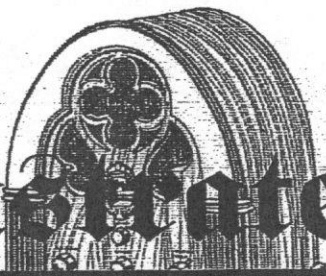


The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

The Illustrated Press



No 389

April 2011



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.

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All Submissions are subject to approval prior to actual publication.

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Library Rates:

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Editor's Two Cents:

Well, we're getting into spring. Hopefully April will be warm, sunny, and spring like. Thanks to Peter for another nice article. Our March meeting was a little smaller than usual. Hopefully attendance picks up. Still couldn't convince Frank Bork that the Green Hornet movie wasn't that bad. I hear there's a sequel in the works. I wonder if Frank will be interested? It's a given that there will be another Sherlock Holmes movie in the works. Robert Downey Jr. will also star in this one. I better make sure I tell Downey to look neat and clean shaven in this one or one of our members might be upset. I'd also like to thank all the members who showed up for our Spaghetti Dinner in February. We appreciate your support. Just got back from my nightly walk listening to a couple of Dragnet shows. Listening to the Chesterfield commercials I can't believe they say that their cigarettes are tested in 270 colleges and universities along with medical doctors endorsing their product as safe to the smoker. Times have sure changed. With the weather finally warming up I am enjoying my walks and listening to some good radio shows. And if the price of gas goes up any higher I may have to walk to work. In the meantime happy radio listening to all.

Bet'sha Didn't Know

There were a number of radio shows that also played on TV. I don't mean shows like The Green Hornet that played in the 60s, but actually played on both medias at the same time. Gunsmoke, Have Gun Will Travel, Groucho Marx, Ozzie and Harriet, and The Jack Benny Show are just a few. A very popular one was Dragnet. I just got back from my walk, and it bugs me a little listening to two episodes. Dragnet was suppose to be based on actual crimes from police files of Los Angeles. What irks me is when Friday confronts a suspect and he or she tells him to literally get the heck outta here. When a policeman comes knocking on my door the last thing I want to do is upset him. Friday took a lot of abuse and was the epitome of kindness when asking questions to two-bit punks. Another thing is when Friday is trying to draw out a confession there is always someone asking for a cigarette. Imagine pulling that one on one of Buffalo's finest. As I mentioned on the previous page Chesterfield was tested in over 270 colleges and universities as being the best cigarette with the least throat irritation. Of course Camel was the cigarette that most doctors endorsed. Most of the dentists however chose Viceroy's. Back then many radio shows were sponsored by tobacco companies. Jack Benny and Lucky Strike had a long relationship. Most of the commercials had some great jingles too. Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Perry Como, Gunsmoke, Red Skelton, and many others thrived because of cigarettes. They are now gone from the airwaves. Did you know that on the last day of tobacco ads almost every commercial on network TV was an ad for cigarettes. Miss the jingles but not the products.

Alan Reed By Tom Cherre

Alan Reed's name may not ring a bell to most people, but his voice is very famous. Do you recall the expression "Yabba Dabba Doo?" Of course we all know it was Hanna and Barbera's Fred Flintstone. To most of us more knowledgeable Old Time Radio fans we may have known him as a star of "Duffy's Tavern", "Abie's Irish Rose", "My Friend Irma", or part of "Allen's Alley" in "The Fred Allen Show". I, myself, I'm sure, along with Frank Boncore would have a soft spot for Reed as the colorful Pasquale of "Life With Luigi". He played Luigi's sponsor who would relentlessly always try to hook up his much over weight daughter Rosa with Luigi. Luigi never took the bait, but Pasquale never gave up. Reed grew up in New York City surrounded by immigrants of many nationalities. He was able to act in 22 foreign dialects. So it was no problem doing Pasquale, Clancy the cop, or Solomon Levy. He is probably most famous for his portrayal of "Allen's Alley" Falstaff Openshaw.

Alan Reed



Reed also played Shrevey the cab driver on "The Shadow" and also played Chester A. Riley's boss on "The Life of Riley." While growing up in the early 1920s radio was still in its infancy, but was invading American living rooms at an alarming pace. At the time radio producers were looking for young men and women willing to work long hours and enjoy little of the glamour. When he was only 19 years old he auditioned for the part of a mobster. The secretary laughed at this pudgy looking young man, and told him to leave. Undaunted by her unfavorable remarks, he waited until she left for lunch and then called the producer on the phone in his best Godfather type dialect. He then hung up the phone and walked into the producer's office. He was hired on the spot. Reed had many Italian immigrant neighbors and was able to mimic them perfectly. Within months Reed was becoming one of radio's most sought-after actors. This new type of medium, as comedian Steve Allen put it was "The Theater of the Mind." This medium needed performers who could invoke an entire world with a slight shift in tone or subtle change of dialect. Reed had a master of mimicry, and he gave his voice to one ludicrous character after another. In his many radio roles he was able to create a dialect for Italians, Irish, Jewish, Russian, or Englishman. He could also

play a Brooklyn tough guy or and intellectual. He could do it all. Reed majored in journalism at Columbia University, and began his acting career in the city, eventually on Broadway. He was born in 1907 as Edward "Teddy" Bergman. Reed spent his early years in a lavish apartment in the then upscale Manhattan neighborhood of Washington Heights. While his father struggled to make a living as a lawyer the family depended on his well to do maternal grandfather Abraham Greenberg to keep them above water. Greenberg did not get along too well with his son-in-law Bergman. This led to hair-raising arguments in the family causing strife and family discord. Reed at ten years of age would sob and began looking for a way out to drown his domestic dilemma. By chance a teacher at school took his class to see a production of Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice". The character of *Shylock* was admired so much by Reed as he performed on stage. Reed thought at once, that was his life's ambition to be an actor. Despite his family's objection's he quit school and got his first acting job at 19 as a mafia don. Reed grew up among Jewish, Irish, German, and Italian immigrants. I felt Reed's characterization of Pasquale was better than J. Carroll Nash playing Luigi. I had two Sicilian grandmothers, and they sounded more like Pasquale than Luigi. As the 50s entered into the 60s Reed's career was pretty much stagnant. The summer of 1960 animators Hanna and Barbera had a concept for a new cartoon portraying stone age people to act like Ralph Kramden and the Honeymooners. They were looking for someone with a rich baritone voice not sounding like a cartoon character. When Reed walked in to audition for the part of Fred Flinstone, he read as if he was

just another Pasquale, or Solomon, or Falstaff. He was hired immediately. Reed was responsible for creating the popular catchphrase "Yabba Dabba Doo." Reed had a gift that so few actors had. He could not only master his 22 different dialects, but he could act superbly in all of them. In addition to his radio and TV work, Reed starred in the classic movie "The Postman Always Rings Twice", "Breakfast At Tiffany's" and "Viva Zapata" playing the role of Pancho Villa. He also voiced Boris in Disney's "Lady And The Tramp". His booming voice was always familiar and enjoyable on countless of radio shows. Alan Reed died August 20th 1977 at the age of 69.



Verna Felton By Mark Clemans

She had an all too familiar voice. As a little kid I first heard her as the fairy godmother in Disney's Cinderella. She played the matriarch elephant in Dumbo, and was also in Sleeping Beauty. That gravel throated voice belonged to Verna Felton. In the movies she played more of a cantankerous older lady who always spoke her peace. She was a bit scary when I saw her character the Queen of Hearts in Alice and Wonderland. I remember her repeated line of "Off with their heads" quite scary for a lad of five.



She later made it big in TV as Hilda Crocker in *December Bride*. Before then she was a talented radio star. If you've listened to Jack Benny, you remember her as Dennis Day's domineering mother. She would blast into Jack and constantly ridicule Benny for not paying her son a decent wage. Even Jack was afraid of her. She was a no-nonsense mother and wife who could dish it out with anyone. She also played the grandmother of Junior the *Mean Widdle*

Kid on The Red Skelton Show. In addition, she also played a regular on The Abbott and Costello Show. Verna Felton was born July 20th 1890 in Salinas California. Her parents were both traveling actors. Playing a role as Little Lord Fauntleroy in 1899 led her to a 67 year career in acting. In 1921 Felton joined The Allen Players of the Sherman Theater gaining her fame as a dramatic actress. She was more or less stereotyped for his husky voice throughout her life. Walt Disney and Felton were close friends. She had steady work at the Disney Studios. Among some other voice-overs were Lady and the Tramp, and Jungle Story. Later in her career she played Fred Flintstone's mother-in-law Pearl Slaghoople. Among some of her popular movies were *Belles on Their Toes* (1952) and *Picnic* (1956). Felton was married to radio star Lee Millar who also did animations notably for Disney's Pluto. I always liked Verna Felton. Whatever she did, she always did well. She was a superb actress, much underrated. Verna Felton passed away on December 14th 1966, just four hours before Walt Disney passed away. She was like everybody's grandmother, and a joy to listen to.



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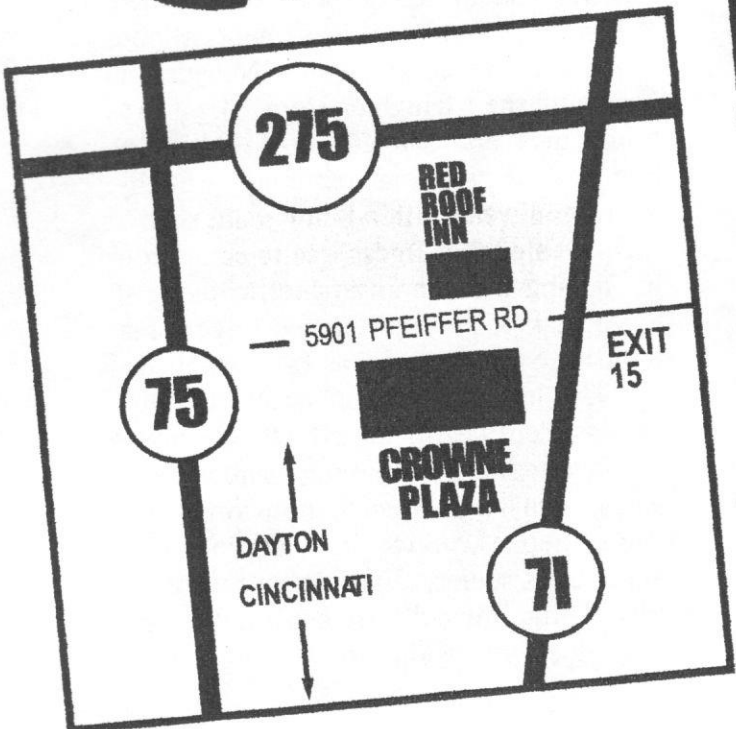
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LONG RUNNING COMIC STRIPS SHORT RUNNING RADIO PROGRAMS

Peter Bellanca

This installment of *Long Running Comic Strips-Short Running Radio Programs* features *Bringing Up Father*, aka Maggie & Jiggs. It ranks high on the longevity list of comic strips, running from January 12, 1913 to May 28, 2000.

Bringing Up Father was created by George McManus, who was born in St. Louis, Missouri on January 24, 1882. After dropping out of school at age fifteen he was hired as a newspaper artist by the *St. Louis Republic*. His assignment was to compliment crime related articles by graphically portraying individuals who were murdered, hung or otherwise victimized. To avoid these depressing assignments he began to draw cartoon strips, which he later said were, "mercifully forgotten."

In 1904 while attending the Futurity Stakes at the Belmont Park Race Track he placed a wager on a horse named Hamburg Belle and won three thousand dollars. With his new found funds he moved to New York City hoping to obtain a job as a cartoonist with a major newspaper. His plan worked, within a few months he was hired by Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*. Some of his early strips at the *World* were *Cheerful Charlie*, *Nibsy the Newsboy in Funny Fairyland*, *Let George Do It* and *The Newlyweds and Their Only Child*. *The Newlyweds* was the most popular of the strips and in 1912 it caught the attention of William Randolph Hearst and his syndication company, King Features. Hearst offered McManus a large increase in pay to leave the *World* and



sign with his morning newspaper, the *New York American*. He now worked for the *American*, but the *World* held the copy-rights to all of his strips and would not allow them to be moved to their competitor. McManus had to start over at the *American*.

The editors at the *American* had him draw a clone of the *Newlyweds* called *Their Only Child*, it was moderately successful. He then submitted a new strip called, *Bringing Up Father*. It was about a poor Irish/American couple named Maggie and Jiggs and their daughter Nora. Jiggs was brick layer and Maggie took in laundry. Suddenly, they became extremely wealthy. Seventeen years after being published it was revealed that Jiggs' wealth came from his having the winning ticket to the Irish Sweepstakes. No one seemed to care that the Irish Sweepstakes was first established in 1930, long after Jiggs became wealthy. The sudden wealth turned Maggie into a snobbish, social climbing shrew, who along with Nora tried to transform Jiggs into someone who would be acceptable to upper class society. Jiggs doesn't want any part of this life style. He can't understand why his ascension to wealth should

The Illustrated Press

prevent him from going back to his old neighborhood to play cards, have a few beers and some corned beef and cabbage with his boisterous friends at Dinty Moore's tavern. The strip takes its name from this premise as Maggie and Nora try to bring Jiggs up to their perceived level of society.

Maggie's misguided attempts to gain acceptance among the upper class were situations that many people could identify with, or at least understand, regardless of their own social position. They saw Jiggs as a down to earth, henpecked rich guy that liked to hang out with his working class buddies and Maggie as a snobbish phony.

In today's world Maggie would certainly be charged with spousal abuse. She was constantly hitting and throwing things at him including her rolling pin, vases or any item that was in her reach. It's interesting to note that while Maggie could physically and verbally abuse Jiggs, McManus and King Features would not allow Jiggs to do the same to her.

The strip was an instant hit. The public liked the characters, the story line, its unique art deco style, assorted bric-a-brac and the animated wall hangings that competed for the reader's attention. It was featured on Broadway, in comic books, Big Little Books, toys and films. Hearst's International Film Service, MGM and Monogram Films all released movies featuring Maggie and Jiggs. In the 1930's the George A. Hormel Company, citing the popularity of the strip used Maggie and Jiggs characters in advertisements to promote their new product, Dinty Moore beef stew. The stew is still being produced and is one of Hormel's leading products.

Dinty Moore's tavern also became popular in its own right when a series of restaurants were opened to capitalize on its name.



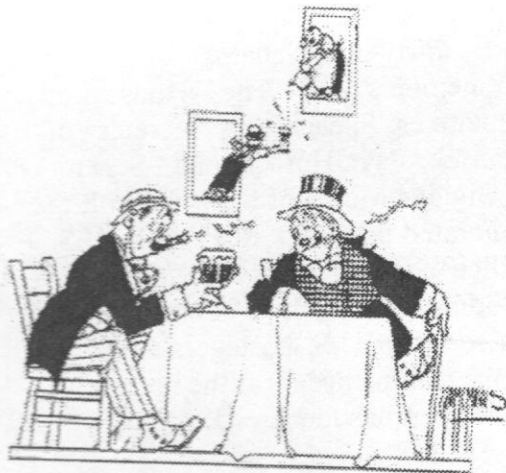
The strip was so popular that at its twentieth year anniversary banquet held in Washington D.C., over three-hundred guests attended including three cabinet members, thirty-one Senators and over ninety members of The House of Representatives. Speeches by Secretary of War Patrick Jay Hurley and Senator George Higgins Moses of New Hampshire commemorated the event. In 1995 the U.S. Post Office honored *Bringing Up Father* by including it in their Comic Strip Classics series of U.S. postage stamps. A copy of the stamp appears at the beginning of this article minus the 32¢ USA logo.

George McManus died on October 22, 1954, a millionaire many times over. It is estimated that he earned over twelve million dollars from the strip. He lost his first fortune in the stock market crash of 1929 and Maggie and Jiggs helped him regain much of it back by the time he died. He is interred in Woodlawn Cemetery in

the Bronx. The strip was continued by Vernon Greene, Frank Fletcher and Frank Johnson. King Features continued to syndicate the strip until it was canceled in 2000. Throughout its entire run it was never made clear if Jiggs was his first name, last name or nickname.

The Radio Program

Bringing Up Father had a brief run as a radio series during the summer of 1941 on NBC's Blue Network. It was heard on Tuesday nights at 9:00pm from July 1st until September 30th. Lever Brothers sponsored the program. Jiggs was played by Mark Smith, and later by Neil O'Malley, Maggie was played by Agnes Moorehead. Helen Shields and Joan Banks played Nora, and Craig McDonnell was heard as Dinty Moore. The program was produced by Cameo Broadcasting and Recording Studios in New York City and was supervised by the William Morris



Agency. It was well produced but failed to capture the attention of public and was cancelled after three months. The problem with the radio program was that remained faithful to the comic script. The strip was a one joke comic, relating to how a poor,

working class couple reacted when they became wealthy. McManus did an excellent job of conveying this concept in an amusing manner through the story line and art work, which made it easily understood by the public. The radio program could not duplicate this concept and was handicapped by the strip's one joke formula, which was very repetitive on radio, and thus failed.

Some Radio Highlights of the Stars of the Show:

Agnes Moorehead had a long and distinguished acting career in television, the Broadway stage, radio and in over seventy films. Space limitations make listing all her credits impossible. Television audiences will best remember her as Endora in *Bewitched*. Her *Bewitched* role lasted through 150 episodes. On radio she had parts in the *Mercury Theater*, *Mayor of the Town*, *The March of Time*, *Bulldog Drummond*, *Sherlock Holmes* and as Margo Lane on *The Shadow*. Her most memorable radio role was in *Suspense's* "Sorry Wrong Number." She played the part of a rich invalid, who is alone in her apartment and overhears a telephone conversation in which a murder is being planned and realizes that she is the victim.

Craig McDonnell's many radio roles included Harka in *Bobby Benson Adventures*, Captain John Drake in *Under Arrest*, Daddy in the *Daddy & Rollo* program, David Harum in *David Harum*, Gramps in *Gramps*, and he had regular roles in *The NBC Story Shop*, and *Official Detective*.

Helen Shields played Sylvia Meadows in *Amanda of Honeymoon Hill*, Joyce Burton

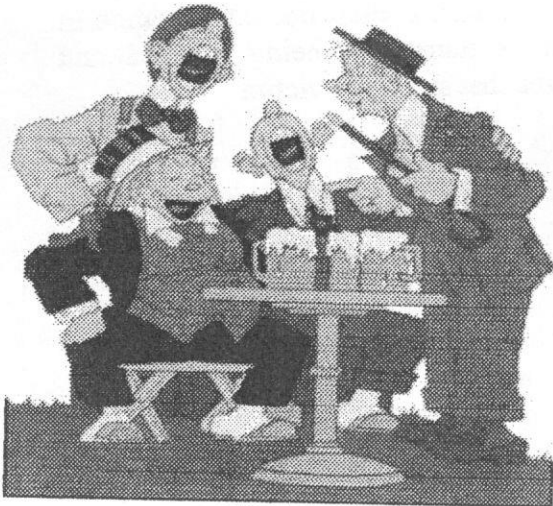
The Illustrated Press

in *Young Widder Brown* and parts in *Joe Powers of Oakville* and the *Lora Lawton* serial.

Joan Banks was a stage actress before coming to radio. Her radio parts included roles in *Ellery Queen*, *The Falcon*, *Gangbusters*, *John's Other Wife*, *Shorty Bell* and *This is Your FBI*. She also appeared in feature films such as *Cry Danger*, *Bright Victory* and *Return to Peyton Place*. Her TV appearances included, *The Medic*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Perry Mason*, *Bewitched*, *Hazel* and *Wanted Dead or Alive*.

Mark Smith played various roles in radio. He was Pop Foyle in *Kitty Foyle*, Uria Calwalder on the *Maxwell House Show Boat*, Deputy Paar on *Murder Clinic* and had roles in the *Ellen Randolph* serial and the *Cisco Kid*.

Neil O'Malley was primarily a stage actor. He was Tex Mason on the *Bobby Benson's Adventures*, Captain Harvey in the *Howie Wing* series, and also appeared on *Lawyer Q*, a quiz show, *Vox Pop*, the human interest and interview show and *The Columbia Workshop*.



I just like to compliment on Peter's article. It just so happens that "Bringing Up Father" was, my most favorite comic strip of all. Every Sunday my brothers and I would fight over to see who was the first one to get hold of the Courier's comic strip section. Back then it had many of my favorites, including Moon Mullins, Dick Tracy, Terry and the Pirates, Little Orphan Annie, Mark Trail, Smokey Stover, Joe Palooka, and the Katzanjammer Kids. When I say comic strip section, I mean there were about ten pages of colored comics. Along with old time radio shows going the way of penny candy, many of the great comic strips have also disappeared. Thank heavens we can relive the radio memories.

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It is with great sadness that I announce that last month, club member Frank Bork's grandson, Daryl Bork suddenly passed away from a heart attack. Daryl was only 39. Our prayers and thoughts go out to Frank and his family. All our members extend their deepest sympathies.

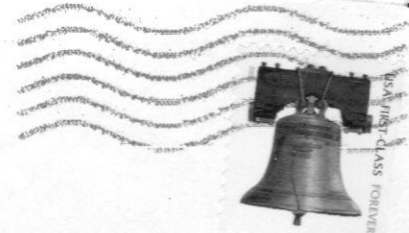
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