

The Old Time Radio Club

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"Hurry Tonto, we've got to get our check mailed to The Old Time Radio Club for our Membership Renewal, it's due this month."

Membership Information

New member processing, \$5 plus club membership of \$17.50 per year from January 1 to December 31. Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing and a monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows: if you join January-March, \$17.50; April-June, \$14; July-September, \$10; October-December, \$7. All renewals should be sent in as soon as possible to avoid missing 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 PM during the months of September to June at 393 George Urban Blvd., Cheektowaga, NY 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
56 Christen Ct.
Lancaster, NY 14086



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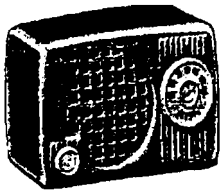
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SAME TIME, SAME STATION

by JIM COX

CAN YOU TOP THIS?

For a dozen years a trio of maturing vaudevillians appearing on this squeaky-clean joke-telling marathon sought bigger laughs than those guffaws produced by the puns submitted by listeners.

The panel included comedians 'Senator' Ed Ford ("Good evening"), Harry Hershfield ("Howdy!") and Joe Laurie Jr. ("Hel-low"). Yarns from listeners were delivered by a contemporary comic, Peter Donald. He was renowned as a master dialectician who often chose ethnic-sounding vernacularism to gain wider acceptance of ordinary quips. Donald routinely employed an Irish brogue, a throwback to his enormously popular alter ego figure Ajax Cassidy, a permanent 1946-49 resident of "Allen's Alley" on weekly broadcasts of *The Fred Allen Show*.

Ward Wilson moderated *Can You Top This?* for most of the run. He would offer a topic on which the next round of jests hinged. He shared the hosting with Roger Bower who also produced and directed the show at varying intervals. Charles Stark was the announcer.

One of the panelists, 'Senator' Ford—who wasn't an elected official representing anybody at all but who called himself by that prefix merely to announce his status as an orator on the banquet circuit—was creator, owner, producer and executive director of the show. Like the others he maintained a large repository of wisecracks (believed to exceed 15,000 gags among the panel threesome) that could yield explosive laughter at a moment's notice.

Each of these jests reached 1000 on a 'laugh meter,' an electronic apparatus connected to a studio microphone that recorded the level of audience response. An indicator was onstage in full view of those witnesses. Once in a while a joke gained only a snickering retort, registering 200 or less on the scale. The majority of puns exceeded 500, however, most of them hitting 1000. A listener's submission that was read over the air earned \$10 for the sender (\$5 in the earliest days). The contributor gained another \$5 every time a panelist told a subsequent joke on the same topic but failed to reach 1000 on the laugh meter. Consequently a collapse of the panel would bring the listener \$25, a tidy sum in those days of simple radio giveaways.

The *Can You Top This?* staff typically received about 6000 jokes every week from the folks at home. Screener Betty North pored over the mail before forwarding her picks to the producer, director, host and chief storyteller. Ostensibly only those gags pertaining to arson, politics and religion were considered off-limits although North got away with omitting some categories of her own: death, deformities, race and stuttering. Jokes about nationalities were fair game, however, and Peter Donald's dialects could readily convert from Italian to Irish to Jewish to whatever else seemed appropriate. North claimed she liked "fast jokes, talking stories that don't require anything visual to put them across." A quip's age was of little consequence: audiences laughed at *Today's Chuckle* from current newspapers just as they did a humorous tale that had been circulated for decades.

Across the show's dozen-year run Ed Ford claimed he had previously heard every joke sent in by a listener in one form or another. This triad of wits—labeled the *Knights of the Clown Table*—altered their stories often to fit a myriad of environments. In addition they adroitly interchanged ethnic characters, locales and other circumstances with direct bearing on a quip's environment. Sometimes enough elements were masked that listeners hardly recognized a retelling of "the same old story."

Can You Top This? ultimately appeared on three radio networks and across its 12-year run was broadcast every night of the week except Sunday. In its heyday the series aired for 30 minutes at varying hours between eight and ten o'clock eastern time. Following an absence of more than 27 months between 1951-53 the show resurfaced as a quarter-hour weeknight feature at 10:15 p.m. on NBC. That format played almost six months until the series transitioned to a weekly 24-minute NBC outing, a final gasp that endured for another three months.

While the program was initially sustained on Mutual during its formative years (1940-43) it was underwritten on that network by the Kirkman Soap Company from 1943-45. Colgate-Palmolive-Peet, which sponsored the show longer than any other firm, purchased a concurrent NBC series in 1942. When that association terminated a half-dozen years later *Can You Top This?* aired sporadic Ford Motor Company commercials on MBS for dual seasons although the series was often unsponsored. It was sustained by ABC in late 1950 and picked up for a half-year by the Mars Candy Company in early 1951. The program was sustained or attracted multiple sponsors on returning to NBC in 1953.

In video form *Can You Top This?* projected crudely. Offering few stage properties for viewers to focus upon

it was little more than the radio show set in front of a camera—with four aging comedians and little more. The jokes were stale and the series was stilted. That attempt didn't last long: the tube version debuted on ABC October 3, 1950 and departed March 28, 1951. Ward Wilson hosted it while Donald, Ford, Hershfield and Laurie swapped wisecracks.

Two decades later comic Morey Amsterdam purchased the rights and produced a syndicated TV rendition that aired from January to September 1970. Amsterdam, Richard Dawson, Stu Gilliam and Danny Thomas were among the celebrity participants. TV game show emcee Wink Martindale initially hosted the run and was soon followed by another veteran of that genre, Dennis James.

While this wasn't everybody's favorite series, at its pinnacle *Can You Top This?* garnered strong ratings and for a virtual nonstop half-hour tickled the funnybone of America with clean humor. The show didn't originate the notion of focusing on a joke-telling panel set before a microphone, of course. But it honed the idea and supplied an obvious dimension of affable enthusiasm and brilliance that may have been lacking elsewhere. The fact that the series aired for a dozen years suggests that it may have ultimately perfected the gag-swapping formula—or certainly done it better than everybody else.

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF RADIO

[Pardon Me, But My Bloopers is Showing]

By Owens L. Pomeroy

Co-founder, Golden Radio Buffs of MD, Inc.

[Excerpted from his book, "Sounds Like Yesterday, The Magic & Power of Radio"]

MR. WELLES AND THE PRUNES

Orson Welles and radio went together like ham and eggs. He was born to be a radio performer. Gifted with a deep melodious voice, piercing and mysterious, he conveyed to the radio audience many mood changes. He was oft times called "the boy genius," having been an actor, writer, producer and director in radio and the Broadway stage, before the age of twenty-six. One very good example of his genius ability to adapt to an emergency, such as he did at the end of his WOTW broadcast, when he gave an on-air explanation of the program, is related in this never-before published story, as told to me in an interview, by one of our "Golden Mike Award" recipients some years ago.

The 1937-38 season saw Orson Welles in the role of *The Shadow*, every Sunday at 2 PM, EST. One morning be-

fore going to the studio, Orson had a rather large bowl of prunes for breakfast. [*Now, I can see by that smile slowly creeping across your face, that you know what's coming! . . . but - let us continue.*] Anyway, about three minutes before air time on that Sunday morning, as luck would have it. "mother nature" called Mr. Welles and he made a beeline for the CBS men's room, next door to the studio where the broadcast was originating from.



Not having been missed by the producer until about 90 seconds before air time, he (the producer), looked out through the glass from the producer's booth and . . . **no Orson!** "Where in the hell is Orson! Where did he disappear to?", he said. The engineer explained that he saw Orson running out the studio door a few minutes before. **Panic!** The producer was about to tear his hair out as the hands on the studio clock were slowly approaching air-time.

"If Orson is not here when we go on-air, open my mike and I'll do his signature opening!", said the producer frantically. [*I should pause for a minute and explain to some of our younger readers that this was in the early days of live radio, and everything was done at the time of original broadcast, before they pre-recorded the opening and closing signatures.*] And now . . . back to our story.

Came air time. The producer cued the music. Up it came with that all-familiar "Orumph's Spinning Wheel," and faded — and just as the producer was about to open his mouth and utter those famous words, through the pa system in the booth he heard: . . . "**Who knows . . . what evil lurks . . . in the hearts of men?**", coming from the **MEN'S ROOM** at CBS, complete with toilet stall echo!

Now, what Orson had done was this: On the way out of the studio, he took a mike and head set with a rather long cable, so he could hear — just in case he did not make it back in time for the opening strains of the theme. So . . . Mr. Welles — true to his genius status — gave the opening signature that memorable Sunday afternoon, as usual on cue — from the men's room at CBS . . . as the historic prunes disappeared into oblivion!

EVERY DOG HAS HIS DAY

Radio newsmen during the Golden Era, used to do their news broadcasts from a small announcer's booth facing

the engineer. The final story they would do, was usually a lighthearted human-interest item of local nature —and immediately following the item, the engineer would cue-up the closing commercial. Now the newsman had no way of knowing what the closing commercial would contain — only the notation in his script “60 second commercial” and the sponsor’s name.

Here then, is a news item that backfired on a newsman in a little station in North Carolina in the late forties:

NEWSMAN: “The county dog catcher was quite embarrassed the other day when, while rounding up a stray dog adjacent to one of our Winston-Salem tobacco factories, the back door of his truck sprang open and nineteen dogs — his entire days catch leaped out and . . . disappeared through the tobacco field.”

[CUE: .60 SEC. COMMERCIAL]

COMM. “Friends . . . does your cigarette taste different lately?”

Alexander Pope once said: “To err is human, to forgive divine.” Could it not be said of these radio pioneers, “To forgive is human, to err, divine.” Two Classic examples of the lighter side of Old Time Radio.

The Wartime Radio Plays of Norman Corwin

By Lance Hunt

(Continued from the December Issue)



AN AMERICAN IN ENGLAND SERIES
Shortly after the end of the “This Is War” programs, CBS asked Corwin to write a series of programs about how things were going with the people of Britain. This resulted in seven broadcasts coming directly from Britain (two were lost, however, because of bad atmospherics) and four more produced in the United States.

Corwin went to England in the summer and fall of 1942 with Joseph Julian, a radio actor, who tells the stories in the series as “Joe,” a typical American looking at British life and fortitude. The series had a journalistic-documentary style reminiscent of the Morrow broadcasts from London. England was then in its third summer of World War II and the concentration was natural-

ly on the war. But Corwin saw the series on a much more universal plane:

“ . . . to Columbia belongs a laurel for undertaking without government initiative or directive the first such expedition in radio history—an American built series originating abroad for the express purpose of sending back to this country programs synthesizing in dramatic form the story of the life and times of the common people of another country. There can never be too much radio enlisted in the cause of promoting knowledge of peoples and good will between nations.” CBS was so satisfied with the series that they followed it with others in similar vein—“An American In Russia,” Orson Welles’s Latin American series, and a BBC-CBS exchange series, “TransAtlantic Call.”

The “An American In England” series met critical acclaim from such divergent sources as the New York Times, the Glasgow Herald Variety, the Hammond, Indiana Times and the London News Chronicle. Unfortunately, it was aired in the United States opposite Bob Hope who was riding the crest of his radio comedy show “which didn’t have to buck sunspots and fading over the Atlantic.” (A touch of irony here in the light of Hope’s limitless wartime service camp treks to entertain the troops.)

Corwin also notes that some of the local stations to which the program was furnished by the network canceled out, as is their option with sustaining shows, among them wrestling matches, speeches by officers of county historical societies and talks on gardening.

LONDON BY CLIPPER—The first show in the series, the title today evokes a touch of continental mystery. But it is “Joe,” a plain American, who is abroad this overnight clipper and who narrates, partially in the second person.

JOE: You get on board and take an assigned seat. You look around at your fellow passengers. Nothing odd about them. Pretty much like the average pay load on the eight-o’clock plane to Washington . . .” (Curtains are pulled on the plane for 20 minutes after takeoff due to war regulations.) He continues: “Twenty minutes out, and the curtains go up. You look below and see your country gliding westward you see the farms and woods and towns of two of the forty-eight states and the blue Atlantic. It’s a calm day—a fine North American summer morning, just a little mist.”

(All this is dramatically played against the effect of engines in full flight as heard from inside the cabin against musical interpolations.) But suddenly this mood is broken.

PASSENGER: Hey, what's that stuff on the water there?

JOE: What stuff? (Pause: to audience) You look out the window and see something that hits you like a sledge hammer.

(MUSIC: A sudden and dark presence, forte. It sustains somberly and sinuously, under the following:) "Oil, thick oil. Far as the eye can see. Great patches of oil, spread out over mile after square mile of water, covering the ocean with a gray-green scum. That's war, drifting in-shore with the tide. These patches are all that's left of American and Allied ships torpedoed recently along the coast. You wonder how many good men lie in those waters—how many thousands of tons of munitions and food for England and Russia are rotting beneath the surface of this oil. Gives you a new slant, looking down on this tremendous oil slick, about people who act careless with the dim-out as though it were a kind of nuisance, a kind of make-believe. Well it's not. That oil down there ain't kidding."

This message is especially representative of the potency and power of descriptive radio. And this kind of wartime reality was probably quite new for most Americans who were still playing golf while the English were melting down their decorative, ornamental gates and fences for bomb shells.

Enroute, Joe reflects on how he'll respond to the British.

JOE: It occurs to you that we Americans as a whole know very little about Britishers, although we've been speaking their language all our lives, and half our cities are named after theirs. We know more about English dogs and muffins and tweeds than about English people.

After more supposition on the British character, Joe crawls into his Clipper berth and awakes over England. At the unidentified airfield at which he lands, he spots a big, English Lancaster bomber and it lifts his heart.

"... this grizzly old battle-worn giant with bullet holes in his fuselage and one of his wings slightly ruffled. This fellow, you can wager, was over Germany last night. This baby has been carrying the war to where it belongs—right on the front doorstep of the Fascists."

Joe catches a train for London but not before he catches a taste of wartime scarcity—no milk at the restaurant, only coffee; no sandwiches, only "meat pastes". The train effect continues in the background adding to the adventure of Joe's first visit to Britain. He looks around his coach: The train is crowded. It's a warm Sunday, and people are apparently returning to London from outings in the country. Everybody in the compartment looks tired, but none can be tired as you.

You look at their faces. Good, average, unspectacular, kindly, people. No signs of malnutrition in this batch. A little shabby, perhaps—not a new hat or suit or dress in the lot. For a long while you ride in silence. Then you look up, look casually out of the window; and there—right in front of your eyes . . .

(MUSIC: Shock. It tapers off under:) . . . are the first bomb ruins you have ever seen. It's an ordinary suburban house such as you'd find in Chevy Chase, Oak Park, Glendale—any of ten thousand towns in the State. But the roof of this one is burnt away and the insides blasted out . . . and now you're passing a church, a little church like the one in Winthron, Mass., or Kent, Ohio, or Pleasantville, Mississippi. Only this one is just four hollow walls.

Joe speculates that "it might be a good idea to ship one of these ruins intact to America and set it up stone by stone in Times Square, so we could see what a bombed house really looks like."

Corwin then attempts to bring the war closer to home. Joe tells his new friend that "to a lot of us the war exists mainly in the newspapers. Here it's blown up your houses and killed your neighbors. Joe's fellow passenger claims that "things are never going to be the same as they were . . . the people who are fighting this one and paying for it and suffering its agonies are simply not going to let the old systems take up where they left off.

JOE: Are you talking about all people, or the people of England?

MAN: All people, I hope—the English, certainly. We've discovered that the idea of every man for himself, that the old class distinctions have outlived their usefulness—if they were ever useful. We've found out that when people allow incompetents and blunderers to manage their affairs, they run up a big bill in blood and grief and money.

JOE: But how are you going to do anything about it?

MAN: Well, by insisting on a new life—by demanding that the same tremendous sacrifice and energy, the same resources of men and material that are put into a successful war be put into a successful peace. (Pause) It staggers the mind to think of what could be done in the way of housing and health and education for the cost of what it takes to run a week of this war. The idea is to first win the war—and then to see that what can be done after this war, will be done. That's what we're fighting for. Not the old stuff.

At the station in London, the man introduces himself as Flying Officer Hill of the Royal Air Force (A fact which Joe probably knew assuming Hill was in uniform but was kept from the radio listener until the right dramatic moment.)

Hill asks Joe not to judge the British "by the lobbies of a few hotels in London (but) see us as we are—see us in the towns and villages and on the streets and in the factories and pubs and army camps and aerodromes and schools. I think you'll like us."

Joe has difficulty finding a taxi since each is allotted so much petrol for the day and go home when it is exhausted. When he does get to his hotel the bathroom window is painted black.

JOE: It's getting on toward midnight now. You take a warm bath and stagger into a robe. Then you switch off the lights and go over to the window and pull back the curtains.

(MUSIC: London in the gloom of mid-war blackout.) London is blacked out. The greatest city in the world lies in a vast hush between battles. You see the rooftops faint in the light of the waning moon. And you make out the Thames. You make out the tall silhouette of Big Ben; you're surprised to find it this close. (Pause) And as you stand at the open window, suddenly you hear airplanes overhead. They must be friendly planes, or else you'd hear a siren—or wouldn't you? Is that distant gunfire, or a train crossing a bridge somewhere? Is that a siren, or a bus starting up in low gear? The planes keep droning above you. They're heading east to the attack. They'll be flying over swastikas twenty minutes from now.

(Big Ben begins to strike, off in Westminster. It is midnight.) Ah! Big Ben! Fine, upstanding, outspoken Ben—telling the world midnight has come again to this island in the third year of its siege. You wonder how many midnights more will sound before the siege is turned and we do the besieging? How many midnights more before Big Ben is joined by all the bells in England and in the whole wide world, proclaiming victory and peace and the new world of Flying Officer Hill?

(HE PAUSES AND REFLECTS.)

Another plane flies up there somewhere in this black night of England, bent on making that new world.

THE TWELFTH BELL, DISSOLVING INTO:

(MUSIC: CONCLUSION)



JOAN: Wisecracks Behind the Counter

She was named Madonna, of all things, and at the age of seven was billed as the "Toy Comedienne." Since then, Madonna Josephine Davis has dropped her dignified name, but not her dignity. For the audience, her speciality is making herself look ridiculous—as awkward as each of us sometimes fears we must look to other people. But you have to be a very self-assured person to be able to spend your life appearing as a bundle of misplaced arms and legs with a collection of unworldly facial contortions and uninhibited actions. The Joan Davis that you never see is a poised, attractive woman, serious-minded, and avid reader, and a hard worker. At the age of three, she sang and recited pieces at church entertainments, retired for a while until she was six, and since then has risen from the Toy Comedienne to the "Queen of Comedy." Joan married Si Wills, her vaudeville partner in 1931. Pretty soon Si was writing her scripts. In 1936, Joan had a part in a movie called "Millions in the Air" and clowned like no woman had ever clowned before. She bounced and split through dozens of movies after that, and in 1941 she appeared on the Rudy Vallee radio program. Came a parody of her "Hey Daddy," and she was a regular member of the cast. Since then, she's been splitting sides between movies and radio, but in private life she maintains all the dignity that Joan says a woman should have. One of the best-dressed women in Hollywood, Joan is also the mother of 17-year old Beverly Wills. Father Si Wills and Joan were divorced in 1947. Beverly, whose main ambition is to be like her mother, now plays the role of Fluffy Adams on radio's *Junior Miss*. 'She's been living in an atmosphere of theatrical chatter all her life. The day she came home with her first report card she announced excitedly, "Look, Mother, did you see the swell write-up I got." They live together in a small home in Hollywood. Joan is now reigning over Willock's Department Store on *Leave it to Joan* every Friday night. The customers suffer, but they'll never know what Mr. Hackady, the manager, has to endure. Madonna, not the customer, is always right.

(June, 1950)

MEMBER'S MIKE



In response to member John Jackson's letter in the October IP, the IP has always allowed free classified ads for members. However, our club probably has not let our newer members know of this service. Therefore, let it be known that our club will publish up to two free classified ads per member each year in the IP.

Also, your other ideas have merit. I believe many members would like to communicate with each other. For interested members, please send your name and E-mail address to the editor of the IP for future listing. To start this, my E-mail address is raolday@earthlink.net.

I have been interested in old time radio since the revival of shows in the mid-60s. I started collecting shows on records in the early 70s and added cassettes in 1978. My collection has grown to over 16,000 shows and is still growing. I have attended several OTR conventions held in Newark, Cincinnati and this past year in Seattle. Member Frank Boncore and myself host an OTR radio show each Sunday at 9 PM on the Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service for the blind and handicapped. My first broadcast was on Halloween in 1988. We also are on each holiday with a three hour broadcast from 10 PM until 1 AM. Although the service is broadcast over a closed frequency (special receivers required), local TV channel 7 (WKBW) in Buffalo has picked up the signal and sends it out on their side band which may be picked up by selecting the MTS or SAP button on a stereo TV. Channel 7 serves Western New York State and Southern Ontario including Toronto.

Although I enjoy many ORTR programs, my favorite is *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* starring Bob Bailey. Please note that this show started in 1949 but was mediocre until Bob assumed the lead in 1955. Bob Readick and Mandel Kramer were the stars in the early 60s and were also very good as Johnny Dollar, but the best run of the series were the 15 minute daily serials that started in 1955 and ran for 1 year. For the members unfamiliar with the show, Johnny Dollar was an insurance investigator. At least one of the Bob Baily shows should be in everyone's collection. CAUTION, this show is addictive!

I don't think anyone would care to see my picture or know who I work for, but if you would like to chat about

OTR or talk about trollys (my other hobby), please E-mail me at the above address.

Dick Olday



Dear Ken,

I just finished reading part 2 of "The Wartime Radio Plays of Norman Corwin" by Lance Hunt and I must say that I enjoyed this article. I am curious as to whether or not the series "This Is War" is available in either club libraries or individual collections, I sure would like to hear some of them after reading this article. I remember a number of years ago borrowing a copy of one of these shows, but the sound was pretty bad.

Best regards,
Gene Dench

Ed. Note: I have searched through my copies of the library and my own collection and have come up short. Can anyone else help Gene in locating the series mentioned above?

A Legendary Voice Silenced: Talk Radio Dean Dies at 70

John Otto, the dean of talk radio in Buffalo passed away early Monday morning, December 6, 1999, barely 48 hours after winding up another 6-night week of high quality conversation and occasional cantankerousness on WGR Radio. The pioneer broadcaster, 70, died in Buffalo General Hospital after suffering a weekend fall at his West Ferry Street home, although doctors attributed his death to the emphysema for which he had been treated for the past 2 years.

The man who would later epitomize radio chatter began his on-air career performing commercials at WBNY-AM in 1952. "The late Henry Brach used to love calling me a 'spot belcher,'" Otto remembered. He soon became the nightly host of "Mostly Music" from 8 to midnight. A newscasting gig at WEBR followed, before Otto joined WGR AM-FM-TV in 1955.

A variety of TV and radio assignments ensued, highlighted by Otto's creation of a "serious music format" for WGR-FM. But in 1962 he took over a late-night timeslot on WGR-AM and designed the talkshow that

continued, with few modifications, until his death. Otto remained on the WGR nightbeat until 1964, when he jumped to the then-rival WKBW and hosted a similar nocturnal gabfest for 5 years. "Then KB gave up, put up the dish and followed the bird," Otto said. Thankfully, I was welcomed back on WGR and was kept on by program director Darryl Parks, who believed in me and to whom I am grateful to this day."

John Otto's calm manor, rich voice and warm style set a remarkable standard for dignified and sometimes iconoclastic conversation for nearly 4 decades. "I was born in Buffalo," he was fond of saying, "educated at Buffalo's Bennett High School and the University of Buffalo. I've been a Buffalo broadcaster always—nowhere else—and I've had no desire really to be anywhere else."

Otto is survived by his wife Sallie, to whom he was married for 42 years, his two sons, two daughters and four grandchildren.

Clayton Moore, TV's Lone Ranger, Dies at 85

Clayton Moore, who grew up wanting to be a cowboy or a policeman and fulfilled both ambitions by playing the Lone Ranger on television, in the movies and at nostalgia shows, died Tuesday, December 28, 1999 at West Hills Hospital in West Hills, Calif. He was 85 and was portraying the masked man long after his hair color perfectly matched his silver bullets. Mr. Moore apparently suffered a heart attack at his home in Calabasas, a hospital spokesman said.

Some two dozen actors have played the champion of law and order in the Old West since the Lone Ranger first appeared on radio in 1933.

Who was that masked man? He was born Jack Carlton Moore on Sept. 14, 1914, on the South Side of Chicago, the son of a real-estate broker. As a youngster he spent Saturday afternoons in Chicago's Devon Theater watching the serials. "I would give anything to be up there on the screen with Ken Maynard, Tom Mix, George O'Brien, William S. Hart, Harry Carey Sr., so many wonderful cowboy heroes." Mr. Moore remembered in his autobiography, "I Was That Masked Man" (1996). "Whenever anyone asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I said either, 'I want to be a policeman,' or 'I want to be a cowboy.'"

The broadcasting executive George Washington Trendle and the writer Fran Striker, who created the Lone Ranger for the Detroit radio station WXYZ in 1933, were

searching around for an actor who could play the Lone Ranger when he moved from radio to television. After catching Mr. Moore in the film "The Ghost of Zoro," they gave him the role.

A trim but broad shouldered six-footer, Mr. Moore was a fine horseman and cut a handsome and commanding presence. But he lacked the kind of deep voice brought to the character by Brace Beemer, who had played the Lone Ranger on radio since 1941 and would continue in that role until the radio series ended in 1954. So Mr. Moore listened to recordings of his predecessor and practiced singing scales in an effort to match Mr. Beemer's sonorous tone.

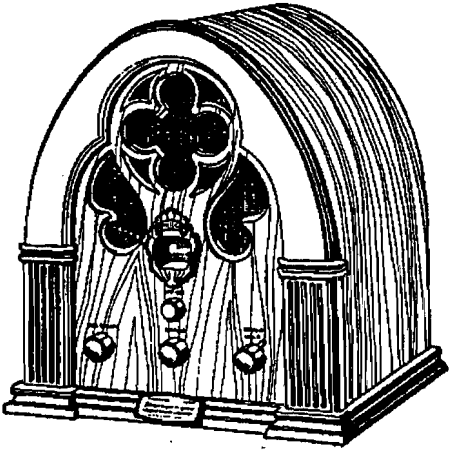
The Lone Ranger made its debut on television on Sept. 15, 1949, the first western series ever produced specifically for television. Mr. Moore appeared on the television series every year except for one season—September 1952 to September 1953—when the producers replaced him with John Hart, an actor who had been in earlier *Lone Ranger* episodes, often playing the bad guy. Mr. Moore said he received no explanation for why he was replaced and why he was returned.

When the Lone Ranger took his last ride on television in June 1957, Mr. Moore decided to continue as a career Lone Ranger, embarking on the personal appearances trail. Except for a role in one episode of *Lassie*, he never played another character. Two decades later, the Wrather Corporation, which had bought the rights to the Lone Ranger from Mr. Trendle in 1954 for \$3 million, asked Mr. Moore to stop wearing his mask at public appearances. It anticipated hiring a younger actor, Klinton Spilsbury, for a new Lone Ranger movie and decided that America wasn't big enough for two masked men. But Mr. Moore balked at removing the mask. "This country needs heroes, and there aren't many left," he said. "For many Americans, the Lone Ranger is a hero, and people don't want to see their heroes shot down." He went on talk shows and held news conferences to press his case and reported receiving 400,000 letters of support. After the Wrather Corporation obtained a court order in 1979 restraining him from wearing the Lone Ranger's black mask in paid public appearances, Mr. Moore resorted to wearing sunglasses cut in the shape of a mask.

The early 1980s were a wrenching time for Mr. Moore. Jay Silverheels, who remained his friend long after their television series ended and who had run a workshop for Indian actors, died in 1980. His wife of 43 years, the former Sally Allen, died in 1986. Mr. Moore is survived by their daughter, Dawn Gerrity of Los Angeles, and by his fourth wife, Clarita Petrone.

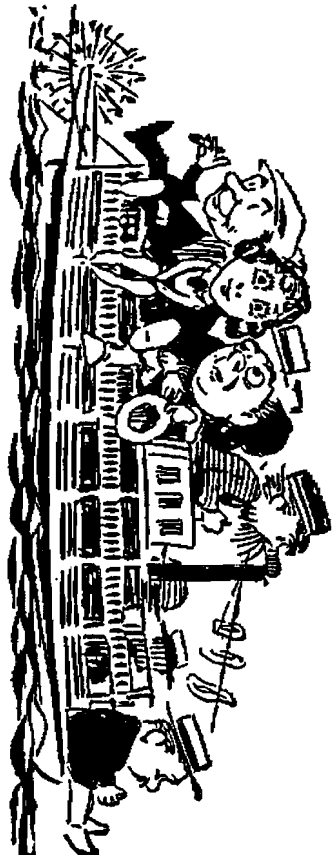
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This will be your final issue of the *Illustrated Press*, unless your Membership Renewal has been received before February 15, 2000. The upcoming February issue will have an updated listing of all the new and replaced Cassettes that have been added to the Cassette Library.
