

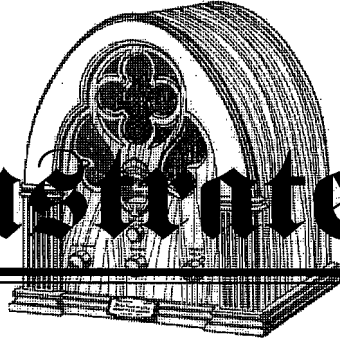
The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

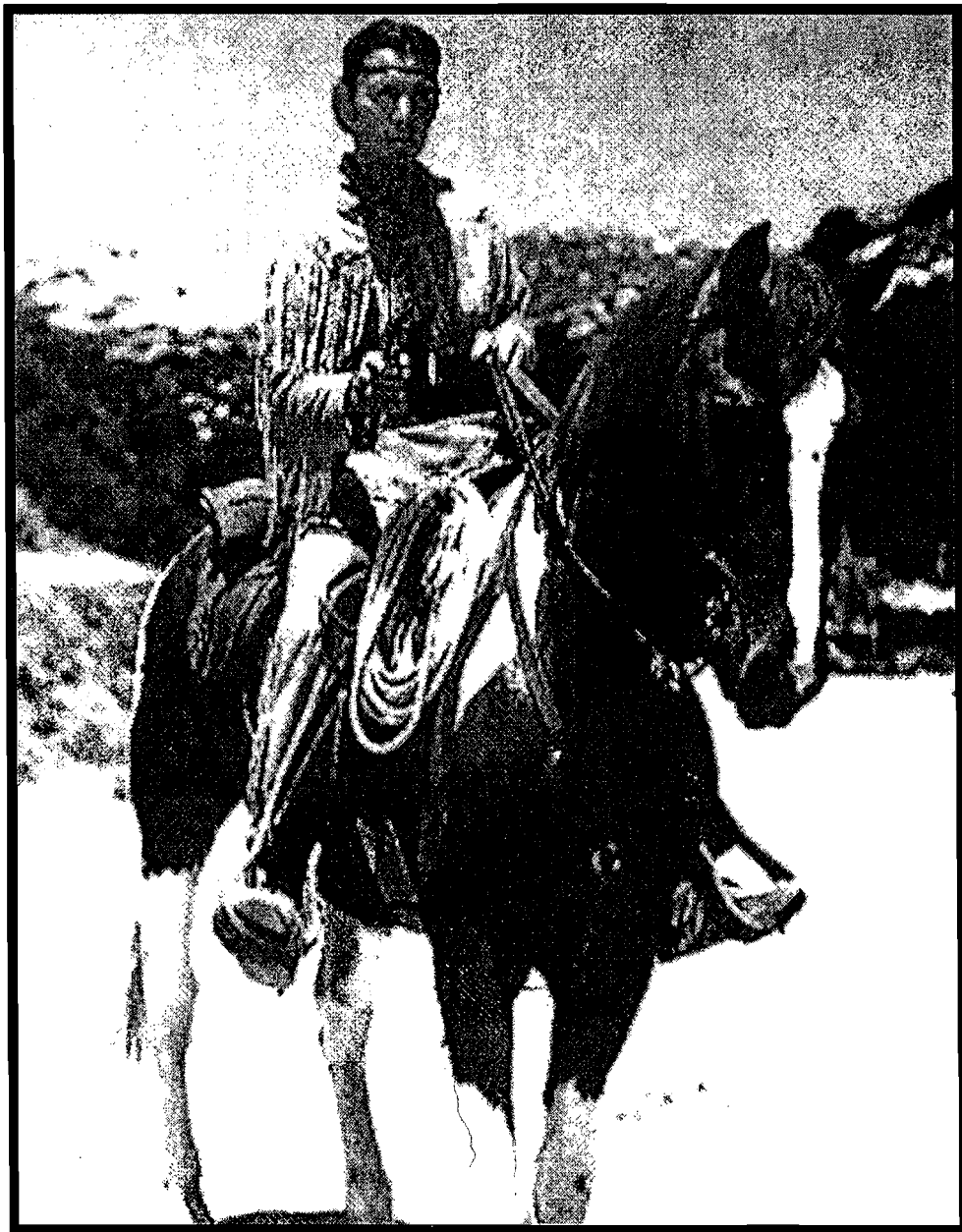
# The Illustrated Press

Number 350

May 2007



## “JUMBO-SIZED ISSUE”



— TONTO —

# The Illustrated Press

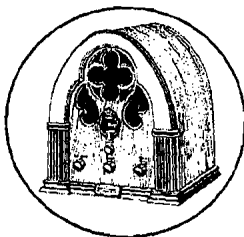
## Membership Information

Club Membership: \$18.00 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, \$18.00; 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 the month of August.

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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All Submissions are subject to approval prior to actual publication.

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

*The Illustrated Press* is the newsletter of the **Old Time Radio Club**, headquartered in Western New York State. It is published monthly except for the months of July and August. Contents except where noted are copyright © 2007 by the OTRC.

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

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### **Library Rates:**

Audio cassettes and CDs are \$1.95 each and are recorded on a **club supplied cassette or CD** which is **retained** by the member. Rates include postage and handling and are payable in U.S. funds.

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# T O N T O

by  
**TOM  
CHERRE**

As a kid I used to do my homework while listening to the *Lone Ranger* radio show. That's probably not the best way to do schoolwork, but I always enjoyed the stories and especially hearing what I called the Lone Ranger song. As a kid we couldn't imitate the Lone Ranger, but we had a lot of fun sounding like Tonto. He was truly the Lone Ranger's faithful friend. For that matter I'll go out on a limb and say nowhere in the pages of radio fiction can one find a greater champion of friendship than those two endured. This match must have been made in heaven.

Of course we all know the Lone Ranger was created by Buffalo's own Fran Stryker many years ago. In all the 21 years of transcribed shows there was never one cross word exchanged between the two. How many times did we hear Matt Dillon of *Gunsmoke* chew off Chester's head for one thing or another? Many times Molly McGee would get into Fibber's face for this or that, not to mention her nagging Fibber to clean out that hallway closet. Even Margo Lane and Lamont Cranston had their little spats from time to time. None of this would happen with our dynamic duo.

Going through a little research, Tonto was created by Stryker so the Lone Ranger would actually have someone to talk to. An interesting fact is that Tonto did not make his introduction on the show until the twelfth episode. The date was February 25, 1933, when 56 year old John Todd first played Tonto. Throughout the entire radio run of the show, which by the way was almost 3000 episodes, John Todd would be Tonto. In the first 11 episodes Todd had played the character of Sheriff Curry. Todd was an experienced Shakespearian actor of Irish descent born in England in 1877. Todd was part of the Jewell Repertory Company associated with station

WXYZ and did earlier shows in Detroit on the same station. On the show Tonto was presented as a chief's son of the Potawatomi nation. The choice to make Tonto a Potawatomi came from station owner George W. Trendle. Growing up in Michigan, it was the traditional territory of the tribe, much like the Seneca or Tuscarora tribes right here in Western New York. For the most part the Potawatomi tribe did not exist in the far west or southwestern part of the United States. They were forced in the areas of Kansas and Oklahoma. The popular "kemo sabe" phrase used on the show meaning "faithful friend" or some others may say "trusty scout" came about by way of co-creator James Jewell. According to Jewell, his father-in-law had a boy's camp by the name of Camp Ke-Moh-Sah-Bee in rural Michigan. Thus emerged "kemo sabe".

George W. Trendle not known for free spending, was what you might call a cheapskate. He was probably tighter with a buck than Jack Benny ever was. He felt he was paying John Todd too much for his Tonto role and used the premise that he was too old, and replaced him with a genuine American Indian in 1947. As the college educated Indian received the script he refused to go on the air with lines like "Me do" and "Him go", The next day Todd was back to work as Tonto.

The story of how the Tonto character was derived is a bit peculiar. The most common and traditional version and one we are most familiar with goes like this. Tonto saves the life of the sole surviving ranger from a party of six Texas Rangers who are tricked into an ambush by the notorious and ruthless Cavendish gang. The ranger's name is Reid, and no other first name is mentioned or used later. Tonto recognizes him as someone who saved his life as a boy. Tonto nurses the ranger back to life and becomes his faithful friend. The other version is presented in the December 7th, 1939 broadcast and goes this way. Tonto and the Lone Ranger are already established friends for many years and in this episode "Cactus Pete" a friend of the ranger tells how they became friends. Tonto has been injured in an explosion when two men dynamited a gold mine they were working. One of the men wanted to kill Tonto, but the Lone Ranger arrives in time to prevent that from happening. He is brought to good health, the other man is intending to make Tonto the fall guy after he murders his partner. The Lone Ranger foils both attempts and Tonto chooses to ride with the ranger as his companion. No reason is given other than gratitude to the Ranger. I go for the traditional version myself.

John Todd was a portly balding late middle age man when he assumed the role of Tonto, For publicity pictures he wore a wig. For public appearances Trendle would hire a real Indian. When the TV series came on

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Jay Silverheels was able to handle the role of Tonto very well. He would use the same Pidgin type dialect and say "That right kemo sabe" and "Him look pretty mean" along with the usual grunts heard on the radio. Eventually some Native Americans took offense and felt his role was degrading to all Indians. Tonto was otherwise cast as an intelligent character skilled in the ways of the west. He was an excellent tracker and skilled marksman. He was loyal to his friend and would lay down his life for him anytime. The two of them were able to tackle any problem presented to them in their half hour time frame. Along with Scout and Silver they were the perfect tandem, and perfect role models, and who wouldn't want a "kemo sabe" like Tonto.

**Trivia:** Tonto in Spanish actually means fool or idiot. In Potawatomi Tonto means "wild one". In the TV series John Hart played the starring role for one year in place of Clayton Moore. Hart spoke of Trendle saying "I never worked for a cheaper organization in all my life" this reiterates the stinginess of Trendle. John Todd also played the father of Brit Reid in the *Green Hornet* and also Inspector Conrad in *Sergeant Preston of The Yukon*.

## The Year 1942 in Review

by JERRY COLLINS

The year 1942 was the first full year that the United States was involved in World War II. Most decisions and significant events were affected by our involvement in the war. Some of those major events were:

American and Philippine forces surrendered at Bataan on April 9th; 36,000 troops were led on the infamous "Bataan Death March."

The Battle of Midway (June 3 - June 6) results in an American victory over Japan.

Major General Jimmy Doolittle led a daring bombing raid over Tokyo on April 18th.

The sale of War Bonds raised \$13 billion by the end of the year.

Gasoline rationing began in the United States.

The Manhattan Project began. It would eventually lead to the use of the Atomic Bomb in August of 1945.

The draft age was lowered to 18.

Kellogg Raisin Bran and instant coffee were

introduced. Nescafe and George Washington companies were responsible for marketing instant coffee.

Young men began wearing zoot suits.

Based on Executive Order 9066, 120,000 Japanese Americans were shipped to Relocation Centers throughout the Southwest.

On November 28, 1942 the United States suffered one of the greatest fire disasters in our history when 492 people died in a fire at the Coconut Grove Restaurant in Boston.

In 1942 President Roosevelt gave permission to continue playing Major League baseball. With some modification this policy was applied in all other sports. In appreciation for this decision baseball scheduled two All Star games, one with a service team.

*The following world sports champions were crowned:*

World Series winner - St. Louis Cardinals  
NFL Champion - Washington Redskins  
U.S. Golf Tournament - not held  
Indianapolis 500 Mile Race - not held  
Stanley Cup Winner - Toronto Maple Leafs  
NCAA Basketball Champion - Stanford  
College Football Champion - Ohio State  
Heisman Trophy Winner - Frank Sinkwich

*The following were the top songs of 1942*

Jersey Bounce  
White Christmas  
Blues in the Night  
Deep in the Heart of Texas  
I've Got a Gal in Kalamazoo  
Sleepy Lagoon  
Serenade in Blue  
Tangerine  
A String of Pearls

*The Year's top Movies were:*

Mrs. Miniver  
Casablanca  
Bambi  
Road to Morocco

*Cost of Living for the Year 1942*

New House - \$3,775.00  
New Car - \$920.00  
Average Income - \$1,885.00  
Tuition to Harvard - \$420.00 per Year  
Movie Ticket - \$.30  
Gasoline - \$.15 per gallon  
United States Postage Stamp - \$.03  
Fresh Baked Bread - \$.09 per loaf  
Eggs - \$.20 per dozen

*The following Radio Shows Premiered in 1942*

David Harding Counterspy

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Hop Harrigan  
Mayor of the Town  
Suspense  
The Whistler  
People Are Funny  
Red Ryder  
Mr. And Mrs. North

### The Top Weekend Radio Shows Were:

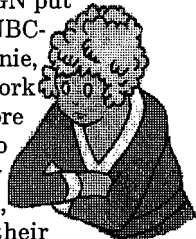
The Shadow  
William L. Shirer  
Prudential Family Hotel  
Lincoln Highway  
The Moylan Sisters  
Bob Becker Talks about Dogs  
The Pause that Refreshes (Andre Kostelanitz  
and his Orchestra)  
Tony Woms Scrapbook  
Olivio Santoro  
Theater of Today  
Metropolitan Opera Auditions  
George Fisher  
The Musical Steelmakers

## COMIC STRIPS: FROM PRINTED PAGE TO MICROPHONE

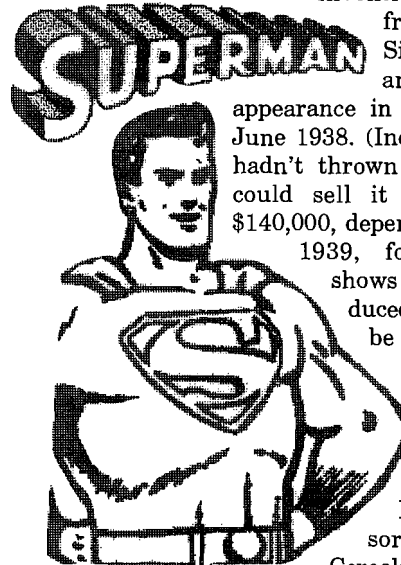
by Jack French © 2007

The personalities depicted in the newspaper strips and comic books were a natural to find their way to the radio microphones. Whether they were funny, heroic, or somewhere in-between, their popularity in one media gave them a distinct advantage in conquering another. This does not mean that every comic book character that got their own radio show was a success, in fact some were downright flops. But enough of them gathered large enough listening audiences to motivate radio producers and advertisers to keep bringing more to the airwaves.

One of the very first comic strip characters to reach radio was Little Orphan Annie. Harold Gray had created her in 1924 and six years later, WGN put her on the air. A year later, in 1931, NBC-Blue picked up the series and Annie, sponsored by Ovaltine, was on network radio. The following year, three more comic strip heroes achieved a radio presence but only one would have any staying power. In 1932 Joe Palooka, Tarzan and Buck Rogers made their debut; the first two would be off the air within two years while Buck lasted until 1947. (The King of the Jungle, however, would continue in syndication, off and on, until the 50s.)



Certainly two of the more famous comic book characters not only made a ton of money for their publishers but also rated very high with radio audiences: Superman and Archie Andrews. The first was the product of two



inventive Jewish teenagers from Cleveland, Jerry Sieges and Joe Shunter, and their hero's first appearance in a comic book was in June 1938. (Incidentally if your mom hadn't thrown your copy away, you could sell it now for \$78,000 to \$140,000, depending on condition.) By 1939, four additional radio shows of Superman were produced although it would not be syndicated on the airwaves until 1940. The series began as a syndicated, 3 times a week program, beginning Monday, 12 February 1940, sponsored by Heckers H-O Cereals. Ten weeks after its debut, "Superman" achieved a Crossley rating of 5.6, the highest of any thrice-weekly program on the air. Heckers even got "Superman" to appear at the New York World's Fair on July 3, 1940, having hired an actor named Ray Middleton to dress up in Superman's costume.

The series did well, and by the time Kellogg's Pep took over the sponsorship in March, 1942, it quickly became one of the most popular kids' shows on Mutual. Clayton "Bud" Collyer played both Superman and Clark Kent and he was pleased that he was uncredited as the voice of the flying hero. Agnes Moorehead did not remain long on the show, although she played both "Miss Lane" and Superman's mother in some early episodes. Joan Alexander played Lois Lane longer than any other woman. There was a cross-fertilization between the comic book and the radio version; Jimmy Olsen, kryptonite, and Editor Perry White were all created by the radio script writers and they were later incorporated into the comic book pages.

The Adventures of Superman, with Jackson Beck as announcer and narrator, was a 15 minute show which aired five times a week through the 40s. It was transcribed by Mutual and remained just as popular with the youngsters as was the Man of Steel in D.C. Comics. In late 1949 it became a half-hour show aired once a week and by June 1950 ABC took over, but Bud Collyer had left for some better paying assignments on the emerging television venue so Michael Fitzmaurice took over the

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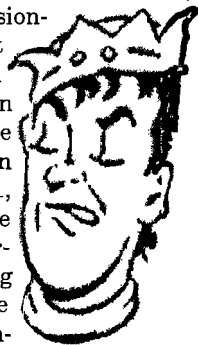
role. The series ended in March 1951. Because it was a transcribed series, an inordinate number of episodes have survived; at present over 1,200 are in circulation.

The most popular teenager in comics, and possibly on the radio also, was Archie Andrews. In 1941, Bob Montana, then a 21 year old staff artist for MLJ



Publications was told to create a high school boy to cash in on the success of the radio series, *The Aldrich Family*, as well as the movies of *Andy Hardy*. Montana came up with Archie Andrews, a red-haired teenager with a beaver smile, whose first appearance was in "Pep Comics" in December 1941. (The value of Archie's debut has not equaled Superman's, but still reached \$1,500.) At the time, Montana was also working on three other MLJ comic heroes, *The Black Hood*, *The Fox and Steel Sterling*. But Archie and his gang at Riverdale High School became so popular that Montana was taken off these jobs to do Archie full time. Over the next few years, Archie Andrews would not only push out all the caped crime-fighters from the pages of his comic book, the publishing firm was eventually re-titled with his name. Today you still see Archie and Jughead beaming at you from the covers of their books at every grocery check-out lane.

Archie came to radio on the Mutual network in May 1943 and would air live until 1952. The youngster was played by several actors over the years, most notably Bob Hastings, a boy singer who occasionally sang on the program. His best buddy, Jughead, was usually played by Hal Stone. Both of these gentlemen were frequent guests at Old-Time Radio conventions on both coasts in recent years. (Stone died February 21, 2007 after complications from valve transplant surgery.) Veronica was portrayed by different girls, including Vivian Smolen, while Rosemary Rice played Betty. It was a Saturday morning half-hour show, sometimes sponsored by Swift's Premium Meats. Since it was not transcribed, only 32 episodes have been found to this date.



Two other comic book heroes, while popular on the printed page, did not do nearly as well with their radio shows: *Blue Beetle* and *The Black Hood*. The first one was created by Charles Nicholas for Fox Features to appear in "Mystery Man" Comics. The debut of this crime-fighter was August 1939. I have a theory, which I haven't proven yet, that the inspiration for *Blue*

*Beetle* was the WXYZ radio show, *The Green Hornet*; it had aired regionally on WXYZ from 1936 to 1938 and Mutual picked it up as a network show in April 1938. The two crime-fighters had similar names, similar goals, and while they appealed to the same audience base there were obvious differences too.

The *Blue Beetle* was drawn by Jack Kirby, a Jewish artist (real name: Jacob Kurtzberg) who would go on to create many famous super-heroes, including *Captain America*. By drinking formula 2X, a rookie policeman, Dan Garrett, became the powerful *Blue Beetle*, wearing a thin blue armor that stopped knives and bullets. No one knew the two were the same man, including his older police partner, Mike Mannigan, and his girl friend, Joan Mason. This comic book would continue until 1957 and then was resurrected in the 1960s for another successful run.

The radio version was a syndicated series of only 36 episodes (all of which are still in circulation) and non-network stations began airing it in May 1940. Most of the adventures are told in one, two, or three 15 minute shows. Frank Lovejoy was one of the men who portrayed this crime fighter on radio. One of the reasons that contributed to its lack of success on the airwaves could have been that *The Blue Beetle* was written in a rather "campy" style, almost as though the script authors were making fun of him. He is thrown into situations where no one has ever heard of him and they scoff at his funny costume. Since he has no super powers, he has to rely upon a new invention each week, created by a friendly scientist, Dr. Franz, the only one who knows his secret identity. One week it might be a fluid to make him invisible, the next week a ring that detects poison, and the following week a liquid that melts locks. Respected OTR historian, Jim Cox, has correctly characterized this series as "juvenile drivel."

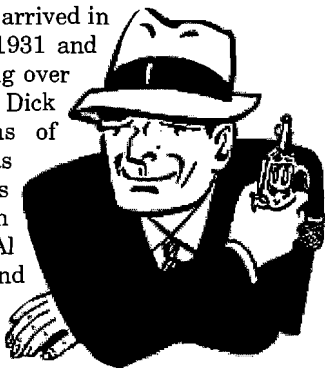
*The Black Hood* also suffered in his transition from the comic books to the radio airwaves. In the pages of the comic books, he was a domineering warrior who outslugged and outwitted evil doers. But in the radio version, he seemed less able to handle the crime fighting duties of a superhero. His debut was arranged by Harry Shorten, an editor for MLJ Publications (yes, the same one that gave us Archie Andrews) in October 1940 in "Top Notch Comics." His origin story was not unique: Kip Burland, a good cop, framed by the bad guys, is turned into a secret vigilante. Over the years, *The Black Hood*, usually in a canary yellow leotard with black hood, gloves, and musketeer-style boots, overcame dangerous criminals, frequently accompanied by graphic violence, torture and bondage. His style led to his own pulp magazine, "Black Hood Detective Magazine."

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He was probably at the height of his popularity when he was brought to Mutual's lineup in July 1943. He would remain there until 1945, and failing to capture a large enough listening audience or a sponsor, was taken off the airwaves. (His counterpart in the comics, however, would continue to 1947 and then went through several revivals until 1965.) Radio's Kip Burland brought his girl friend, Barbara Sutton, with him, although she was not nearly as feisty as she was in the comic book pages. Scott Douglas was the voice of Burland and the Black Hood; Marjorie Cramer voiced Sutton. The program's theme music was a strange choice, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" which because of Walt Disney's 1940 animated film, "Fantasia" probably had most listeners thinking of Mickey Mouse and water buckets carried by marching broomsticks.

Only one recording has survived and that may be a blessing. It starts out with a robber confronting Sutton in her residence and demanding a ring she obtained from a voodoo doctor called "The Miracle Man." Within seconds, Burland, who was outside, changed into his Black Hood costume, and crashes in to see the robber escape, without the ring. Later Sgt. McGinty, comic relief in a show that doesn't need any, plans to visit the Miracle Man that night. Meanwhile Burland and Sutton, parked in his car in the moonlight, discover a secret compartment in the ring which may contain poison. When Sgt. McGinty gets access to the home of The Miracle Man, his female servant, Wamba, bonks him on the beeper with African crockery, rendering him unconscious at the end of the episode.

A flint-jawed police detective arrived in the newspapers in October 1931 and became a cultural icon lasting over three-quarters of a century. Dick Tracy has survived dozens of strange-faced criminals, has been portrayed in the movies by Ralph Byrd and Warren Beatty, been parodied by Al Capp as "Fearless Fosdick" and has proven that "crime does pay" at least to whomever own the rights to his name.



His creator, Chester Gould, was born in Oklahoma, graduated from Northwestern University, and spent virtually all of his life on this one character. Gould never stopped learning about police procedures from both the Chicago Police Lab and the forensic scientists at Northwestern. But that did not mean he was bounded by realism; he drew outrageous, monstrous villains and veered into science fiction with Tracy making trips to the moon, before our own astronauts reached its surface.

The radio series arrived in 1935, only four years after the newspaper version. It would run for 13 years, NBC for the first five, and ABC for the remainder. There were many cast changes, and sponsors, over the years, Two of those who played Tracy were Matt Crowley and Ned Wever. Jackie Kelk was one of the boys who portrayed Junior and Ed Herlihy was one of five different announcers on the series. Probably the low point in the series occurred in the mid-40s when Tootsie Rolls as the sponsor changed the Tracy's theme music to "Toot Toot Tootsie." Approximately 58 episodes are being traded among collectors today.

A newspaper strip didn't have to have a hero or even a story line to merit getting its own radio series as Believe It Or Not certainly proved. This syndicated feature, the creation of a sports cartoonist named Ripley would not only become one of the most talked about features in the newspaper, it would also make him a millionaire. The cartoonist's name was Leroy Ripley and he was born in Santa Rosa, CA in 1890 and as a shy, stuttering buck-toothed kid, he seemed unlikely to go far. His newspaper editor in Chicago made him change his first name to Robert as Leroy wasn't masculine enough. By 1918, Ripley found modest success in a feature he first called "Champs and Chumps" which illustrated unusual aspects of sports. He then expanded it to include oddities from around the world and re-titled it Believe It Or Not.

By 1930 Ripley's syndication rights on his feature netted him over \$100,000 a year, which included the royalties on his radio series which began that year. It would be on and off the air until 1948, and sometimes under different titles: Believe It or Not, Baker's Broadcast, and Romance, Rhythm and Ripley. For a few years Ozzie and Harriett were the leads on the show. But whatever variety form the show took, it contained plenty of odd facts and stories gathered by Ripley and his staff. There are 25 shows from this series that survived to today. Ripley died of a heart attack at age 59, but his legacy continues in a syndicated TV series and a string of his museums, called "Ripley's Odditoriums" around the country.

### COMIC STRIPS: FROM PRINTED PAGE TO MICROPHONE

*To be Continued in Next Month's Issue.*



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### —STRAIGHT ARROW—

BearManor Media announces the publication of *Straight Arrow: The Definitive Radio Log and Resource Guide for that Legendary Indian Figure on the Trail of Justice* book written by William Harper of North Augusta, South Carolina. The Harper family researched the Nabisco Shredded Wheat promotion for over twenty years. Their efforts led to the publication of Pow-Wow, a newsletter for faithful fans. Straight Arrow was a Mutual radio show introduced to a nation wide audience in February of 1949. The preparation and well planned promotion propelled the radio show to the top in children programming, but also became the first children show to break into the top 10 of all radio programming. Nabisco used the vehicle as a means of selling its Nabisco Shredded Wheat to children.

Straight Arrow spawned a host of premiums, merchandise items, comic books and a daily funny paper strip.

Harper has not only done a great service for Straight Arrow fans, but has afforded the casual readers an opportunity to glimpse the efforts involved to create a popular culture icon that is still remembered after nearly sixty years.

*Straight Arrow: The Definitive Radio Log and Reference Guide for that Legendary Indian Figure on the Trail of Justice* by William Harper can be ordered directly from the publisher or from your local book store.

BearManor Media  
P.O. Box 71426  
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229-436-4265  
bearmanormedia.com

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### Cinci Convention Report

By DICK OLDAY

Arlene and I attended the Cinci Con again this year and had a great time. We especially enjoy meeting old friends and radio personalities. Our Saturday evening visit with Esther Geddes McVey was one of the highlights of our trip. She is such a charming and wonderful person. Our president, Jerry Collins, his wife and Frank Boncore also attended this year. Jerry will have a column about the convention so I will leave the comments to him except to say the convention was a lot of fun but the hotel service and condition is in dire need of new management!

Our club would like to thank the following dealers for their very generous donations to our library:

(1) Leo Gawroniak (Cassettes)  
852 Lakemont Dr., Apt. H  
Louisville, TN 37777

(2) Radio Memories (Cassettes)  
P.O. Box 94548  
North Little Rock, AR 72190-4548

(3) Olden Radio (Mp3 & DVD-serials, TV, etc.)  
P.O. Box 8  
Beach Grove, IN 46107

(4) Great American Radio (Mp3 & DVD-TV & movies)  
P.O. Box 401  
Clio, MI 48420

(5) BRC Productions (CD, Mp3 & DVD-TV)  
P.O. Box 158  
Dearborn Heights, MI 48127-0158

(6) Bob Gardner (Mp3)  
312 Fenwick Dr.  
New Carlisle, OH 45344

When you are looking for old time radio, please keep the above dealers in mind and let them know you heard about them from the Old Time Radio Club.

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## BEING THERE: Collecting Radio Broadcast Admission Tickets

By RICK PAYNE (All Rights Reserved 2007)

*During the golden age of radio, networks and sponsors invited the general public to attend live performances of many popular programs. For the performers, the presence of the studio audience provided encouragement, laughter and appreciation. For the audience, the experience was an unforgettable opportunity to see their favorite entertainers at work. Tickets from some broadcasts survive today . . . waiting for collectors like me.*

In our last episode, we featured several broadcast tickets related to the golden age of baseball and football. This month, let's take a look at another team sport: radio comedy.

Almost every radio comedian commonly used other cast members as foils on their programs. Ed Wynn used his announcer (Graham McNamee) as a straight man, a practice later followed by Johnny Carson and others. Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Bob Hope and Eddie Cantor



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used ensembles of talented regulars to propel their shows to great popularity. In some encounters, the star actually gave the comedic spotlight up to these regulars, taking a straight man role themselves. But those situations only lasted a few minutes each week.

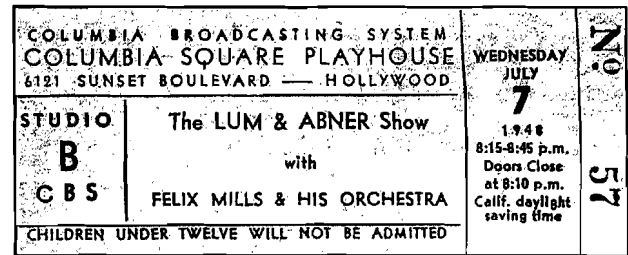
But a few acts were undeniably best as a team. In fact, your mind won't let you hear one of their names without quickly providing the other. Don't believe me? Here you go: Abbott. Lum. Amos. Burns. Fibber McGee. See what I mean?

This month, we feature broadcast tickets featuring the best radio comedy duos . . . pairings of two individuals (with one notable exception) whose combined efforts created a level of radio humor that remains entertaining even today. Collectors consider these tickets to be "the essentials." Whenever someone learns we collect radio tickets, these are the ones they ask to see first. Getting them isn't easy . . . because everyone else wants them too!

In truth, getting them was never easy. Tickets for these programs were most coveted in the golden days of radio, often spoken for long before the broadcast date. For most shows, only a few hundred audience seats were available. But if you were lucky, after a long wait your tickets would arrive by mail. And if you're a VERY lucky collector today, you may find the rare mailer cards that accompanied the tickets!

This beautiful example accompanied tickets for the April 9, 1946 broadcast of Rinso's *Amos 'n' Andy Show*. As you can see, the actual tickets were placed in a precut slot on this postcard-sized holder. It's a nice keepsake in itself, and similar designs were used for several other shows. Others mailed out tickets in illustrated folders.

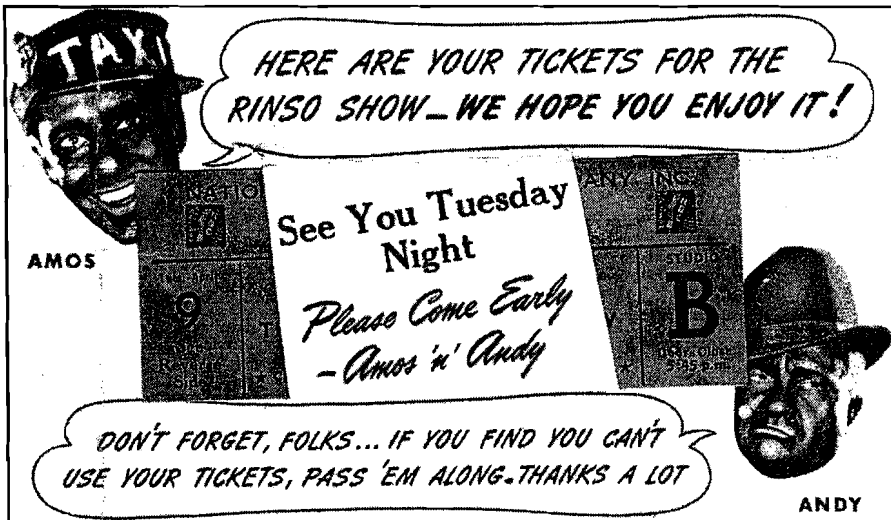
Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll performed thousands of NBC *Amos 'n' Andy* broadcasts out of public view until 1943, when sagging ratings and a sponsor change spurred radical changes to their production. With only three exceptions, they never performed an actual broadcast before a studio audience until the Lever Brothers series began that October. The owner of this 1946 ticket saw the episode in which Andy enters a "best dressed man" contest dressed in a suit made of the cloth from a pool table. I guess he wanted an outfit he could bank on . . .



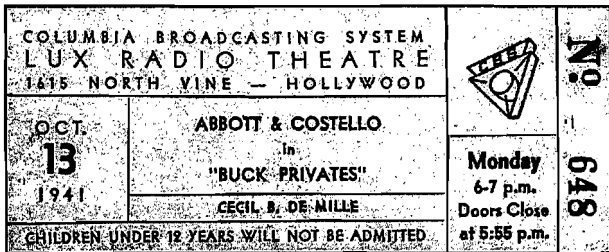
Like Correll and Gosden, radio pioneers Chet Lauck and Norris Goff performed most of the voices on their early *Lum and Abner* broadcasts in a private studio. Their quiet homespun comedy relied on a sense of intimacy that was best suited to that arrangement. They did take to the road in a series of music-focused *Lum and Abner Old Time Sociables* in 1933-34, and some were broadcast on the NBC network. I have no tickets from those rare broadcasts, although I do own a poster advertising a 1933 Sociable in Meadville, Ohio.

It wasn't until 1948 that the boys found themselves in need of the same overhaul that had boosted *Amos 'n' Andy* in 1943. New sponsor Frigidare insisted they abandon their traditional 15-minute serial format for a more conventional 30-minute sitcom with guest stars, and orchestra and a studio audience in Hollywood. The new program would premiere on October 3, 1948.

So what's with this July 7, 1948 ticket . . . three months before the series premiere? Well, it's for the audition of that new format! The *Lum & Abner Show* audition featured Felix Mills and his Orchestra, Clarence Hartzell and Francis X. Bushman in an episode in which the boys seek to borrow money to pay their back taxes. The original owner of this ticket was part of the very first *Lum and Abner* studio audience! The recording is in circulation. On a personal note, I was lucky enough to attend a 1972 banquet reuniting Lauck and Goff, where they fondly recreated comedy routines to the crowd's delight. As far as I know, that was their last performance . . . and yes, I kept the ticket!



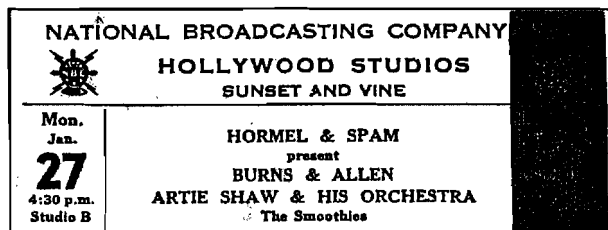
## The Illustrated Press



The team of Bud Abbott and Lou Costello became famous on radio, but found their greatest success in movies. They built their reputation through regular appearances on the Kate Smith and Chase and Sanborn programs, eventually earning a film contract with Universal. Their films were hugely successful, saving the studio and making them international stars. Their most famous comedy routine, "Who's on First," is enshrined in the National Baseball Hall of Fame and the Library of Congress National Recording Registry.

Here's the audience ticket for the 1941 CBS *Lux Radio Theatre* presentation of their first starring film for Universal, "Buck Privates." This would prove to be the only *Lux* appearance for Abbott and Costello. The film, which cost \$180,000 to make, grossed \$4,000,000 in the USA. Believe it or not, it earned two Oscar nominations, including best song for the classic Andrews Sisters tune "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy!"

In the fall of 1942, Abbott and Costello would return to the airwaves for a five-year run for Camel Cigarettes in Hollywood. Tragedy and squandered opportunity plagued the team for their entire lives, but their legacy remains as one of the funniest and most popular comedy teams of all time.

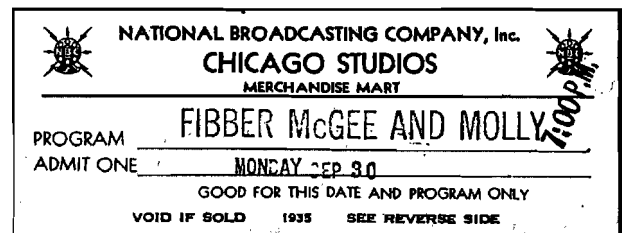


George Burns and Gracie Allen shared a long career during which they consistently demonstrated the talent to change with the times. They met while playing the vaudeville circuit. They married and eventually played the Palace Theatre, vaudeville's Valhalla. They leaped into films in 1929, radio in 1932 and television in 1950. They found success in each medium. George even found success as a solo artist after Gracie's retirement and death in 1964, winning an Oscar at age 80 for "The Sunshine Boys." He died at 100, one of the best-loved entertainers of all time.

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The 1930s radio scripts focused on Gracie's antics as a daffy single girl. After several successful rating-driving gimmicks, the format was becoming tired and ratings slipped badly. Burns overhauled the format in 1942, announcing Gracie and he would henceforth appear as a married couple. It worked, and the show soon regained its popularity.

This bright blue ticket from the 1941 NBC Hormel series is from the point at which ratings were at their lowest. The great swing bandleader Artie Shaw provided the music, and Gracie read a letter from her cousin Willie. The program concerned George's efforts to retrieve his \$5,000 mink coat from Cobina Wright Jr., the real-life daughter of a society columnist. She had achieved some notoriety by suing Bob Hope for parodying her on his radio program. Just imagine . . . a debutante that didn't seek publicity! Wright eventually faded into obscurity, but Burns and Allen . . . and Spam . . . went on to join comedy's Hall of Fame.

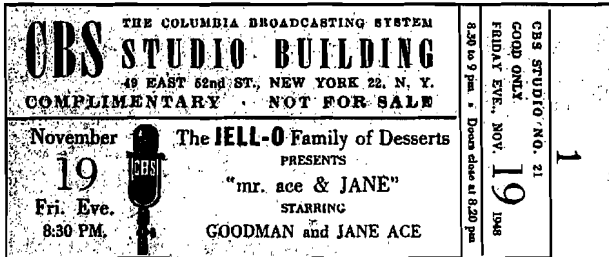


Jim Jordan and his wife Marian had appeared on radio in Chicago for many years before writer Don Quinn created their most famous characters. In fact, *Fibber McGee and Molly* wasn't even their first network program. It did, however, make everything they did before simply a footnote to their radio biography.

Here's an extremely rare ticket for the 25th episode of the program, broadcast on NBC's Blue Network. Just four weeks earlier, the title characters had won a raffle drawing. The prize was a house located at 79 Wistful Vista, and the hall closet in that house eventually provided some of the biggest laughs in radio. This episode, titled "Touchdown McGee, the Tickapooka Tornado", originated from NBC's Chicago studios in the Merchandise Mart. *Little Orphan Annie* and *Amos 'n' Andy*, and *The First Nighter* are but a few of the thousands of shows broadcast from the Mart.

I've never seen another ticket from the Chicago broadcasts. The program moved to Hollywood in 1939; those tickets prominently feature the name of sponsor S.C. Johnson's products above the title. One of my favorite tickets for *Fibber McGee and Molly* won't reproduce well enough for publication here. When Reynold's Aluminum took over the series in 1952, they printed ticket stock with a silver foil surface!

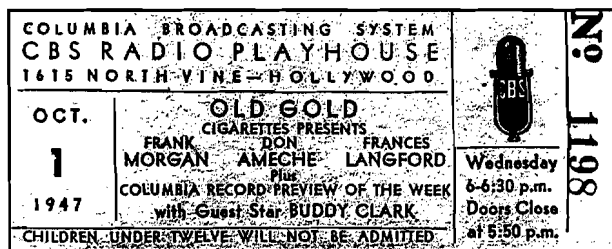
## The Illustrated Press



Kansas City natives Goodman Ace and his wife Jane provided some of the smartest comedy writing of all time for their earlier series, titled *Easy Aces*. "Time wounds all heels" is probably the most famous of the malaprops written by Ace for his wife, and Jane delivered them with perfection. The program enjoyed a 15-year run, never achieving wide popularity but earning the devotion of a loyal listener base. Unfortunately, there are no tickets because *Easy Aces* never allowed a studio audience to observe the broadcasts. We are lucky that many of the original broadcasts were preserved for our enjoyment today.

Fortunately, the program was essentially resurrected in 1948 in New York City, and an audience was permitted. Under the title *mr. ace & JANE*, the Aces continued their excellence one last time on the radio. This ticket from the 41st episode of that series has a very unusual feature: it is ticket number one. CBS routinely numbered tickets for many of their programs, but finding one of these is pretty special!

The Aces took the program to television in 1949. Goodman Ace retired from performing in 1949, but continued to be a brilliant writer for other entertainers and has influenced countless scripters.

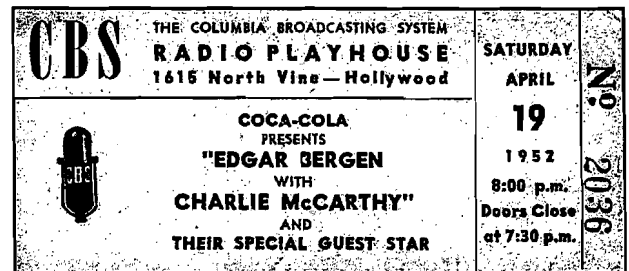


Our last three tickets featured immortal real-life husband-and-wife comedy teams. This ticket is from the second radio series to prominently feature my favorite radio husband and wife, the creations of writer Phil Rapp. I'm speaking of John and Blanche Bickerson, brilliantly portrayed by Don Ameche and Frances Langford. If you've never listened to a Bickersons recording, put down this copy of *The Illustrated Press* immediately and not rest until you have heard one. Radio comedy was never better.

Under the subtitle "The Honeymoon is Over", the Bickersons skits originated on a show called *Drene Time* in 1946. Both Ameche and Langford clearly tapped into uncharted comic territory, elevating the simplest possible set-up . . . a world-weary schnook just trying to get some sleep and the insecure spendthrift wife enraged by his insufferable snoring . . . into unforgettably outrageous performances.

This 1947 ticket for the second episode of the CBS series *The Old Gold Show* repeated that format. The first half of the program featured exaggerated stories from actor Frank Morgan (MGM's *Wizard of Oz*) and a musical guest (in this case, singer Buddy Clark) before turning it over to Ameche and Langford for the highlight. This series marked the last time Ameche would play the role on radio, although he later joined Langford for commercial recordings of the characters in the 1960s. Clark, incidentally, died in a plane crash almost two years to the day after this broadcast.

Alas, the only tickets I have that show the title *The Bickersons* are for the inferior 1951 CBS series starring Lew Parker and Langford. It's just not the same.



One of radio's most popular comedy teams had only one member . . . at least, only one who could eat. Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy created magic on the radio every week for over twenty years, never really changing their basic formula for success. To the delight of the radio audience, Charlie routinely got away with outrageous behavior, wooing female guests, abusing figures of authority, and creating general mayhem with his pal Skinny Dugan. All the while, Bergen's futile efforts to teach Charlie to behave fell on deaf ears . . . literally. Truly, Charlie was no dummy.

Regardless of the official titles used by the networks, just about everyone called the program *The Charlie McCarthy Show*. By 1952, CBS was taping the studio performances for later broadcast. I can't pinpoint who appeared as the guest on this episode. The show originated from the same venue as the *Lux Radio Theatre* and *The Old Gold Show*.

## The Illustrated Press

NBC RADIO CITY STUDIOS RCA BUILDING • NEW YORK		
TUES. <b>26</b> AUG. 1952	COLGATE-PALMOLIVE-PEET CO. PRESENT <b>THE BOB AND RAY SHOW</b> COMPLIMENTARY TICKET . . . NOT TO BE SOLD	DOORS CLOSE 11:25 AM

Last but certainly not least, we come to my favorite radio comedy team. Disc jockey Bob Elliott and newscaster Ray Goulding found comic inspiration in the medium of radio itself. Using an astonishing number of characters and voices, Bob and Ray made fun of everything and everybody in the gentlest of ways. It made the listener feel like Bob and Ray were letting them in on the joke, while the rest of the world carried on without a clue. With the aid of writer Tom Koch, Bob and Ray routinely laid waste to every form of conventional authority. Deadpan was never so funny.

The networks never really knew quite what to make of Bob and Ray. NBC gave them a 15 minute daily radio program in New York in 1952, and later tried them in a variety of game shows on radio and television. They found their best format later on WOR and National Public Radio, and most of their best routines are preserved today.

Tapes of their early broadcasts from Boston's WHDH indicate that an audience was in studio, but I've never seen one of those tickets. This ticket is from the 27th episode of *The Bob and Ray Show*, their first NBC series.

Bob and Ray used to do a routine called "The Hobby Hut." As host Neil Clummer, Ray interviewed Bob as a person who collected some unusual item, such as "numbers from places that asked you to take a number" and "fruit grown in unusual shapes." I'm sure my wife would place my ticket collection in the same league.

Well, that wraps up another installment of Being There. It's always good to hear from you by email at [oldtix@aol.com](mailto:oldtix@aol.com). Next month, let's take a chance and explore radio's great quiz shows and game shows as we ease into our summer break. If you have a lady in your balcony, it'll be just what the Doctor ordered!



### Parents! Get out of the Dog House!

You were young once. Don't make Johnny run an errand at 5:45 this afternoon. Don't ask Susie to help set the table. Don't interrupt with silly grown-up questions when "JIMMIE ALLEN" is on the air at 5:45 P.M.

WKBW - Buffalo's Most Powerful Station

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## Bill Mazer

By TOM CHERRE



As a kid growing up in North Buffalo back in the 50s baseball was a big part of my life. We usually played with cracked bats and taped up baseballs all summer long at Nichols Field off Colvin Avenue. They were all pick up choose me games, and no adults. I loved those times. I also loved the Buffalo Bisons of the old International League. I remember taking the Parkside Zoo bus and passing Freddie's Doughnuts on Main and Michigan. Walking down Woodlawn Street I could still see those humble looking blind people selling pencils for a nickel. I always felt obliged to buy one outside, and besides, I'd save a nickel. The excitement grew as I neared that great palace that housed my personal heroes, Offermann Stadium. Guys like Buddy Hicks, Billy DeMars, Chick King and big Luke Easter, to me these men were all superstars. They probably made a little more than the peanut vendor then, but I never heard them complain about the money. At least I don't think they did.

When I couldn't be there in person to root for my team I did the next best thing. I listened to WGR radio 55 and heard the greatest play-by-play man in the game. That man was Bill Mazer. From 1948 until 1964 the city of Buffalo was lucky enough to have Mazer do play-by-play, do sports shows and a few other local programs. I recall many times sitting on my back porch listening to the games and keeping score. Just listening to Mazer's play-by-play was almost as good as being there. And even if we were in last place he'd make you feel like the team was as good as the Yankees. He had that electrifying voice vividly describing every play that bouncing ball took. I remember he had that similar greeting of Mel Allen's with "Hello there everybody". His closing salutation "It's been a pleasure" was all his own. Actually it was a pleasure for all his listeners doing the game. I remember the many times at the crack of the bat hearing him say "Demeter hits a deep drive to left . . . it's going . . . going . . . gone. Another case of Phoenix beer for Steve Demeter. What I really enjoyed was the great commercial jingles they had back then. There was one for Iroquois beer, Merchants Mutual Insurance Co., The

## The Illustrated Press

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Big E and “Wonderful Wonderful Copenhagen for Pheonix beer”. I’d rather hear those than the moronic Geico and lawyer ads we are blitzed with nowadays.

Back in the middle 1950s we were then playing against the Havana Sugar Kings in Cuba. Those games would be transcribed via ticker tape over Western Union. The feed would come out like ball one, strike one, out. Bill Mazer would dress it up like slow curve in the dirt, almost got away from the catcher, high fast ball just hit the outside corner, and sum it up with a deep drive to center and he catches it at the wall. I also became acquainted with names like Amelio Alvarez, Elio Chacun and Nino Esquelera. One of my favorites was Spook Jacobs of the Columbia Jets. Bill Mazer was also a real homer. In the beginning of a double header he would entice you to come to the game by saying “It’s a great night for baseball. The weather’s perfect. You’ve got 6 innings left of this game and the whole second game, so if you’re coming, keep on coming.” No matter if the weather was cloudy or overcast where you were, the sun was always shining at Offermann.

Bill Mazer also hosted a kids show at the old 184 Barton Studio called *Watch The Birdy*. It was much like the *Howdy Doody Show*. Mazer was Uncle Bill. I remember this show because I was part of the “peanut gallery” on one of the Saturday morning episodes. Whenever we’d see Mazer at the games we chided him with the Uncle Bill greeting. Mazer also did the evening sports, which was then 15 minutes long. I remember he would have some great guests on like Rocky Marciano and Gorgeous George among others. Buffalo never really appreciated Bill Mazer. He was a gifted and talented sportscaster. He was knowledgeable in every facet of sporting events. His various sports trivia books attest to that. For this he was given the nickname “A-Maz-In”. Mazer was an icon back then. He ranks with notables like Buehlman, Fran Stryker, Bob Smith, The Hound, and maybe throw in Danny Neavereth.

Mazer was born in Kiev Russia in 1920. He left Russia when he was a year old and moved to New York City, growing up in Brooklyn. He was drafted in World War II and was in the Air Force Transportation Co. in the Pacific Theater. Upon his return from service he married his pre-war sweetheart Dora Sudarsky whom he referred to affectionately as “Dutch”. They were married for about fifty years when she passed away in 1996. Mazer’s first radio job was announcer for a soap opera in 1947. It was called *When A Girl Marries*. He came to Buffalo in 1948 and eventually made a name for himself right here in the “Queen City”. His popularity led him to bigger and better things in New York City when he arrived there in 1964 doing major league sports of all kinds. Mazer is now 86, living in New York and is con-

sidered by many to be the guru of sports wisdom. Still active, Bill Mazer does an afternoon show in New Rochelle over WVOX. He is approaching 60 years in broadcasting. He has received numerous awards throughout his life, all truly deserved. I like many of you old timers over 55 remember Bill Mazer and I thought he was the best. Speaking for myself for all those years, it was a pleasure.

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### Let’s Pretend with UNCLE RUSS

From 1948 to 1952, kids at American military bases all over the world would tune in to *Let’s Pretend with Uncle Russ* on Saturday mornings. The show was presented by the Armed Forces Radio Service and was hosted by me, Russ Thompson. I was a Staff Sergeant and was stationed at AFRS Sendai, Japan, as program director in 1951 and 1952. I produced, wrote, directed and was *Uncle Russ*, a 30 minute show sent to Armed Forces Radio stations in almost every country in the world. Audiences would tune in to hear me tell stories and play music in our Saturday morning broadcast. Our prime audience was the U.S. Military service people and their dependents (“GI brats of the fifties”), but we also heard from many others who listened in as well to be entertained and to hone their English skills. *Uncle Russ* also had the “Around the World Safety Club”, which sent out safety hints and suggestions and membership cards with safety slogans and a picture of *Uncle Russ* on each card. On the show I did some character voices, including Percy the Penguin and Ricky the Robot, two of my favorite characters, along with Captain Comet and Rocket Ranger Jane. Several countries had *Uncle Russ* fan clubs, and the fan mail was phenomenal. I was quite proud and very pleased to think that this program had such a profound effect on the children of the Armed Services. The Armed Forces Radio Service had a “hitch-hike” audience of give or take ninety million people!

I invite you to visit my website at:

[www.letspretendwithuncleruss.com](http://www.letspretendwithuncleruss.com). Take some time to browse through the PHOTOS, and check the LETTERS page to see some of the fan mail I received while playing *Uncle Russ* to all those kids so many years ago. There must be thousands of people who have since grown up and returned to America and remember *Let’s Pretend with Uncle Russ* from Armed Forces Radio Service. If so, I’d love to say “Hi” once again and hear from you. You can reach me via e-mail at:

[russ@letspretendwithuncleruss.com](mailto:russ@letspretendwithuncleruss.com)

**Charles R. (Russ) Thompson**

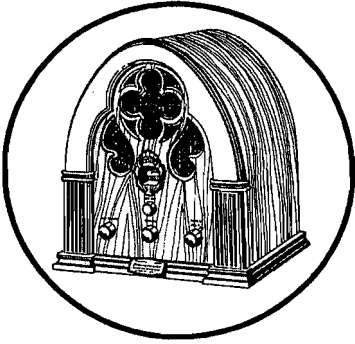
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#### Tonight—7:30

Tonight there's special reason for listening to the McCurdy Little Symphony! You'll hear a composition by Dr. Howard Hanson, "Serenade for Flute, Harp and Strings"; announcement of McCurdy Senior Scholarship winners for 1951; and presentation to Dr. Hanson of a special WHAM citation. Be sure to listen!

#### 9:25 ANOTHER ALL-STAR NIGHT ON WHAM!

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>6:00 Esso Reporter</b><br/>Listeners say: "Best for evening news."</p> <p><b>6:10 Bob Turner</b><br/>Latest sports news. Interestingly reported!</p> <p><b>6:30 Tello-Test</b><br/>The new radio game that's sweeping Rochester! Have you heard it? Tune in!</p> <p><b>7:00 Light Up Time</b><br/>Frank Sinatra and Dorothy Kisten.</p> | <p><b>8:00 Cavalcade of America</b><br/>Martha Scott in "Never Merry a Reneger."</p> <p><b>9:00 Bob Hope</b><br/>And singer Doris Day.</p> <p><b>9:30 Fibber and Molly</b><br/>Favorite radio couple!</p> <p><b>10:00 Big Town</b><br/>Exciting Adventure.</p> <p><b>10:30 People are Funny</b><br/>Starring Art Linkletter</p> |
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