

The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS

Number 207

December 1993

ALWAYS THE FIRST ORDER OF THE NAZI INVADER



“SEIZE THE RADIO STATION!”

MAKE NO MISTAKE, Hitler knows the power of radio.

But in his hands, it is a power for evil — a force to smash men's liberty.

We, as free men, will listen tonight to programs of our own choosing — because brave men are fighting that we may remain free.

And so that these fighting men may have ample resources of vital equipment, Rogers Majestic has converted its factories and its research laboratories 100% to war purposes.

On that triumphant day when the peoples of the conquered lands once again control their radio stations, we shall provide Canadians with revolutionary new Rogers, Majestic and DeForest Radios.

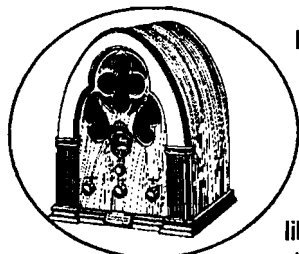
A.P. Mackenzie
PRESIDENT

ROGERS MAJESTIC (1941) LIMITED

A N D A F F I L I A T E D C O M P A N I E S

Manufacturers of Rogers, Majestic and DeForest Radios and Rogers Long-Life Fully Guaranteed Radio Tubes. A Tube for Every Purpose.

Membership Information



New member processing, \$5.00 plus club membership of \$15.00 per year from Jan 1 to Dec 31.

Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing, and a monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows:

If you join Jan-Mar, \$15.00; Apr-Jun, \$12.00; Jul-Sep, \$8.00; Oct-Dec, \$5.00. All renewals should be sent in as soon as possible to avoid missing issues.

Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The **Old Time Radio Club** meets the first Monday of every month at 7:30 P.M. during the months of September to June at 393 George Urban Blvd. Cheektowaga, N.Y. 14225. The club meets informally during the months of July and August at the same address. Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome. The **Old Time Radio Club** is affiliated with The Old Time Radio Network.

Club Mailing Address

Old Time Radio Club
P.O. Box 426
Lancaster, N. Y. 14086

Back issues of the *Illustrated Press* are \$1.50 postpaid. Publications out off print may be borrowed from our Reference Library.

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Cheektowaga NY 14225

Tape Library Rates: All reels and video cassettes are \$1.85 per month; audio cassettes and records are \$0.85 per month. Rates include postage and handling. Canadian rates are the same as above, but in Canadian funds.

Radio and World War II

An estimated 60 million Americans were at their radios Monday, December 8, 1941, to hear President Franklin D. Roosevelt noontime address to Congress. It was a record number of listeners at the time. Congress declared war shortly thereafter and the country geared up for battle. Radio played a vital role during the war years, helping to keep up both civilian and military morale as well as keeping the public abreast of war news. This could be said to be the beginning of the age of electronic journalism, the first sight of the global village.

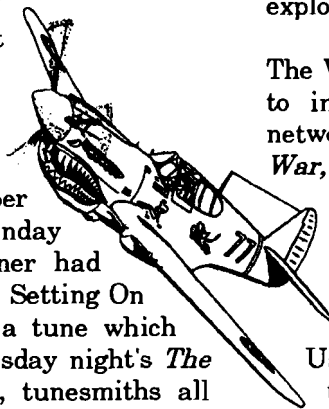
The public heard the first confused reports from Pearl Harbor on Sunday, December 7th. By six A. M. on Monday morning, songwriter Max Lerner had finished, "The Sun Will Soon Be Setting On the Land of the Rising Sun," a tune which made its national debut on Tuesday night's *The Treasury Hour*. Very quickly, tunesmiths all over the country were grinding out patriotic melodies designed to raise the blood pressure of the American people. Eddie Cantor, on his Wednesday, December 10th show, sang "We Did It Before and We Can Do It Again," a rousing piece that reminded Americans of past glories.

Radio became the prime source of Americans for war news. News programs became commercial successes for the networks. In 1939 NBC devoted 3.6% of its airtime to news, by 1944, the percentage had jumped to 20%. In the same year CBS spent 30% of its time on news programs. The networks began to worry about a drastic post war slump in advertising revenues when there would be no more war news to broadcast. In the meantime, radio reporters went overseas to follow the war action. Many became radio stars. Edward R. Murrow was easily the most famous, remembered for his broadcasts from war torn London, complete with the sounds of Big Ben tolling and the Nazi blitz. Larry Tighe made the first broadcast of an invasion from a plane while aboard a B-29 under heavy attack over Okinawa.

The transmission was picked up by the Navy stations on Guam and relayed to the states. Cecil Brown gave a vivid description on the sinking of the "Repulse" as he was aboard the ship at the time. Eric Sevareid bailed out of a transport plane with the troops to be on the scene in Burma's jungles. Does anyone remember George Hicks' words from a war sip on D-Day? "The platform on which I am standing is vibrating to the construction of the guns and exploding shells."

The White House suggested a series of programs to inform the public about the war, so the networks put together a series called *This Is War*, which was broadcast simultaneously on all four networks. It was a weekly half-hour show that ran for thirteen weeks. The series was directed by Norman Corwin, who also wrote several of the programs. The first show was entitled "How It Was With Us," and featured Robert Montgomery telling the audience how essentially good America was. "We never made killing a career," he said, "although we happen to be pretty good with a gun." Later programs saluted the Army Navy, Air Corps, and the War Production Board. They showed the nature of the enemy and encouraged young people to join with their peers throughout the world in the fight against Fascism and Nazism. *This Is War* avoid complexities. The English and Free French were the Good Guys, The Axis countries were the Bad Guys, and the Russians were Good Guys misrepresented by certain American newspapers. The Office of Facts and Figures estimated that the highly praised programs were heard by some twenty million listeners.

After the formation of the Office of War Information in 1942, radio war programs fell under the jurisdiction of OWI's Domestic Radio Bureau, headed by Donald Stauffer. The DRB was a collection of copy writers, account executives, and station time salesmen who spent days trying to think up ways to get the "war message" across to the public. To do this, they



employed "entertainment values" showing the strong admen influence, sugarcoating the unpleasant message. The DRB had to sidestep controversial subject matter and eliminate any political points of view from their programs because of harassment from Congress. *The Know Your Ally* program on the Soviet Union made Communism appear as a political system second only to democracy in effectiveness. The general attitude they conveyed to listeners was that, although complex issues were involved, why bother with them when there was a common enemy to be defeated? The DRB sold the Russians like soap and soft drinks:

*Soviet Union hits the spot,
12 million soldiers, that's a lot.
Lenin and Stalin, too,
The Soviet Union is Red, White, and
Blue.*

Entertainers took up the battle cry. Don Quinn, the writer for *Fibber McGee and Molly*, was an expert at weaving worthy thoughts into a plot line, such as signing up as a nurse's aide or refusing to patronize the black market. Phil Baker, emcee of *Take It Or Leave It*, closed the show with "Bye-bye, buy bonds." Many comedy and variety shows traveled to GI bases and their writers would include local gags for the men. Children's shoes often featured a direct or implied war message, exhorting the kids to help save fuel, clothing, or collect scrap.

The commercials of the war years exploited the war much as the advertising of today exploits the current happening in our society. The American Tobacco Company is remembered for its "Lucky Strike Green has gone to War," a catch phrase that tied the product with patriotism. Ironically, *Information Please* dropped Lucky Strike as a sponsor because of numerous complaints about the slogan. Pall Mall, also manufactured by the American Tobacco Company came up with "On the land, in the air, on the sea" complete with appropriate war sounds. This, too, was banned by one network.

Although radio would be taken to task for

making huge war profits from its swollen advertising revenues, the medium was responsible for raising morale during the war years and demonstrated that it could make the listener an active participant/observer in history in the making. The best example of this was the death of FDR. On April 12, 1945, at 5:48 P.M., CBS' John C. Daley broke into the *Wilderness Road* to make the first announcement to the nation. NBC interrupted *Front Page Farrell* with the news, ABC broke into *Captain Midnight*, and Mutual into *Tom Mix*. For three days, the networks suspended commercial programming, playing somber music or *The Lonesome Train*, a play by Millard Lampell about the death and funeral of Abraham Lincoln. And who can forget Arthur Godfrey crying at President Roosevelt's funeral.

Although crude when compared to what we are accustomed to today, radio proved its worth to America in her time of crisis.

**PHILCO
CORPORATION**
INVITES YOU TO
LISTEN TO
**OUR SECRET
WEAPON** **TRUTH**
**Hear Rex Stout
Expose AXIS LIES!**
**WIBX TONIGHT
7:15 P.M.**

RADIO MEMORIES

by Francis Edward Bork

Axis Sally! How many of you ex-GI's remember her? The guys who fought in the European Theater of Operations, but then how could you ever forget her.

Remember, "Say Joe, you poor beaten GI's fighting Mr. Roosevelt's trumped up war for England. While your Limely pals are home sleeping in warm beds, you poor guys are sleeping in the mud here in France. But don't let the mud bother you for tomorrow you'll be swimming the English Channel trying to get out of here. Wouldn't you rather be home with mom and dad eating some of mom's pot roast and apple pie instead of K-rations? And what about that cute little blond across the street from your home, miss her? Sure you do, but not to worry because she's not lonely anymore. Your buddy from your local draft board makes sure that she's not alone on these long winter nights. You remember him don't you? Of course you do, he's the guy with the flat feet and drives that big Buick Roadmaster and then too he has all the gasoline ration coupons he needs. Draft board business, you know. ha, ha."

"The Victorious German Army are driving you and your allies into the sea once again, just as they did at Dunkirk. Put down your arms and refuse to die in this useless trumped up war. You know you can't win so why not live and go back home safe to that little blonde trick back home. You will be well treated in Germany and then when the war is over you can go home. Home GI's, home."

Hey buddy, how about that BS. Heard that before? I'll bet that you did. That really tells how important radio is and how it can be used other than pure entertainment. Lucky for America our fighting GI's saw through Axis Sally and her attempt to sway them. The GI's did enjoy her radio broadcasts but not the way she thought they would.

"And now just for you lonely GI's of the defeated 1st Infantry Division 'The Big Red One,' listen

boys just for you *I'll Walk Alone*" she would purr in her sexy low voice.

Axis Sally, very little is known about her before she began to broadcast for Germany during World War II. Mildred Gillars Sisk beamed her war time program direct from Berlin to the soldiers of the Allied Armies fighting in Fortress Europe. European Theater of Operations, E.T.O. to the GI's. She had a low sexy voice which she used to full advantage on her broadcast, between the sentimental songs she played for our homesick GI's.

Our poor beaten GI's jeered and whistled at her when ever she tried to get them to give up and surrender to the "Victorious German Army." They loved the American songs that she played for them. Yes it did make them homesick, it did make them miss the girl next door a little more. It did not make them give up the courage to fight as history proves.

Sally, or rather Mildred grew up in Portland, Maine and attended Wesleyan College. During the 1930's she tried her luck as an actress in New York City without much success and not much better in Europe before Pearl Harbor. Almost overnight after Pearl Harbor she became an important radio personality known on two continents. She was not heard here in America except by those few people who picked her program up on powerful short wave sets while she broadcast from Germany. Her American countrymen were kept informed by the U.S. press and by letters written home by the GI's who serving in the European Theater of Operations.

Mildred Gillars Sisk from the time of her arrest by the Allied Forces after the fall of Berlin has claimed herself to be innocent of any broadcast as Axis Sally during the war. She has claimed that she used the name Midge in all her broadcasts. The nickname Axis Sally, Mildred said came about when the American soldiers confused her with another woman who did use the name Axis Sally which gave aid and comfort to the enemy, the same crime which Mildred was accused of. Those broadcasts came not from Berlin, but from Rome, Italy by another

woman who did use the name Axis Sally.

To this day Mildred swears that she was so upset at the time over what the Rome Axis Sally was saying on her broadcasts that she had made a strong protest to the German Foreign Office. All of which was disregarded.

Although the Rome Axis Sally had renounced her American citizenship, Mildred Gillars Sisk never did. Her Italian counterpart was born in New York City. Her name was Rita Louise Zucca, the daughter of the Manhattan Theater District restaurant owner Constantine Zucca. Rita was refused re-entry into the United States after the war and was sentenced to nine months in prison by the Italian government, which she did serve. After her release from prison she slipped out of sight and to this day no one knows where she lives.

The American Forces brought Mildred back to America in 1947. One year later she stood trial for her Axis Sally broadcasts. The call against her was weaker than the government had hoped for. She was charged with ten counts of treason, but was only conviction one count. Treason is not treated lightly anywhere, especially here in America, and that one count brought Mildred a sentence of from ten to thirty years in Federal prison.

Mildred served ten years in the Federal Prison for Woman at Alderson, West Virginia. Another inmate at Alderson at the same time Mildred served there was Mrs. Iva Toguri D'Aquino, better known to American marines and soldiers who fought in the Pacific Theater of operations as "Tokyo Rose." Mrs. D'Aquino was a Nisei Japanese and was last known to be living with her father, a pearl importer from Chicago.

When Mildred was in prison she became a Roman Catholic, due to the efforts of the nuns who work the rehabilitation of the woman prisoners. When Mildred was released from prison she lived for a time with her half sister, Mrs. Niemurer in Ashtabula, Ohio. Although the sisters were never close, Mildred being 15 years older than Mrs. Niemurer, her younger sister did study all the evidence against

Mildred and was convinced that she was being railroaded on incorrect evidence.

For seven years Mildred has been living in a small flat belonging to a convent. Although Mildred has not taken vows she lives and works with the Sisters of the Poor Christ Child who run a girls boarding school in Columbus, Ohio. She works as a music teacher and through her good efforts has impressed both the faculty and the students of that school.

The parents of the girls who attended the school knew that the notorious Axis Sally was teaching their girls, but no one seemed to be bothered by that fact. When the Mother Superior of the order was asked about Axis Sally, she said that Mildred was definitely a good influence on her students and has been living a productive life since she came here.

Mildred does not like to be photographed and rarely grants an interview to reporters. She is reluctant to discuss her past except to say, "there is no doubt in my mind that I did not receive a fair trial." Oh, it happened so long ago. Mildred Gillars Sisk, was she really Axis Sally???

Old Time Radio. It did have an awesome impact on our daily lives. It brought us not only happiness in the form of entertainment, it brought us some sadness too, war news, some good and some bad. But mostly it brought us together as a people, with hope for our own future and faith and hope for our American way of life.

Well that's it for now, till next time "Happy Radio Memories."

(ed note: Frank informed me that his Radio Memories column on William Gargan in the June *Illustrated Press* contained two incorrect dates. The movie *Miss Annie Rooney* was produced in 1942, not 1932, and the movie *The Bells of St. Mary's* was produced in 1945, not 1935. Sorry about that Frank.)

Member's Mike

Dear Editor:

The letter by Jack Palmer in the October *Illustrated Press* was certainly well meaning and not without merit, But I feel that the suggestions I made in my article of TUNING IN (July, IP) were reality-based and very practical.



Yes, we all acquired radio shows in our early collecting days from whatever source we could find. The number of people in the hobby back in the 1970's was far smaller, and the number of reliable dealers was smaller too. We found programs from those early collectors and dealers, nonetheless, exciting and fascinating! We had no standard by which to judge the "listenability" of the shows except, perhaps, from our dimming memory of what the "originals" sounded like. We soon found that old-time radio didn't have to sound atrocious! We became more "savvy" to the mechanics of dubbing, and most of all to the selection of the sources from which we were building our collections.

There were many collectors then, and, sadly, still many who couldn't care less about quality. One prominent gentleman, a long time collector in New York, has amassed what very well may be the world's largest collection of vintage programming -- ALL in mediocre to downright rotten sound!!

Suppose a new collector wanted to start a new quality collection and was obtaining his first shows from him? Those would be the nucleus of his new collection. In trading then, in turn, to someone else, imagine the disappointment when the second person hears the poor quality! That would be the end of the trading.

Clubs, because they have a membership of enthusiastic members, do not guarantee good sound. I personally know of two very large clubs whose entire collection had to be re-done (or partially re-done) because the quality was so bad, and so many members complained/quit. Again, the source has to be very carefully checked out.

The desirable sound for old-time radio should be the VERY BEST available. There should be no hum, speed variations, hiss, missing segment, distortion, brassiness, etc. You would be amazed at the number of people who think they are trading "good" or even "excellent" tapes to other collectors, when, in fact, they are poor quality, barely making it to the "for reference only" category.

The OTR dealer is in business to sell the best quality programs he can find and put on Master Tapes. He knows that if he sends out poor quality tapes, he will have no repeat business. Therefore, the new collector can depend on most of the dealers who have been in business for a number of years to give them top quality shows on good tape at a fair price. It eliminates the "guess-work" and, in the case of clubs, doesn't require any further dubbing or returning the tapes. Most reputable dealers stand by their products, and will make replacement if the customer has a problem with a tape.

Of course, after the newcomer has built up a nice selection of programs in excellent sound, he is in a position to start trading with older collectors who have fine sound in their collection. Up to this point, they really have nothing to "trade" with!!

Look for dealers/collectors who stress high quality, low generation tapes.

I am sure that those of us who have tape sales as part of our participation in the hobby, helping newcomers to get started is very important. My company, HERITAGE RADIO CLASSICS, has been around since 1970. We have now all but eliminated poor sounding tapes from our cassette collection, emphasizing the best quality obtainable, often replacing 2 or even 3 times, the same program in our catalog.

Old time radio can bring hours of enjoyment every week by enjoying it the way it sounded originally, not with poor, problem-plagued tapes that can actually be annoying to the ears. All the fun is spoiled by such inferior programs in one's collection. Start out right with the best, and stay that way. You'll be glad you did.

Tom Heathwood

From the Editor's Chair

As you can probably tell this month's *Illustrated Press* is dedicated to the big one, World War II. This was the first time that radio was available to the masses during a major war.

Today, of course, we can see killing and bombing right in our living rooms. Who said we haven't progressed. On that note, have a Happy Holiday Season and don't forget that dues are due next month. (membership dues have been reduced, see INFO page) Your eyes aren't going bad, I had to reduce the type size of this page to fit everything in.

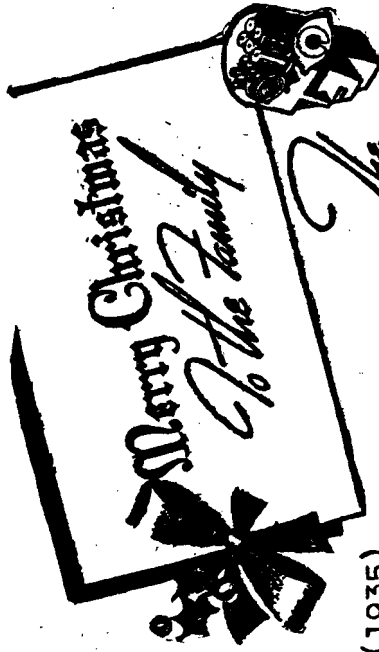


Be Sure...

Your New Radio Has

MAGIC BRAIN METAL TUBES

Trade In Your Old Glass Tube Radio
Now While It Still Has Value

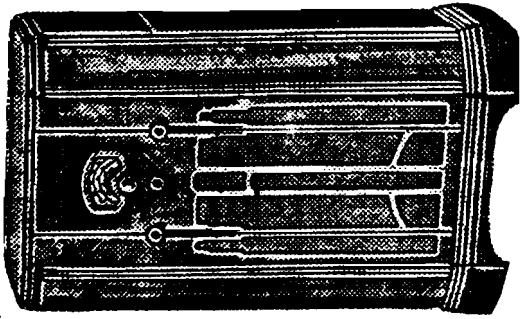


(1935)

The
RCA Victor
WITH

MAGIC BRAIN METAL TUBES

An RCA Victor, the most modern and best performing of all radios, promises years of radio joy without equal. See it...compare it with all others. Then you'll buy it and like it!



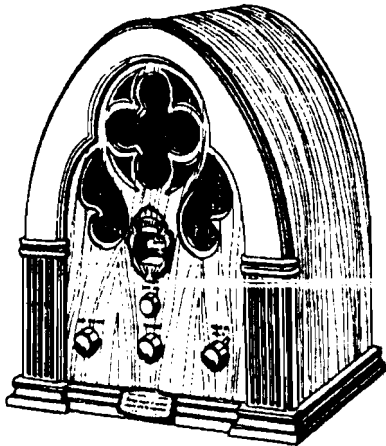
7-TUBE MODEL C7-6
This 7 tube radio provides a tremendous entertainment service. Foreign and domestic programs, police, aviation and amateur calls—all frequencies 540 to 18,000 kcs. Super 12-inch speaker—automatic volume control.



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