

The Old Time Radio Club

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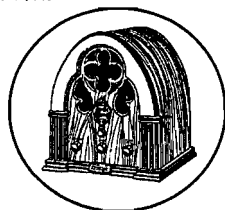
FANNY BRICE "Baby Snooks"

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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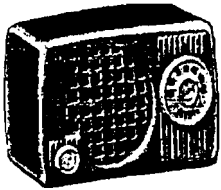
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SAME TIME, SAME STATION

by JIM COX

WELCOME TRAVELERS

Tommy Bartlett was convinced that people on a journey are more likely to let their hair down and chat with strangers than they are to talk with folks in their own hometowns. For seven years on radio and three-and-a-half years on television he put his idea to the test before daytime audiences tuning in to *Welcome Travelers*.

Emanating live five days a week from the College Inn of Chicago's Sherman Hotel, the show dispatched a cadre of scouts to local train and bus depots—and, later, airline terminals—to pluck prospective interviewees who were passing through the city on their way to somewhere else.

Those appearing on the show were encouraged to relate unusual tales about themselves and possibly the circumstances that brought them to Chicago. Sometimes they were asked about life in their hometowns and the states they represented. Some shared highly emotional issues while others told of romantic encounters or even spoke of troubled concerns, situations that had left them destitute or alone.

Introduced in a manner comparable to a train barker they told their stories to Bartlett, the program's co-creator and master of ceremonies. For their part participants were rewarded with gifts of valuable merchandise. A studio audience typically averaging 1,000 members witnessed this. They, too, had been recruited at Chicago train, bus and air terminals, where *Welcome Travelers* dispensed free tickets daily to the show.

Shortly after daybreak each morning a crew of quick-witted, affable, well-groomed young men fanned out to the city's multiple rail, bus and air terminals. Studying the incoming travelers, the staffers—having gained a sixth sense based on previous encounters—quickly spotted worthy guests. Introducing themselves by offering a ticket for the broadcast, these young scouts engaged their quarry in dialogue about their travels while simultaneously determining who might become enticing interviewees.

Later, at the Sherman Hotel, prospective program guests completed questionnaires about themselves. For two years, from June 30, 1947 through July 8, 1949, the half-hour weekday program aired at 12 Noon Eastern Time on ABC. When it moved to NBC on July 11, 1949 it was on at 10 a.m.

While the travelers enjoyed a sumptuous complimentary breakfast, the program's staff—working at top speed—culled from a stack the most interesting questionnaires while carrying on verbal exchanges with their authors. Subsequently these assistants put together vita sheets on each one. These were given to *Welcome Travelers* director Bob Cunningham. From them he selected the guests and presented them to Bartlett. He also suggested the route that a subject's interview might take. At that juncture Bartlett took over.

In the course of time it was probably inevitable that the program would be taken by some unscrupulous charlatans who sought personal gain at the expense of integrity. More than once a guest claimed to be down on his luck and stranded. A runaway youth gained a sympathetic following while pretending to be an orphan enroute to a relative's home. Occasionally the show was put in the position of separating fact from fiction while dealing with human nature of many stripes.

Sometimes the staff of *Welcome Travelers* uncovered situations requiring special preparation. The nation rejoiced when a childless couple got their first look at their newly adopted baby while the show was on the air. By contrast, there was heartbreak when two mothers appealed to a kidnapper to return their children unharmed. There was also a sobering moment when a terminal cancer patient candidly told how he intended to use the remaining months of his life. The spontaneity of such human drama invariably touched many in the audience and kept them coming back for more.

Nor was *Welcome Travelers* beyond taking on some extraordinary challenges, either. The U. S. Air Force requested that the program take a journey to Germany in 1949 to entertain fliers following a Berlin airlift. A 29-member entourage made the 10-day trek to Europe, airing 11 broadcasts and performing in several additional shows.

By the time it left radio on September 24, 1954 and was airing exclusively on television, *Welcome Travelers'* direction shifted dramatically from its radio days: previously it highlighted sagas of more a frivolous nature. Yet, "Inspired by the success of *Strike It Rich*, the tales had become litanies of woe," explained TV chronicler Wesley Hyatt.

The tube version of the show premiered on NBC-TV September 8, 1952 at 3:30 p.m. It shifted the following year to 4 o'clock on August 3, 1953. But not until it left NBC did it become more aggressive in its appeal to audiences, airing stories of pathos. The series debuted on CBS-TV July 5, 1954 at 1:30 p.m.

Tommy Bartlett, the radio host, also presided over the televised series until suddenly, on May 6, 1955, the rug was pulled out from under him. The human-interest program abruptly left Chicago with its misery yarns behind it. The following week it unceremoniously opened in New York City.

In *Welcome Travelers'* revised format singer Jack Smith, who had only a short time earlier broadcast weeknights on CBS Radio, jousted with a trio of sight-seers who had come to town. Guests estimated where a spinning compass would stop and answered quiz questions posed by the host. Contestants who qualified to enter a Treasure Room by correctly responding to a complex query that was put to them by Smith went home bearing U. S. defense bonds.

Less than six months later, on October 31, 1955 *Welcome Travelers* experienced yet another transformation, this time resulting in both format and title changes. Under its new banner *Love Story*, the program focused on Smith and co-host Pat Meikle interviewing couples who competed for cash and merchandise prizes. It was an ignoble effort. Tommy Bartlett's original concept had been radically diluted and TV watchers were less than enthralled. Nearly nine years after *Welcome Travelers* debuted as a popular midday radio feature it had evolved into unrecognizable clutter. *Love Story*, sounding more like a soap opera than a game show, was canceled on March 30, 1956, five months after its debut.

Nevertheless while it operated under the premise that initially inspired Bartlett and his co-creator, Les Lear *Welcome Travelers* often proved Bartlett's theory daily: "People seem to open up when they're traveling."

Born in Milwaukee on July 11, 1914, Bartlett became a high school dropout. Early in life he was fascinated with hearing people talking over the airwaves without the benefit of wires connecting their voices to his crystal set. At 14 he started announcing for his hometown's WISN. He claimed his first "role" was that of a barking dog. Five years hence he advanced to Chicago's more powerful WBBM where he announced for *Meet the Misses* and *The Misses Goes to Market*, both regional series. It would be 13 years before he would preside over his own audience-participation show.

In 1939 he announced a short-lived CBS program titled *News and Rhythm*. He hosted broadcasts of Carl Hohengarten's Orchestra. Yet despite these, his on-air credits were minimal until *Welcome Travelers* was sold to Procter & Gamble

In 1950 Bartlett narrated a radio remote from the Chicago Rail Fair. The broadcast booth on that occasion sat adjacent to a booth for Cypress Gardens, a Florida attraction that boasted daily water ski shows. The encounter led him to develop his own Midwestern ski show at nearby Wisconsin Dells. This venture, known as Tommy Bartlett's Ski, Sky and Stage Show, Robot World and Exploratory, eventually lured thousands of summer visitors

There were fewer principals on *Welcome Travelers* than on most other daytime series. What the series missed in a reduced staff, however, it more than made up for by drawing listeners to their sets, often mesmerized by the insightful glimpses allowed into the lives of people representing all walks of life. It was reality radio that obviously provided the spontaneity and candor few series could.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



JERRY COLLINS

This will be the final installment of the radio trivia activity that I have been conducting for the past four months. I will be publishing the results late in the summer or early in the fall. So you still have time to list your favorites. In fact if you want to go back to the first installment and send everything to me in one letter, feel free to do so.

Many radio shows featured animals. List your *five* favorite radio animals. Most of the really good radio shows also had very good sound effects. In your opinion list the *five* shows that had the best sound effects. Lastly, the best shows usually had the most memorable theme songs. List the *five* shows with your favorite theme songs.

The Old Time Radio Club is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary this year. When you send me your entry, I would welcome any messages or comments that you would like to make related to our club's celebration. We will include your messages in upcoming issues of the Illustrated Press.

Cincinnati OTR Convention

by Linda DeCecco

I attended this year's convention in Cincinnati looking for new shows to add to my collection of old time radio shows and to meet old friends who are interested in the same thing I am, namely old time radio. I arrived on Thursday evening and checked into the Radisson Hotel, where the convention was being held. Several of us went to the Bombay Bicycle Club for a pre-convention dinner.

On Friday morning the convention started bright and early. Everyone was looking over the cassettes and videos and buying up a storm. I got several *Shadow* shows from the "Sci Fi" Guy, Gordon Payton, that I didn't have. Three of the cassette shows are from Australia.

Several dealers were selling shows on c.d.'s (compact discs) I bought 4 c.d.'s of the *Lone Ranger*. The *Lone Ranger* and *The Shadow* are my personal favorites along with *Yours Truly*, *Johnny Dollar*.

On Friday night there was a re-creation of *Ethel & Albert* and *Frontier Gentleman*. *Ethel & Albert* were played by Peg Lynch and Bob Hastings. Peg wrote the script for *Ethel & Albert*. Both did super jobs of bringing this bubbly couple to life. *Frontier Gentleman* starred Tyler McVey, as a British newspaper reporter in the American Wild West. Esther Geddes also starred in this show, both did an outstanding job. And we can't forget to mention the other members of the cast who also gave wonderful performances. Miss Geddes is Mrs. Tyler McVey in private life.

On Saturday the dealer's room opened early again and we had more time to buy our favorite shows.

Saturday afternoon there were re-creations of *The Bickersons* and *X Minus One*. There was enough of a crowd of people for these two shows that two seatings were needed to fit everyone into the room where the re-creations were done. After the 2nd re-creations were done there was a raffle of shows and videos and books that were donated by the dealers. I wound up winning two videos of cliffhangers, one book and a pack of OTR shows from Great American Radio. The 2 videos were both donated by the Buffalo Old time Radio Club of which I am a member.

Saturday evening we had a very nice sit-down dinner at the hotel as part of the evenings activities. Ed Klute

entertained us with some music before we were regaled with 2 more *Ethel and Albert* episodes and a *Mr. and Mrs. North* show.

Two special awards were given out after the shows. One to Peg Lynch and one to Bob Hastings for their dedication to old time radio.

On Sunday we had to say goodbye to another year's convention and depart for home. The Cincinnati convention is much smaller than the convention in Newark, but is well worth attending as is Newark. I find it easier to get to Cincinnati by car and one can listen to old time radio shows as your driving down the road. 'til next time, the end.

Cincinnati's 14th Annual OTR Convention

by Dick Olday

Before I begin my article, I want to thank the following dealers for their generous contributions to our club's library listed in alphabetical order: 1.) **Leo H. Gawroniak**, P.O. Box 248, Glen Gardner, NJ 08226 2.) **Great American Radio** P.O. Box 504, Genesee, MI 48437-0504 (810) 686-5973. 3.) **Radio Memories**, 4618 John F. Kennedy Blvd., North Little Rock, AR 72116-7356 (501) 835-0465. 4.) **The Scifi Guy**, 114 E. Cuthbert Blvd. Bldg. "F" #1, Westmont, NJ 08108 (856) 858-4401. 5.) **Vintage Broadcasts**, P.O. Box 50065, Staten Island, NY 10305. All of the above listed dealers have large catalogs with quality sound recordings at reasonable prices. When you patronize the above, please tell them that the OTR Club recommended them to you.

On Thursday, April 27, 2000, Linda DeCecco and I drove down to Cinc to attend the convention. Arlene was not able to get off work so I offered to drive Linda to the convention so that neither of us would have to make that drive alone (6-1/4 hours). After checking into the motel, we, along with Beth (another attendee) went across the street to the Bombay Club for dinner. After dinner we returned to the hotel to rest up for the convention (yes, each of us in our own rooms for those of you with other thoughts).

Friday morning after breakfast, we headed to the dealer room for our first peek at the "goodies" available. Linda and I each spent a lot of time and money in the dealer room that day. After dinner, we attended an *Ethel and Albert* skit starring Peg Lynch and Bob Hastings. Peg's

script was very funny as usual and both performances were excellent. Next up was a *Frontier Gentleman* recreation that was also done well.

Saturday morning dawned bright and early and we found ourselves back in the dealer's room after breakfast. Linda and I certainly helped our nation's economy by putting a lot more money into circulation. After lunch, we attended the first of two identical performances of *The Bickersons* with Tyler McVey and his wife Esther Geddes plus *X-1* starring Bob Hastings re-enacting his original part. Both shows were excellent and the enormous crowds required a second performance. Following the shows there was a raffle where Linda was a multiple winner and I also won one prize. After the drawing, we returned to our rooms to change for dinner and the evening shows.

Cocktails were served at 5:30 with dinner following at 6. After dinner, we were treated with request time by Ed Clute, two more very funny *Ethel and Albert* shows and a *Mr. and Mrs. North* show with Bob Hastings and Rosemary Rice. There were a few sound glitches (Don Aston had trouble with the tape recorder) and once after the cab Mr. and Mrs. North were in was supposed to come to a screeching halt (no sound effect), Rosemary said tires screeching and continued her reading. These problems just added to the enjoyment of the programs.

All in all, this was a very enjoyable convention and special thanks should go to Bob Burchett and Bob Newman for running another great convention. Next year's convention is planned for the weekend following Easter which will be one week earlier than this years since Easter does tend to move year to year. I plan to be there and I would like to see all of you there also. The costs are reasonable and the fun is considerable.

**LATEST ADDITIONS TO THE
CASSETTE LIBRARY**

- 2705 Amos 'n' Andy "Lecture Bureau" 3/16/45
Amos 'n' Andy Prentice Clothing" 3/23/45
- 2706 The Hermit's Cave "Spirit Vengeance"
The Hermit's Cave "It Happened on Sunday"
- 2707 Dragnet "Quick Trigger Gun Men"
Dragnet "Murder of Helen Corday"
- 2708 Dragnet "The Big Strip"
Dragnet "The Big Press"
- 2709 Mercury Theater "Treasure Island" 7/18/38
(60 min.)
- 2710 Counter Spy "Foolish Father" 8/15/50
Counter Spy "Fight Against Narcotics" 3/14/52

- 2711 Screen Director's Playhouse "Love Letter"
10/24/49
Screen Director's Playhouse "Remember the
Night"
- 2712 The Shadow "Death in a Minor Key" 6/2/46
The Shadow "Gang Doctor" 11/24/46
- 2713 Screen Director's Playhouse "Butch Minds
Baby" 5/12/50
Screen Director's Playhouse "When My Baby
Smiles at Me" 5/5/50
- 2714 The Lone Ranger "Via Pony Express" 1/16/42
The Lone Ranger "An Old Woman's Call"
1/19/42
- 2715 Lights Out "Nobody Died" 12/16/39
Lights Out "Rocket to Manhattan" 9/20/45
- 2716 Walk Softly, Peter Troy "Trouble with Tanya"
Walk Softly, Peter Troy "Wistful Witch"
- 2717 Walk Softly, Peter Troy "Minx in Mink"
Walk Softly, Peter Troy "Vanquished Venus"
- 2718 True Detective Mysteries "Girl in the Iron
Mask" 4/29/37
True Detective Mysteries "Helen Clevenger
Case" 5/6/37
- 2719 Suspense "The Second Door" 5/6/62
Suspense "Blackbeard's Ale" 4/29/62
- 2720 Suspense "Joker's Wild" 12/8/52
Suspense "Gold of the Adomar" 1/19/53
- 2721 Suspense "Snow on 66" 2/15/62
Suspense "Sin Eater" 7/8/62
- 2722 Ford Theater "The Front Page" 5/9/48
- 2723 Theater Five "First Weekend"
Theater Five "Where Art Thou Romeo?"
- 2724 Pat Novak "Lydia Reynolds" 11/24/46
Crime Files of Flamond "T.C.O.T. Victimized
Victim" 1953
- 2725 It Pays to be Ignorant #100 9/1/44
It Pays to be Ignorant #101 9/8/44
- 2726 Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar "The Cronin
Matter" 12/5-9/55 (90 min.)
- 2727 Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar "Nick Schoen
Matter" 12/19-23/55 (90 min)
- 2728 Everyman's Theater "Mr. Ginsberg" 2/21/41
Everyman's Theater "The City" 3/9/47
- 2729 Gunsmoke "Cyclone" 3/14/53
Gunsmoke "Pussy Cats" 3/21/53
- 2730 Mr. District Attorney "The Money Machine"
4/11/51
Mr. District Attorney "Deadly Devotion"
5/17/50
- 2731 Roy Rogers Show "Lee Bulow" 3/14/52
Roy Rogers Show "Herb Selby Trapped in
Cabin" 3/21/52
- 2732 Mr. District Attorney "Spring Fever" 5/14/45
Mr. District Attorney "Deadly Snowflake"
5/26/48

- 2733 Mr. District Attorney "Stanley's Jury is Fixed"
8/23/44
- 2734 Mr. District Attorney "One Slip Means Death"
Johnny Chase, Secret Agent of Space BBC
#1 "Power of Thor" #2 "Bowl of Nothingness"
- 2735 Johnny Chase, Secret Agent of Space BBC
#3 "The Torks Strike Back" #4 "Battle for the Sun"
- 2736 Johnny Chase, Secret Agent of Space BBC
#5 "Vision of the Green Angel" #6 "Princess and the Troll"
- 2737 Johnny Chase, Secret Agent of Space BBC
#7 "More About Pooligo" #8 "Deeper into Lorp Stardom"
- 2738 Johnny Chase, Secret Agent of Space BBC
#9 "Gift of Sight" #10 "Gorzoop's Escape"
- 2739 Johnny Chase, Secret Agent of Space BBC
#11 "Berranger Warp" #12 "Robot Warriors"
- 2740 Johnny Chase, Secret Agent of Space BBC
#13 "Brink of Heaven" #17 "Agather Pays a Visit"
- 2741 Johnny Chase, Secret Agent of Space BBC
#18 "Macadamile Realm" #19 "Sofrin the wise"
- 2742 Johnny Chase, Secret Agent of Space BBC
#20 "Revolution" #21 "Parade of All Pleasures"
- 2743 Johnny Chase, Secret Agent of Space BBC
#22 "Birth of the Green Angel" #23 "Percy, Triumph of Evil"

picked up some misinformation on the part of Judy Price that I have seen in several other reference books. The part of Judy Price was originally played by Rosemary DeCamp. I researched my own collection which has most of the shows from 1937-1940 and they all starred Rosemary including the first show of the series 11/07/1937. I do not know who played Judy in 1941 but Lurene Tuttle was on board on 9/16/1942 for the 1942-1943 season. I do not know who played Judy the next season but there she is again on 10/18/1944. The show of 01/10/1945 has Helen Clair in the role. The shows of 9/17/1947, 11/26/1949, 11/29/1950 and 02/21/1951 all have Rosemary as Judy Price. I know that Rosemary took some time off when she was having her children during the 1940's and that may account for some of the substitutions but the role was hers for most of the run of this show. If anyone has any further information, please send it along to the 1. P.

Keep up the good work, Ken.

"I Have a Lady in the Balcony" Memoirs of a Broadcaster

by George Ansbro, McFarland, 237 pps. ©2000

A Book Review by Lance Hunt

George Ansbro has written a cache of memoirs which should delight any nostalgia fan but moreover has laced the remembrances with a subtle history of the development of radio in this country.

Encompassing a remarkable broadcasting career of close to 59 years before "officially" retiring, Mr. Ansbro was a network announcer essentially for NBC for all that time beginning in New York City.

He lives in New Jersey now with his wife Jo-Anne and often attends the Friends of Old Time Radio convention at the Holiday Inn, Newark. His remembrances of the 1995 meeting is especially significant since he announced a recreation of Peg Lynch's *Ethel and Albert*, a show he first announced in 1944 when Albert was played by Richard Widmark. He mentions other film actors who started on radio: Eddie Albert and Van Heflin. He also mentions constantly running into Gregory Peck when Peck was an RCA guide. Ansbro was an NBC guide too, back when he started.

He was always fascinated with radio and was even a singer on *Coast-to-Coast on a Bus* with Milton Cross.

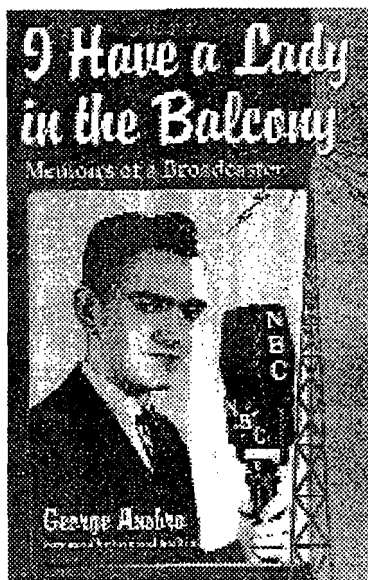
Member's Mike



Letter to the editor from R. A. Olday . . .

Congratulations to the club on its' Silver Anniversary! The color cover on the May issue was fantastic. It may interest our members that the changes our club has made over the last year or so have put our club into the best financial basis that I can ever remember in over 20 years. Now, if we can start to build up our membership, our club will next be celebrating a Golden Anniversary. Everyone can help by telling your friends about us. The future is up to you.

I always enjoy Jim Cox's column *Same Time, Same Station* and this time was no exception as it dealt with a favorite program of mine, *Dr. Christian*. However, Jim



Back in the 20s it was called NBC's *Children's Hour*. He branched out into announcing but always maintaining his rich Irish Catholic roots with his family in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. Two of his brothers became Roman Catholic priests, another a dentist. He was married in St. Patrick's Cathedral close to the Rockefeller Center radio activity of the day.

Another of his many milestones was announcing the popular soap *Young Widder Brown* from its inception on NBC in 1938 to its demise in 1956, eighteen years.

He was a lifelong friend to Mary Pickford after announcing her husband's show *Pick A Date* with Buddy Rogers in 1949 and 1950.

Musicologists will be especially fascinated by his big band remote broadcast history. Everywhere from Central Park's Tavern on the Green to Chautauqua. Fascinating bits of info emerge such as the Dorsey brothers working for the NBC Studio Orchestra, and Rudy Vallee's ability to turn the air around him blue at difficult rehearsals.

His book title comes from the *Dr. I. Q. Show* when it went to TV and stayed permanently anchored at the Ritz Theater in NYC. He did work early television



George Anshon at the mike at a Friends of Old Time Radio convention.

but mainly carved a permanent niche in radio. His memoirs are unique. Nothing malicious, just a steady stream of vignettes about a host of personalities from the 20s on who encompassed the backbone of America's popular culture.

The book is eminently readable having been written in easily handled "bite-size" chapters. It is a lot of fun especially for the radio buff! Highly recommended.

The Depression Years and WWII

(Growing up with radio)

by Owens L. Pomeroy

(from the book "Sounds Like Yesterday")

In 1930 there was a very popular song entitled: "*The Best Things In Life Are Free*." And that just about summed up our way of life back then. The country was eager to participate in anything that would keep America from thinking about the condition the country was in at that time. All of a sudden as if some mystical force had swept over the country, radio came along to proclaim it's "golden age." Bringing to American homes what it needed most, laughter, information, music and entertainment. By listening to radio, we Americans became more sophisticated, and it (radio) became our way of life. Everyone wanted a radio set. Sales immediately increased to 400% and every third family in America had one. (The first radio I can remember listening to was an Atwater Kent "breadboard" wet battery model with three dials, then we purchased a Majestic "Highboy" three-band floor model which by the way is still in my home today and plays just as good as the day my dad bought it "second hand" in 1935 for \$40.00.)

Will Rogers once said: "Dog-gone it! This here radio contraption is just too big a thing to be out of." His voice was one of the first I remember listening to during the mid-thirties. Radio became an escape for me and my parents and I guess we reflected the image of the whole country by tuning it in regularly. It was a custom at our house to have dinner at 6 o'clock every weekday evening so we could listen to Amos 'n Andy at 7 o'clock. We took our phone off the hook at that time so we would not miss any of this popular program. We also enjoyed the many popular songs of the day, now coming to us through this magic of radio. Two of our favorites were Kate Smith singing her theme: "*When The Moon Comes Over The Mountain*" and Russ Columbo crooning "*Prisoner*

Of Love.” And who could forget “*Mama*” being sung so beautifully by Arthur Tracey, “*The Street Singer*”? For older folks like my mom and dad, radio did more than entertain them. Before radio came along the only way they had of getting the news was to read about it in our local papers. Now here they were listening to dramatic news reports by the likes of such great journalists, now turned news commentators, as: Lowell Thomas, Edwin C. Hill (“*The Human Side of the News*”), Boake Carter, H. V. Kaltenborn and Gabriel Heatter (“Ah, yes . . . there’s good news tonight”)

Rudy Vallee starred in the very first hour long variety show, *The Flieshman Hour*, while *Showboat* was the very first hour long musical I can remember listening to. Charles Winninger and Lanny Ross (A former Baltimore boy) were the stars, with Maxwell House Coffee (Good to the last drop!) as it’s sponsor. *The Linet Bath Club Revue* with Fred Allen, and *Music That Satisfies* with Ruth Etting were two popular shows of the day. The first quartet I can remember listening to were The Mills Brothers. My favorite vocalist was Bing Crosby, while dad favored Harry Richmond, and mom swooned over “Whispering Jack Smith.” (The first one, not the latter of TV fame.) Youth, of my generation was served by a mere young Harriet Hilliard and Ozzie Nelson and his orchestra. They seemed to fit in perfect because radio was then a young medium and did a great deal to improve the image. Other popular band leaders made their way to radio also. Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians, Vincent Lopez, with his famous opener: “Lopez Speaking!”, the great Isham Jones (far ahead of his time with those fantastic arrangements of his) were only a few.

Classical music was to gain a big listening audience during those first years of radio. Those who before could only hear him at expensive concerts, could now hear Dr. Walter Damroch conduct the National Symphony Orchestra for free! Symphony orchestras were also organized and broadcast by the networks themselves. The NBC Symphony was led by Dr. Frank Block and Alfred Wallenstein. Rosario Bourden and Andre Kostelentz conducted the short-lived CBS Symphony orchestra. *The Grand Canyon Suite* was first heard on radio and was conducted by it’s composer Ferde Grofe leading the NBC Symphony. Many great names from the Metropolitan Opera were now broadcasting from the Met stage (one of the first remote broadcasts). Lily Pons, Lauritz Melchior, and Lawrence Tibbet were three of the first.

The most listened to programs by most people in terms of popularity though, were the comedy programs. It was only a matter of time before the great “Kings” of comedy from the Broadway and the vaudeville stage would

try this new medium called radio. Joe Cook, Walter O’Keefe, Jack Pearl (Baron Munchausen) with Cliff Hall as “Sharlie,” from the Broadway stage came on the scene. From vaudeville came Burns and Allen, with Jack Benny Mary Livingston and Rochester, and Fred Allen, whose long “feud” with Jack Benny made radio history. The comedians felt right at home on radio and scored highly, because they had spent years on the stage performing before live audiences. Radio to them was only a matter of trading one audience for another. (Radio programs had live audiences for network broadcasts.) Why then, was radio so successful? One reason only. M-O-N-E-Y!

Radio had a humor all it’s own. When these great comedians stepped in front, of the mike, they would laugh and joke about taxes, unemployment and all the other problems of every day life and make it so humorous, that we at home tuning in forgot about the depression and laughed right along with them. They were at their best. Such comedy teams as Abbott and Costello, Amos ’n Andy, Lum and Abner, Bergen and McCarthy and Fibber McGee and Molly are today still remembered by radio buffs like myself. What did those broadcasts offer us? Nothing more logical than humor, wisdom and social comment. If I am still living by the year 2000 and some young person asks me “What was life in the thirties?” all I would have to do is show them one of the old scripts or play one of my tapes of those daily broadcasts.

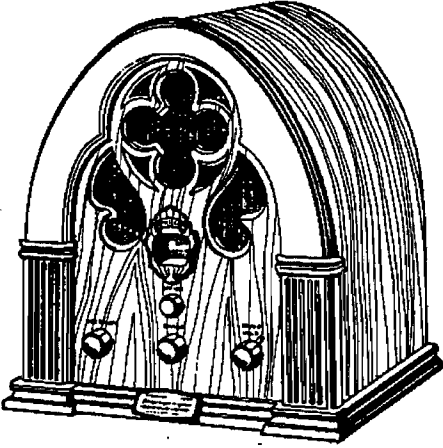
Every day, five days a week more radios were tuned to the soap operas than any other program. Asked to define a soap opera one time, I remembered a quotation from James Thurber: “Between thick slices of advertising, spread twelve minutes of dialogue, then add predicament, villains and female suffering in equal measure. Then throw in a dash of nobility, sprinkle well with tears, season heavily with organ music, cover with a rich announcer sauce, and serve it five times a week.” And that just about sums it all up for a perfect soap opera recipe doesn’t it? My mom, along with every other American housewife of that era, tuned in each day and “suffered” along with *Stella Dallas*, *Ma Perkins*, *Just Plain Bill*, *Myrt and Marge*, *Our Gal Sunday*, *Saturday’s Children*, *Mary Noble*, *Backstage Wife*, *Hilltop House*, *Life Can Be Beautiful*, and her all-time favorite *Against The Storm*. How many of these did you remember?

(To be continued in the next issue.)

A Reminder: The Illustrated Press will not be published during July and August.

Old Time Radio Club

49 Regal Street
Depew, NY 14043



FIRST CLASS MAIL

“REMEMBER”

Give me again, those “Golden Years,”
Of Radio at its best.

Let me hear just one more time,
Drama, and all the rest.

Escape, The Shadow and Riley too,
Now they are gone, those shows that we knew.

Remember Mollie et Fibber McGee?,
And an Aldrich, named “Henry,” we all laughed with glee.

Dragnet, Gunsmoke, great shows all,
Inner Sanctum, Suspense, we fondly recall.

Oh, where did they go, where did they hide?
TV, that Ogre, cast them aside.

But listen, what’s that!, why they’re back once again.
Uniting us all, neighbors and kin,

Forget the TV, go back to the “dial,”
For now, we’ll remember, if just for a while.

Skelton is there, Cantor and Pearl,
Orson too, and his “War Of The Worlds.”

Frankie, Tommy, Glen and Hal,
McIntyre, Miller, Dorsey and Carl.

Duffy, Luigi, keep counting the score,
Into our lives, they’ve come once more.

Never to leave us, always to reign,
‘Cause we knew all along, that Radio was King!

By Owens L. Pomeroy