play the banjo. Fortified by a \$50 advance, Dick spent a couple of weeks practicing on a second-hand instrument, hitch-hiked to Indianapolis, and learned to eat again.

Band-storming was an uncertain business in the midtwenties, and there were many moments when the homesick kid regretted he had ever left his \$90-a-month job with the telephone company—not to mention the \$60 he got for singing with a Little Rock church choir. Maybe he should have stuck to his original ambition to become leader of that choir and vice-president of the phone company. (He probably could have achieved both—one brother is now vice-president of the Illinois Central Railroad, another is an executive of the International Harvester Company in South America.)

Dick has always had a good head for figures, handles money wisely now that he has it, even made good pay while in his teens—until bitten by the band-bug. He was an ace soda-jerk, a chain-store grocery manager at 18, did all right with his college orchestra, and was a whiz at collecting nickels from the coin-boxes for the phone company.

Little Rock had looked like the golden land of opportunity, when the Powell family moved there from Mountain View, the tiny Arkansas town where Dick was born. The boy had lived nine miles, from even the nearest railroad track, traveled long distances to school—perched behind an older brother on muleback—exclaimed in alarm when he first saw city streetcars "But, daddy, where are the hoses?"

When show business beckoned, the mathematics-minded Powell brain turned thumbs down. As a child, he bad first learned the commercial potentialities of his voice when a veteran railroad engineer gave him a nickel for rendering "Casey Jones." Music still seemed like a comparatively unprofitable sideline to him, when a visiting bandleader offered him a singing-playing job with low pay and lots of travel. But, like a sober business man, he talked it over with his boss at the phone company, was startled when that probably stagestruck gentleman advised him to take a chance.

That early gamble has now been paying handsome dividends for years. Once established, Dick was long the Sinatra of the screen—or, to put it more accuiately in point of time, Hollywood's answer to Rudy Vallee's swooning success in radio. In his filmusical heyday, Dick's fan mail reached a peak never since topped at



Dick has good reason these days for high-kicking hilarity

that studio. But he hated those kiss-and-sing roles, broke away to freelance, hoping for straight acting roles. Success in light comedy has led to out-and-out drama, like the recent "Farewell, My Lovely," in which the husky six-footer played a tough guy who got beaten up plenty—without ever once breaking into song.

As a result, about the only place one can be sure of hearing Powell's singing voice is on *Bandwagon*. Dick still gets a kick out of that (as proved by the candid camera) Quiet-voiced and easy-going, he may be the type that plays a shrewd game of bridge, likes to tinker with carpentry and loves sailing a boat more than eating his favorite ham and eggs, but he nevertheless has an impish streak that enjoys a good joke—of the practical kind.

And the serious side of him revels in his new role as a radio reporter for the 5-minute "war score" at the program's close. One of his great treasures today is the opening-night telegram he got from commentator H. V. Kaltenborn, "Welcome to the first singing newscaster. You were excellent!" (Reprint from March 1945)

#### **RADIO HUMOR**

Doc Gamble: As your physician my advice to you is to take up globe-trotting.

Fibber McGee: Globe-trotting?

Doc Gamble: Yes. Do a little trotting and get rid of that globe.



### **Groucho Marx** by Tom Cherre

Born Julius, Groucho hated the name. He never felt comfortable with Julius or Julie. In 1914, on the road during a break between vaudeville shows, the four Marx Brothers were performing at a theater in Galisburg Illinois. The brothers set up a card game with Art Fisher, who was a traveling monologist. At that time in vaudeville the art of nicknames seemed to be saturated with the likes of Kiddo, Boyo, Jocko, and anything else that ended up with an O. Thus Art Fisher gave the Marxes their names of Groucho, Chico, Harpo, and Gummo. Zeppo would come later on.

Groucho Marx, as we all know had such a great career throughout his lifetime. He was big in vaudeville, on Broadway, in movies, radio, and TV. His personal life on the other hand left much to be desired. He was plagued with devastating obstacles including failed marriages, a falling out with his children and also his brother Zeppo.

Groucho Marx also had the untimely luck of passing away just three days after Elvis Presley. <u>Time Magazine</u> had the unmitigated gall to post 31 lines in its milestone section under obituaries, while the King had over three and a half pages.

Groucho was absolutely the best at what he did. He was the king of ad-libs and the prince of wise cracks. He needed no scripts at all. On the other hand, the King of Rock & Roll was hardly a conversationalist. Having seen Elvis perform at his last live concert in Buffalo's Memorial Auditorium, I think Elvis may have managed

to utter a few phrases that made sense. Groucho recalls his talent of mastering ad-libs was perfected during his vaudeville days. He'd say "One night you're in the Bible Belt, the next you're in Chicago, Boston, or New York. Occasionally the skits weren't drawing laughs. The boobirds would chime in and then came the rotten tomatoes. That's when the fun started, and we had to adapt to our audience." Along with his brothers, they possessed a unique blend of comedy. This was apparent when watching their many hit movies of the 1930s. They were known as zany. Other descriptions of their humor could be classified as crazy, sarcastic, witty, funny, and talented.

After 30 years experience in all the entertainment media the 1940s approached, and their movies seem to go stale. The new comedy team of Abbott and Costello was wowing them at the box office and they were number one. Groucho decided to give radio a try. He tried with four different shows and each one was cancelled shortly after. He became even more despondent when he interviewed as the successor host of the \$64.00 question quiz show, only to be passed over for that one.



"Groucho sent me"

Fearful of losing his status, Groucho took every radio guest spot that he could. He did a one time spot on the Walgreen Comedy Show with Bob Hope. Groucho was a smash hit throwing out the script matching barbs with Bob Hope through out the show. As luck would have it producer John Gudel happened to be listening and knew Groucho Marx would be perfect for the new audience participation quiz show that he was working on. The show he had in mind was You Bet Your Life. It debuted on ABC with Groucho as host. George Fenneman recipient of a barrage of vocal insults hurled at him each week was the announcer. The show was a huge hit that made Groucho a lot of money, and sold a lot of cars for DeSoto/Plymouth dealers. His catch phrase for selling cars was "Tell 'em Groucho sent you." The show brought new popularity back to Marx that he hadn't enjoyed in some years.

Some of Groucho's famous sayings: When asked how you would like to be remembered, "Alive" he replied "If not that way then dead."

In 1945 Groucho was named best quiz man of the year. The year before Thomas Dewey lost in his bid for President. Marx noted "It just goes to show you that a man with a moustache can win." I'll end with "I never forget a face, but in this case I will."

### K. C. JAMBOREE

Nightclub revelries liven the airwaves for daylight dialers.

Ever hear of a nightclub show before lunch? Well, that's what *KC Jamboree* aims to be. That mythical Western town, KCville, is inhabited by folks who like to hit the, hay with the chickens—so they have to do all their dissipating in the daylight hours, if ever.

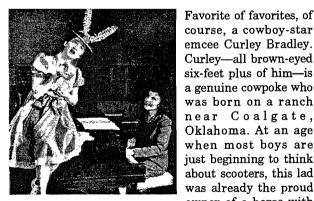
KCville House itself (the town's hotel and showplace) comes straight our of "never-never land." Its got a staff of—count 'em folks—just one, Curley Bradley. Curley's supposed to be the chief bell boy (also doubling as star vocalist), but actually he runs the entire enterprise. On occasion, he has assistance in gumming up the works, from the co-owners of the place, *Gideon Sprigg* and *Sebastian Crow* (played by Clarence Hartzell and Cliff Soubier).

Though KCville House may be a bit short on service to guests, it's long on entertainment value—and that's where the night club angle comes in. Listeners have a choice of many favorites—marimbist Jose Bethancourt, singing "bus driver" Barbara Marshall, pianist June Lyon, organist Romelle Fay, and the colorful vocal-



Locale of the plot is KC-Ville's Hostelry, with Bell-hop Curley Bradley and proprietors Sprigg and Crow in charge.

instrumentalists, the Prairie Ramblers. For those who prefer comedy, there's Elmira Roessler, a wilted coquette of uncertain years but a very certain aim in mind-matrimony. Elmira's been on the trail of romance for many a long moon, and her approach has all the subtlety of an anti-tank gun. She's musical, too, though critics have been heard to comment that the best thing about Elmira's renditions is her accompanist.



emcee Curley Bradley. Curley-all brown-eyed six-feet plus of him—is a genuine cowpoke who was born on a ranch near Coalgate, Oklahoma. At an age when most boys are just beginning to think about scooters, this lad was already the proud owner of a horse with all the trimmings -handmade boots, sil-

Elmira Roessler's warbling startles even pianist June Lyon

ver belt buckle, spurs and chaps. By the time be was seven, an older brother had tried him out on an unbroken pony; at 15, he'd soloed on a bronc.

lt's no wonder, then, that he's acknowledged past master of the Western ballad and guitar-strumming technique. Oldtimers may remember Curley in the movies, where he acted as stunt man and singing double for John Gilbert. It was in Hollywood, too, that he met two other cowboy extras and formed the Ranch Boys Trio, a group that appeared in numerous Western pictures before Bradley became a star. Curley's never become a city slicker, though-he still lounges around in a cowboy

belt, is shy with strangers, speaks soft and slow. In odd moments, he swims, spins ropes, rides, boxes and wrestles-and when he's just too tired settles down with a Zane Grey novel. Possum and sweet potatoes make his idea of a good meal, and sagebrush is his favorite perfume.

Only complaint Curley has about life is that nothing ever happens to him, but friends remember a few incidents they'd call adventure. The modest Westerner once roped two pals from a quicksand trap, has rescued three men from drowning and had his horse fall on him when he was trying to outride a stampede. Otherwise, he's had a dull career.

Other characters on the show have no such startling tales to tell, have spent most of their years behind the footlights. Clarence Hartzell (Gideon Sprigg) is the same fellow who made famous the role of Uncle Fletcher in Vic and Sade, started his acting career on a bet. A friend was so sure Hartzell couldn't land a stock company part that he bet a new hat on it. Clarence got that hat-and a lifelong profession in the bargain. Cliff Soubier (Sebastian Crow), on the ocher hand, is a born trouper, was cradled by his actor-parents in the traditional trunk. Cliff's debut was made at four, singing "My Sweetheart's The Man In The Moon" with his mother supporting him from behind the curtains by holding on to his dress. Next came an act as "Little Eva" in which he was nightly hauled up to "heaven" via rope and pulley. Cliff's subsequent career has covered everything from showboats to Broadway, with such varied assignments as boy soprano, tightrope walker and comedian. Radio came into the picture by accident, when the sandy-haired actor was pushed into service while waiting for his wife in a Chicago studio. And listeners have never given him a chance to leave the airwaves.

(Reprint from March 1945)



The Prairie Ramblers are much more tuneful, as Jack Taylor, Chick Hurt, Alan Crockett and Smokey Lohman demonstrate

### Introducing Young People to Old-Time Radio



By CLINT N. EVANS (Reprinted by Permission)

Many old-time radio enthusiasts would like to introduce their favorite hobby to young people. Well, my father successfully hooked my brother and me when we were 12 and 14, and I'd like to tell you how he did it. It is possible for the MTV Generation to enjoy vintage radio shows!

Really, I think there are only three main points to remember.

First, it's important to introduce old-time radio gradually to young people and lower their expectations. Let me explain. When I say lower their expectations, don't just go up to them and shout, "These shows are the greatest thing since the invention of video games! You have to listen!" Instead, invite them to listen to a show when they're not busy doing something else.

That is the approach my father used to introduce these great old programs to my brother and me. In fact, he said, "How about listening to Challenge of the Yukon as you're going to sleep?" He didn't pressure us, thankfully, or tell us how great it was going to be. He let us pick the episode and climb into bed. Would you like to guess which show is still one of our favorites?

Second, high-quality sound is a must. Young people today are accustomed to digital clarity. If they have to struggle to hear a show, they become easily frustrated and will turn it off. My father purchased some compressed MP3 CDs that held a hundred shows and, frankly, we were not able to listen to the first two minutes of the program. Companies such as First Generation Radio Archives, however, demonstrate just how clean and crisp the sound can be.

The point is, don't expect children to listen to shows that they have to struggle to hear. This also means that the CD player must be of acceptable quality. It doesn't matter how good the recording is, if the player is junk, then the listener will be frustrated. My brother and I used to own a cheap CD player that skipped and failed to read some perfectly good discs.

Finally, young people like to have a choice in what they hear. My father enjoys Vic and Sade, and my mother

likes Our Miss Brooks, but my brother and I would rather hear Jack Armstrong. Luckily, our parents do not force us to listen to their choices. There's plenty of room in old-time radio for everyone to pick their favorites. That's part of the fun!

My brother and I still listen to old-time radio shows. Our favorite titles are Challenge of the Yukon, Jack Armstrong, Rocky Jordan, Lum and Abner, and Red Skeleton. The manner in which our father introduced vintage radio to us allowed us to appreciate these programs on their own merits. Instead of forcing us to listen, he invited us to listen. There's a big difference. If older folks use this approach, the number of younger folks who develop an interest may surprise them.

#### LATEST ADDITIONS TO THE CASSETTE LIBRARY

- 3437 Suspense "The Thirteenth Sound" 2/13/47 Suspense "Always Room At The Top" 2/20/47
- 3438 Suspense "A Shipment Of Mute Fate" 4/3/60
- Suspense "Two Horse Parlay" 4/10/60 3439 Escape "The Invader" 3/29/53 Escape "A Sleeping Draught" 4/5/53
- 3440 Richard Diamond. Private Detective "Butcher Shop" 3/9/51 Richard Diamond, Private Detective "Monsieur
- Beauchand" 3/16/51 3441 Amos'n'Andy "Faith Is Those We Love" 4/8/51 Amos'n'Andy "Kingfish More Conciencious" 4/15/51
- 3442 Weird Circle "The Werewolf" 5/7/44 Weird Circle "The Old Nurse's Story" 5/14/44
- 3443 CBS Radio Workshop "A Writer At Work" 10/12/56 CBS Radio Workshop "The Legend Of Annie
  - Christmas" 10/19/56
- 3444 Life Of Riley "Big Football Bet" 11/12/44 Life Of Riley "Turkey Hunt" 11/19/44
  3445 Dimension X "Dr. Grimshaw's Sanatorium"
- 9/22/50
  - Dimension X "And The Moon Be Still As Bright" 9/29/50
- 3446 Red Skelton Show "The Little Christmas Tree" 12/19/51
  - Red Skelton Show "The Day After Christmas" 12/26/51
- 3447 Avenger "The Coins Of Death" 7/6/45 Avenger "The Mystery Of Dead Man's Rock" 7/13/45
- 3448 Avenger "Tunnel Of Disaster" 7/20/45 Avenger "The Crypt Of Thoth 7/27/45
  3449 Avenger "Melody Of Murder" 8/3/45
- Avenger "Fiery Death" 8/10/45
- 3450 Avenger "Ghost Murder" 8/17/45 Avenger "The Blue Pearls" 8/24/45

### The Old Time Radio Club

49 Regal Street Depew, NY 14043



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