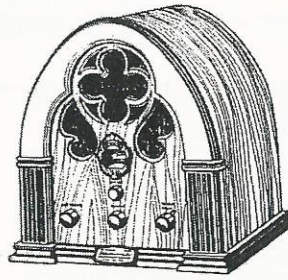


The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

# The ILLUSTRATED

Number 418



# PRESS

March 2014

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Here's the only  
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It's Always Fresh!

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**The Lone Ranger**

**Monday**  
**6:30 P. M.**  
**Special—70th**  
**Anniversary Broadcast**

**WISGN**  
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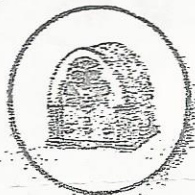
**Membership Information:**

Club Membership: \$20.00 per year from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>. Members receive a media library listing and a monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows. If you join Jan-March, \$18.00, April - June \$15.00, July-September, \$12.00 October-December \$8.00. All renewals should be sent in ASAP to avoid missing issues of the newsletter. 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 thru June at St. Aloysius School Hall 157 CLEVELAND Dr. Cheektowags, NY. There is no meeting during the month of July and a club picnic in August.

Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome. The Old Time Radio is affiliated with the the Old Time Radio Network.

**CLUB MAILING ADDRESS**

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Lancaster, NY 14086



All submissions are subject to approval prior to actual publication.

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**Library Rates:** Audio cassettes and CDs are \$2.00 each are recorded on a club supplied cassette or CD which is retained by the member. Rates include postage and handling and payable in U.S. funds.



## Editor's Two Cents !

As I write this newsletter it's still February. I hope by our next meeting the weather takes a big about face. Anyway, I wish to thank the many members who supported our spaghetti dinner. I and our Knight's Council thank you. We also had our old time movie night this past month. No one from the club came, but everyone who was in attendance had a great time. The main feature was *Don't Fence Me In*. Dale Evans remarked, this was her greatest movie she starred in with Roy Rogers. They were all B movies, but I would have to rate this a B plus or maybe an A minus. Gabby had one of his best roles as he portrayed the legendary "Wildcat Kelly". Roy and company did a good job on Cole Porter's "Don't Fence Me In" which was a number one hit for Bing Crosby and a little help from the Andrews Sisters back in 1945. Most of the crowd was too young for Saturday Matinees back in the old days, but we had enough old timers, and the young buckaroos enjoyed it too. We also had a Three Stooges flick, a couple of episodes of the 1948 Superman serial, and a Popeye cartoon. We plan to do it again sometime in May. We may do a Hope-Crosby road movie or one of the Thin Man classics. It was fun, and I think our members would enjoy it. Latest word on Jerry Collins

was he had a minor set back for the February meeting, but we're keeping our fingers crossed for March.

Trivia: Last month picture trivia person was Staats Cotsworth who played Casey in Crime Photographer.

For Sale Items from Grant Brees:

While doing some much cleaning of my personal Fibber McGee's Closet I found three old reel to reel tape recorders. The last time I used them they were all working, but I will not be able to guarantee that they still are in optimum operational condition. I also found a dual cassette recorder and turntable that were also in good working condition. If anyone can use them I am open to offers. I also have a number of open reel tapes available. My contact information is:

Phone: 207 365 4080

e-mail

Snail mail 60 Lawler Ridge Rd.

Benedicta, ME 04733

Units available and models are:

Tascam Model 302 dual cass. Recorder

Akai GX255 open reel recorder/manual

Pioneer RT901 open reel recorder/man.

Teac A4010S open reel recorder/w/manu

Technics SL-DL5 turntable w/manual

Leaving Maine for trip in late March.

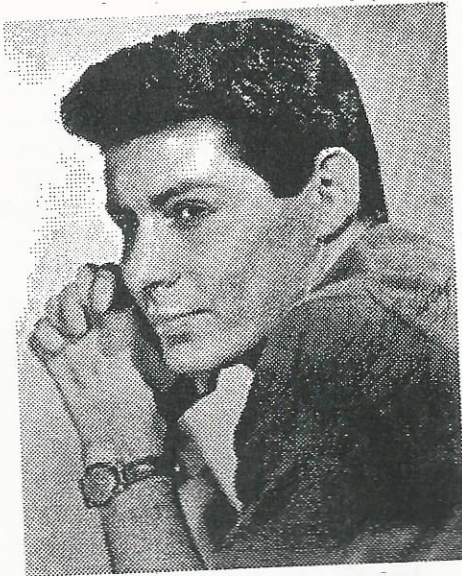
Can change route and swing by if

anyone is interested in purchases.

Thanks, Grant R. Brees

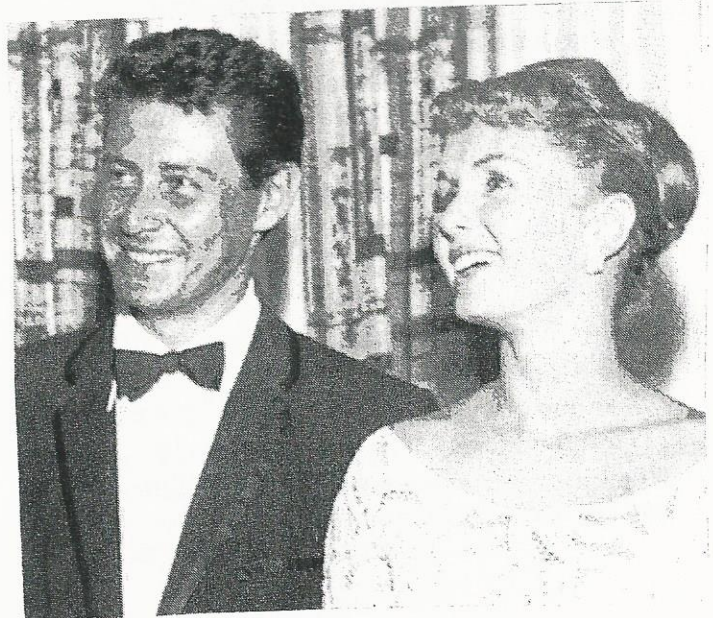
Rich Simpson asked what we can do at meetings to make them more interesting. I say, why not play a radio show once in awhile and we can talk about it. If fellow members have any thoughts, let me or Rich know. Until then, Happy Radio Listening To All.

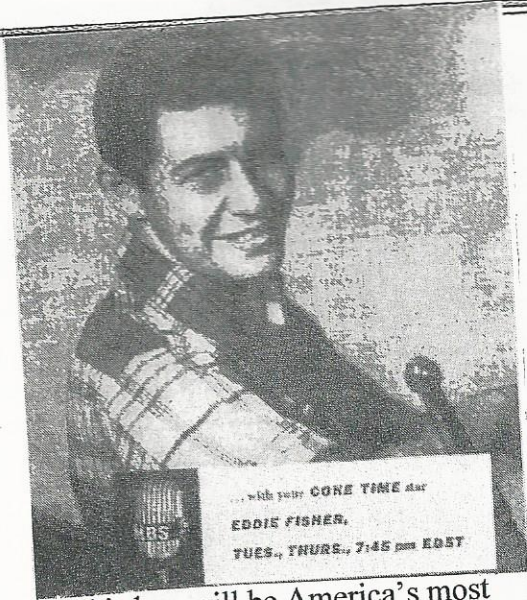
## Eddie Fisher His Life and Times By Tom Cherre



You've all heard the expression, "Born with a silver spoon in his mouth". If there was ever someone who fitted that bill, it was Eddie Fisher. He was the heart throb of every teenage girl in the late 40's and early 50's. He had matinee-style looks and a smooth romantic voice. He was married to supposedly, the most beautiful girl in the world. His other wives were not what you would call castoffs. From 1950-56 he had the most pop hits on the charts. He had a hit radio show and later had one on TV. Before the rock and roll era hit he was king of the music world. So what went wrong when his career took a tumble while he was only in his 30's? Drugs, booze, and gambling kind of contributed to his fall from grace. He ventured into a long downslide, and in 1970, he filed for bankruptcy. This was his bad time. Let us go back and enlighten you on his good times. Eddie Fisher was born in 1928 in Philadelphia, the fourth of seven children, to Russian immigrants. His father's last name was Tisch, but was Anglicised to Fisher by the 1940s to his

familiar Fisher. Eddie was always called "Sonny Boy" from Al Jolson's film *The Singing Fool* (1928). Fisher attended the Simon Gratz High School. It was in these years he realized he had a talent for singing with his smooth sounding voice. At 13, he won a singing contest sponsored by the "Horn & Hardart Children's Hour", a radio variety show. He won other amateur contests and became a regular on the Philadelphia radio station WFIL where his starting salary was 15cents. It later rose to \$18.00 a week. A local voice teacher once told Fisher's mother, "It takes many qualities to make a good singer, but your boy has the most important quality of all. In his throat there is a thread of gold". With a chance to make it big professionally, he dropped out of school, and teamed up with bands of Buddy Morrow and Charlie Ventura. He performed on *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts Show*. In 1949 he began a stint at Grossinger's Resort in the Borscht Belt in the Catskills. Eddie Cantor was in attendance, and this was the so-called discovery later described as a totally contrived manipulated arrangement by Milton Blackstone, Grossinger's publicity director. After performing once on Cantor's show, he said "In one year,





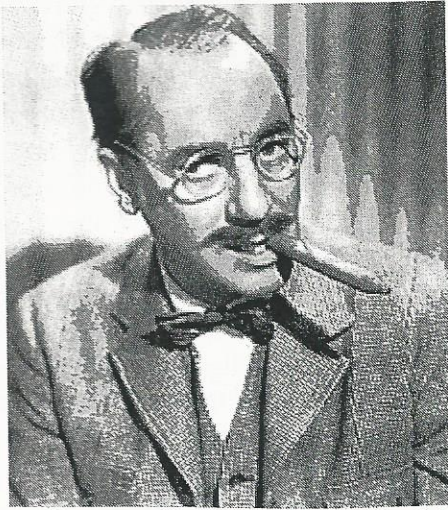
this boy will be America's most important singer of popular songs". Cantor predicted right, and Eddie Fisher became an instant singing sensation. He soon signed on with RCA record company and "the hits just a kept on coming". He gained nation wide fame with songs like "Thinking of You" and "Anytime", and many more. He commanded a \$1000 per week as headliner at the Paramount on Broadway. In 1951 he was drafted into the Army, which put him to work singing with the Army Band and touring bases overseas. Fisher once told the New York Mirror in 1953, The Army gave me much more than I gave it. Why, I did shows I never would have done. I performed in the rain, in the mud, off the backs of trucks, without a mike, and sometimes without music. While in the army he continued to record, while on furlough and resumed his career without a glitch, in his two years of service. When he returned to the Paramount in New York he began to look like the second coming of Frank Sinatra. In 1955 Eddie Fisher married Debbie Reynolds, "the girl next door" as she was known as in America's dream world. The wedding took place in the Catskills in 1955. They had a son and daughter. One of Debbie's

best friends was fellow MGM co-worker Elizabeth Taylor. When Liz's husband Mike Todd died in a plane crash Debbie asked Eddie to console Liz for her loss. Fisher did that and never returned home. It was an ugly divorce, and the newspapers were full of it. Fisher was considered a heel for leaving Debbie and his two little children. Taylor was called a family wrecker and due to unfavorable publicity NBC cancelled his TV show in March of 1959. He married Taylor in 1959. In 1960 he was dropped by RCA Victor and briefly recorded on his own label. He later went on to record for Dot Records. He, then was the first one to record "Sunrise, Sunset" from *Fiddler on the Roof*. This was supposedly his biggest standard hit of all times. Album sales were not as successful in the 60's as were his hit 45s. Hits like "Wish You Here", "I'll Hold You In My Heart", "Turn Back the Hands of Time", "I'm Yours", "Lady of Spain", "I'm Walking Behind You", "I Need You Now", "Heart", "Dungeree Doll", "Cindy Oh Cindy", and "Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep" were all top ten hits. He also had three #1 hits including "Oh My Papa", which I still get a little 'ver klempt' when I hear that one. Imagine having 52 top 40 hits in a little over 7 years. After the late 1960s his recording career took a sour direction. He tried to make a comeback in 1983, but that didn't work out. His final recordings (never released) were made in 1995. According to arranger-conductor Vincent Falcone, he said in his Autobiography; *Frankly: Just Between Us*, "These tracks were the best singing of his life". Before the drugs consumed him. Fisher was appearing in places like the London Palladium, the Palace Theater in New York, and Las Vegas.



The second half of Eddie Fisher's life was a virtual non-ending nightmare. He went bankrupt in 1970. He was married 5 times. He later confessed that when he was married to Liz Taylor, he was nothing more than a nursemaid to her and a babysitter for her kids and pets. Fisher claimed that in his lifetime he earned and spent \$20 million dollars. Eddie Fisher died of complications from hip surgery. His daughter Carrie, who had a shaky relationship with her dad most of her life finally reconciled toward the end. She had these words for her dad, "He was an extraordinary talent and a true mensch (Yiddish for person of integrity). He was all of that. And I love the way he sang "Oh My Papa".

**The One the Only Groucho:  
By Tom Cherre**

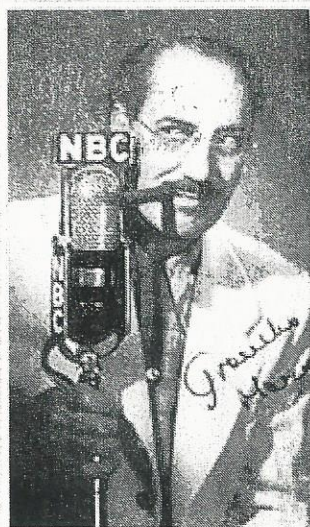


My first recollection of Groucho Marx was watching him on Thursday nights just before *Dragnet* came on. He was actually on the radio the night before and I would try and catch the jackpot question and then give the right answer while my parents were watching the next day. They thought I was quite a smart guy always knowing the answer. My mother would say how come you know all the answers, but your school grades are down. I had no answer for that one, but I kept on coming up with the right answers all the time. My brother finally let the cat out of the bag and that was the end of me sounding smart. I did enjoy his *You Bet Your Life* show. I was just listening to a show and I keep criticizing the contestants because I think they're so stupid not knowing some of the answers to relatively easy questions. After quite a few years after many Marx Brothers movies, Groucho's career turned a bit stagnant. He did a few radio shows, but they went nowhere. It was when he appeared on a Bob Hope Special that his career took a big upswing. Groucho had to sit in a cold waiting room for almost an hour before he would be on live radio. When Hope introduced him he

said "Why it's Groucho Marx, ladies and gentlemen! Groucho, what brings you here from the hot desert?" Groucho had this reply, "Hot desert my foot, I've been standing in a cold waiting room for almost an hour!" Groucho continued to ignore his script and went on to a verbal onslaught with Bob Hope. Hope, who could usually carry his own, being a formidable ad-libber in his own right, could not begin to keep up with Groucho. Marx extended the interview beyond its allotted time with a multitude of improvised wise-cracks. As luck would have it, producer John Guedel was listening to the show, and had a brainstorm. He approached Groucho and offered him a chance to host a radio quiz show. Groucho said, "A quiz show, only actors who are completely washed up, do those". Guedel explained that the quiz would just be a backdrop for his interviews of people and the storm of ad-libbing it would reflect. Groucho then said, "Well, I've had no success in radio, and I can't hold on to a sponsor. At this point, I'll try anything!" Thus his second career took off with *You Bet Your Life* which lasted on radio from 1947 till 1960. It ran on TV from 1950 until 1961. Of course he had a great career many years before.



The master of quick wit ad-libs was born in 1890 in New York City on the second floor above a butcher shop. Marx's family was Jewish. His mother Minnie came from northern Germany. His father Simon came from Alsace-Lorraine. Minnie's brother, Al Schoenberg who shortened his name to Al Shean, was largely responsible for getting the five (Groucho, Gummo, Zeppo, Chico, and Harpo) Marx brothers into the entertainment world. By 1909, manager Minnie had arranged her sons into a forgettable-quality vaudeville singing group billed as "The Four Nightengales". After a dispiriting Texas performance in Nacogdoches, Groucho, Chico, and Harpo began cracking jokes on stage. To their surprise, the boos and harassments started turning in to laughter and applause. The Marx Brothers would then perform variations of this routine for the next seven years. Their vaudeville days were extremely popular. Later on they were the biggest comedy act on Broadway. No other comedy act had ever been so successful on the Broadway circuit. This eventually led to their career in Hollywood. Groucho made a total of 26 movies, 13 of them with his brothers. Two of their Broadway hits were made into movies,



Groucho as host of *You*

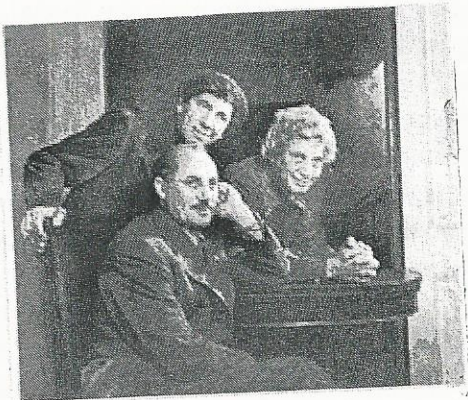


At work on *You Bet Your Life* with daughter Melinda, 1953

namely *The Cocoanuts* and *Animal Crackers*. Other successful movies, were *Monkey Business*, *Horse Feathers*, *Duck Soup*, and *A Night at the Opera*. Director Sam Wood would often complain to Groucho of his ab-libs and abtics on the set that were never in the scripts. Wood yelled "You can't make an actor out of clay." Groucho responded "Nor a director out of Wood." In The Marx Brothers movies Groucho usually put on horn-rimmed glasses, painted mustache, and darkened eyebrows and walked around slooped down in a tuxedo. When he was asked to do the quiz show on TV Guedel wanted Groucho to grow a real mustache to go along with his horn-rimmed specs. Another of his props was a cigar in his mouth which he usually indulged in while doing the show. Groucho was the subject of an urban legend about a supposed response to a contestant who had nine children which supposedly brought down the house. In response to Marx asking in disbelief why she had so many children, the contestant replied, "I love my husband." To which Marx responded, "I love my cigar, too, but I take it out of my mouth once in a while." Groucho, in many interviews, always asserted this exchange never took place, but it remains one of the most quoted Groucho-isms nonetheless. Many other catchphrases came about as a result of his show, including, "Say the secret



word and divide an extra hundred dollars between you. It's something you see each day, or always have with you. See your Desoto/Plymouth dealer, and tell em Groucho sent ya". Of we all heard booby prize questions like "Who was buried in Grant's Tomb? What color is the White House, or how long is a 10 foot pole? This is so the couple who didn't win a cent would not go home empty-handed. Surprisingly enough, some people would miss out on the gimmie questions. The theme song for his show was from one of his movies *Animal Crackers*, entitled, "Hooray for Captain Spaulding". Despite Groucho Marx's lack of a formal education, he did write several books. Originally Marx had hopes of being a doctor, but money was scarce and he had to quit school and work to help the family. Irving Berlin once, "The world would not be in such a snarl, had Marx been Groucho instead of Karl". After his TV show Groucho continued to do guest spots, a few forgettable movies and was a frequent guest on The Dick Cavett Show. In October 1971 as he passed his 81<sup>st</sup> birthday, his health became more frail physically and mentally as a result of several minor strokes. In 1974 Jack Lemmon presented Marx with an honorary Academy Award, his final public appearance, in which he received

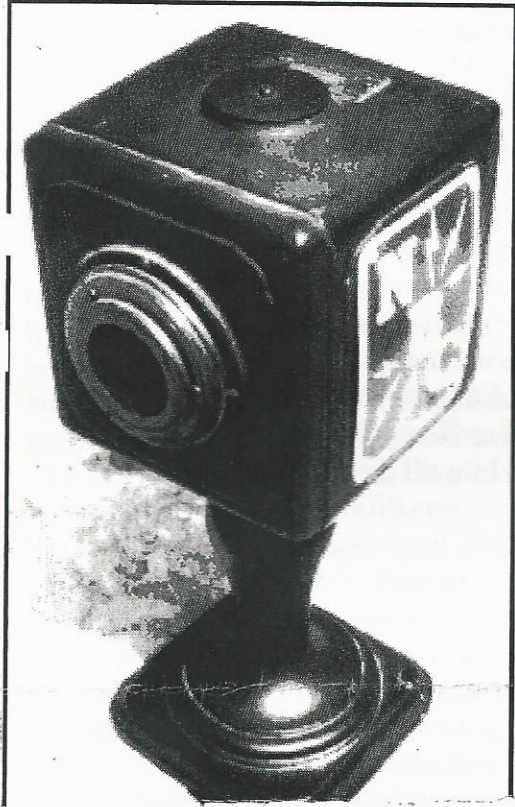


The Marx Brothers (clockwise:  
Groucho, Chico, and Harpo)

a standing ovation. Noticeably weak and sluggish, he took a bow for his deceased brothers, saying, "I wish that Harpo and Chico could be here with me to share this great honor". He also wished Margaret Dumont could have been present, adding that she was a great straight woman for him and that she never understood any of his jokes. Groucho's final appearance was a brief sketch with George Burns in a Bob Hope Special in 1976. His health continued to worsen and when his younger brother Gummo died, in April 1977 he was not given word. He retained his sense of humor till the end. His announcer George Fenneman remained close to him till the very end. When Fenneman was lifting him from his wheelchair, he put his arms around him and began to walk him back into his bed, Groucho whispered to George, "you were always a lousy dancer". Groucho Marx passed away on August 19<sup>th</sup> 1977. His death was somewhat overshadowed by the death of Elvis Presley who passed away only days before the one and only. He got snippets instead of major headlines. His legacy lived on in TV. Alan Alda did a take on the Marx Brothers in a *M.A.S.H.* episode. Gabe Kaplan portrayed Groucho in his one man show. He also imitated Groucho on his "Welcome Back Cotter TV show many, many times. Years ago I would see Groucho being done in the old black and white cartoons along side Crosby and Vallee. Rob Reiner as Mike Stivic on "All in the Family" did Groucho too. They say imitation is the most sincere form of flattery. I will say that in his time and genre he was the best. And you can tell-em Groucho said so. Or I should just say "You Bet Your Life".

## Radio's Forgotten Years Tuning Thru The Great Depression

By Elizabeth McLeod



Mention Old Time Radio, and the sounds that leap to most memories are those of the 1940s and early 1950s—the “Golden Age.” The OTR hobby in recent years has focused exclusively on that era – to the point where many collectors seem hardly aware of what happened before this “Golden Age.” Some may have heard the more popular programs of the late 1930s, but for many the years before 1935 are a blur. Too bad because the Depression era provides a fascinating period for OTR research—and some fine listening besides—if you’re willing to do some digging.

### Dawn Of A Decade

What was radio really like at the dawn of the 1930s? As the new decade began, the medium was moving into its adolescence. The experimental years were over, the networks were off and rolling, and the movement toward making radio a form of Wholesale Entertainment for the masses was well underway. The most popular program format of the late twenties was the sponsored musical feature. It could be a large symphonic group, a dance orchestra, or a song and patter team—and it would usually carry the sponsor’s name. The A&P Gypsies, for example—a large genre-crossing orchestra conducted by Harry Horlick. The Ipana Troubadours—a hot dance band directed by Sam Lanin. The Goodrich Zippers—a banjo-driven orchestra conducted by Harry Reser, when he wasn’t leading the same group under the name of The Cliquot Cub Eskimos. Everyone remembers The Happiness Boys, Billy Jones and Ernie Hare—but what about Scrappy Lambert and Billy Hillpot, who performed exactly the same sort of material as Trade and Mark, The Smith Brothers. The list is endless: The Silvertown Cord Orchestra, featuring the silver masked Tenor, The Sylvania Foresters, The Flit Sisters—yet another Harry Reser group. The Champion Sparkers, and The Fox Fur Trappers. The Ingram Shavers, who were the Ipana Troubadours on alternate Wednesdays. The Yeast Foamers, The Planted Pickers, and the magnificently named Freed-Eisemann Orchestradians. All playing pretty much the same sorts of music, all announced by Phillips Carlin or John S. Young or Alwyn Bach or Milton Cross in pretty much the same sort of stiffy formal style. And then came The Vagabond Lover.

### Heigh Ho, Everybody!



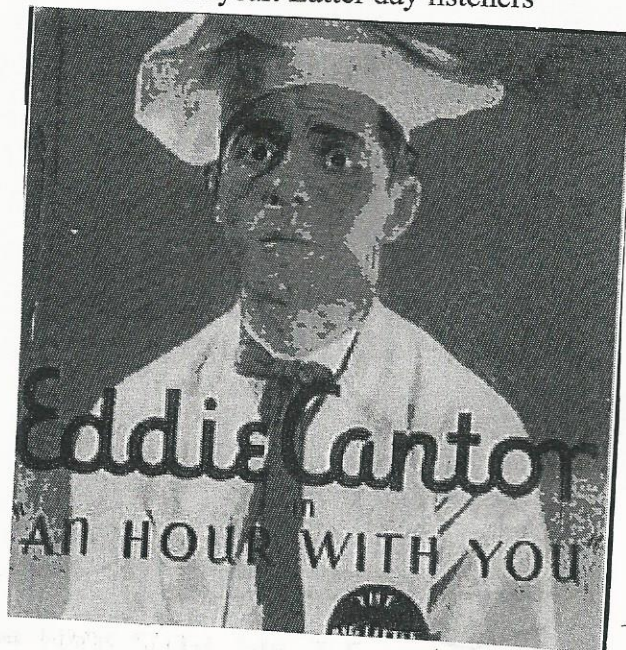
Maine-bred saxophonist Rudy Vallee organized his eight Connecticut Yankees in 1927, and the intimate quality of this group made it a radio natural. In a series of remote broadcasts over WABC from New York's Heigh Ho Club, Vallee pioneered an informal style of broadcasting which would help to break the medium out of its white-tie straightjacket. His band got its first network shot on NBC Blue in 1928, under the sponsorship of Clopin Cod Liver Oil Capsules—but the series faded from view as quickly as the stomach-turning product it advertised. Late in 1929, the people at Standard Brands decided to take a chance on an hour's worth of the Yankees every Thursday night, and this time the Vallee style grabbed the national imagination. Rudy wasn't a great singer, by any stretch of the imagination. Nor were the Yankees, musically speaking, anything but an ordinary twenties dance band. But Rudy was also a master showman. None of his musicians were any threat to the reputation of Biederbecke, but they new how to put fun into their playing. Rudy may have sung through his adenoids, but he was a master of routining songs, of putting together a program that worked as a cohesive whole and not just one-

Part Two Next Month

number-after-another. And he knew, instinctively, what songs were right for his style. For its first two and a half seasons, the series remained close to the traditional sponsored-dance-orchestra format, pausing only to introduce occasional guest stars. But late in 1932, with the show's popularity beginning to sag, Rudy's showmanship came to the forefront. A new policy was adopted, stressing guest stars. The Standard Brands checkbook opened wide, and the best that vaudeville and Broadway had to offer were enticed to the microphone. The Fleischmann's Yeast Hour became radio's first really Big Time variety program, and set the pattern for every one that would follow.

### Zanies

The success of the Vallee approach to the variety format caused the Standard Brands people to think that lightning might strike twice, and in 1931, they added a second hour to their radio schedule for Chase and Sanborn Coffee on Sunday nights. Tapped to star was the hyperkinetic Eddie Cantor, who had convulsed the nation with several guest appearances on the Vallee Program earlier that year. Latter day listeners



IT'S A BLUE NETWORK PROGRAM

**KABC**

The station disclaims all responsibility for the health of those who insist on hearing this thriller

— and Every Tuesday Night

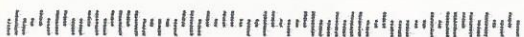
**TONIGHT at 9:30**

**in "Creeps By Night"**

**Boris Karloff**

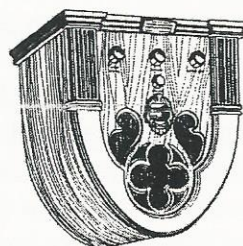
Persons suffering from heart trouble and those whose blood has a tendency to curdle and hair to uncurl under the stress of great excitement are urged NOT to listen to

**WARNING!**



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Jim Beshires  
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