

*The Old Time Radio Club*

Established 1975

# THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS

Number 296

January 2002



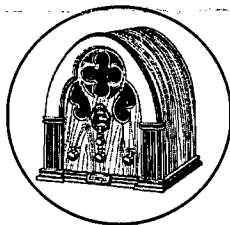
***“Charlie . . . I hope you remembered to  
mail our Membership Renewal Check  
to the Old Time Radio Club!*”**

**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 7:39 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



Back issues of *The Illustrated Press* are  
\$1.50 postpaid

**Deadline for *The Illustrated Press* is the  
1st of each month prior to publication.**

*The Illustrated Press* is a monthly newsletter of the **Old Time Radio Club**, headquartered in Western New York State. Contents except where noted are copyright 2002 by the OTRC.

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Depew, New York 14043**

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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 \$.85 per month. Rates include postage and handling and are payable in U.S. funds.

## Ed WANAT's Clips

*(This column is made up of clippings from various publications gathered over the years by Ed Wanat)*



### After the Smiles

By  
*Richard Pritchett*

He was a sad man. Yet he brought happiness and laughter to others. W.C. Fields was scarred emotionally by a childhood of sorrow, and he remained insecure until the very end.

Yet he had an appeal to audiences that lived on long after he died. And when two of his films, "The Bank Dick" and "Never Give a Sucker an Even Break," were revived at a New York theater a few years after his death in 1946, the critics, too, fell in love with him again. Since then, old Fields films have been in constant demand at film festivals and revivals all across the nation. And W.C. Fields has become a legend.

Fields was a public figure who hated living in a glass house. He was a heavy drinker with more than his share of complexes. Take his birthday, for example. Fields' birth date has been reported as Feb. 26, April 19, May 9, and a lot of other dates. Every time he was interviewed and the question came up, he gave the interviewer a different date. He always gave the same year though. It was 1879: "I always tell people as little as I can about myself," he once said. "The less said, the better."

Fields was a child of poverty. Though very bright, he had little in the way of formal schooling, and he ran away from home at the age of 11 after a brutal argument with his father. He wandered the streets of Philadelphia searching for handouts and stealing when he had to. Local police referred to him as "a one-child crime wave." He was in and out of jail.

As far as James Dukinfield, his father, was concerned, it was a case of good riddance. But Fields' mother, Kate, was brokenhearted. A few years later, when Fields

achieved his fortune, he started sending his mother a weekly allowance, and he supported her as long as she lived.

For a while, young Fields lived with a grandmother. Then he became a panhandler and a billiard shark. He also practiced juggling for hours every day. "I don't believe Mozart, Liszt, Paderewski or Kreisler ever worked any harder than I did," he once stated. When he was 14, he made his professional juggling debut in Norristown, Pennsylvania, for five dollars a week. It was a carnival show, and the manager charged him a \$1.50 agent's fee. Said Fields: "After paying for meals and expenses, I was only losing ten cents a week."

After that he performed in burlesque houses. Back then, burlesque was considered respectable. However, employment was not steady, and Fields spent one Christmas at a soup kitchen on New York's West Side.

For a while he was a circus roustabout. And he was once hired as a juggler for a New York flea circus, he said, "to replace a headless woman who had fallen and fractured her skull." Finally, in 1898, Fields got steady booking on a theatrical circuit, and he was on his way to fame and fortune. As a juggler, he commanded a high price.

As he traveled from town to town, he started opening bank accounts. His income was large, and there was seldom any need for him to make a withdrawal. It has been speculated that many of his accounts may still be on the books in banks in the United States and foreign countries. The accounts were not opened under Fields' own name. He used such names as Eustace McGargle, Samuel Bisbee, Figley E. Whiteside, T. Forthingwell Bellows, Sneed Hearn and Dwight Twilight, to mention a few. It has been estimated that Fields opened as many as 750 different bank accounts in various parts of the world. (A few of them were even opened under his own name.)

According to the comedian's biographer, Robert Lewis Taylor, Fields "would open a bank account everywhere he went. He began with the large cities, placing twenty dollars here and ten there, and worked on down to banks that occupied, perhaps, a corner of a feed store in a cross-roads village. Sometimes he hopped off trains and opened an account while an engine took on water." Taylor, who wrote "W.C. Fields, His Follies and Fortunes," said the comedian piled the bank books in a corner of his wardrobe trunk, and "for the most part, forgot them."

Actress Carlotta Monti in her book "W.C. Fields and Me" recalled the time the comedian casually asked her

to go to a nearby bank and make a withdrawal of \$50,000. "But why so much money?" she wanted to know.

"I need a couple of pairs of shoes shined," Fields quickly responded, "and the boy at the stand has raised his price." It has been suggested that Fields' many bank accounts were his "security blanket." It's as good an explanation as any.

After Fields' death, the executor of his estate reportedly was able to find only 30 of the bank accounts. Yet William Grady, the comedian's agent for many years, insisted his friend had thousands of dollars in banks under false names.

Fields liked to boast he spent the last 46 years of his life on "a diet of olives 'floating in a sea of alcohol.'" A chronic alcoholic, he was the butt of countless drunkard jokes by other film and radio comedians. Said Bob Hope, for example: "I saw W.C. Fields on the street and waved—and he weaved back."

During his lifetime, the comedian estimated near its end, he had consumed "at least \$200,000 worth of whisky."

The comedian made 44 films in Hollywood after he left the vaudeville circuit. In most of them he played W.C. Fields—a part he played exceptionally well. His favorite other role was probably that of Mr. Micawber in the movie "David Copperfield." It was a bit of offbeat casting on the part of producer David O. Selznick, and Fields stole the movie. He got rave reviews.

The comedian had a famous radio feud with the late Edgar Bergen's sidekick, Charlie McCarthy. Fields once threatened to slash Charlie "into venetian blinds."

A few months before his death, he made a final appearance on the Edgar Bergen radio show. He was so ill a screen was placed between him and the studio audience.

In his will, he left a large sum of money for the establishment of the W.C. Fields College for Orphans. The will instructed that "no religion of any sort is to be preached. Harmony is the purpose of this thought." The college was never opened.

Shortly before he passed away, Fields is supposed to have opened his eyes and noticed a pretty nurse sitting in a chair in his room. He was in the Las Encinas Sanitarium at the time. According to newspaper accounts published the day after his death, he placed his fingers to his lips and tossed her kiss. Then he winked at her. A few seconds later, he was dead.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



JERRY COLLINS

I am quite excited to report to our membership that our cassette library has grown at a record setting pace this past year. Since this growth resulted from donations from the top dealers in the country, the quality of these shows is near perfect. Our tape librarians are looking forward to a big increase in orders.

As the year comes to an end, I want to pay special thanks to the dealers who have made these generous donations to our library. Leo Gawroniak, Great American Radio, Barry Hill, Vintage Broadcasts and Gordon Payton, the Sci Fi Guy. Special thanks also go out to Tom Monroe and Ted Davenport at Radio Memories who donated over 300 cassettes.

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## Cassette Tape Library

by Dick Olday

Our tape library grew by almost 15% during 2001 due to several generous donations by many OTR dealers. Our club has almost 3500 programs on cassette. We just received another very large donation of tapes from RADIO MEMORIES. This was the second largest donation received from them since the Newark Convention.

Our club strongly recommends the dealers that have contributed to our tape library, so if you are looking to purchase any programs please give them first consideration. All of the dealers that have contributed this year have quality tapes and stand behind their products. When ordering from these dealers please let them know that you heard about them from our club.

Recent donations will be listed in upcoming newsletters. For information on ordering from our expanded tape library, please refer to page two of The Illustrated Press.

**Ed. Note:** We have also received a donation of a dozen cassettes from member Bernard Drew. Our heartfelt thanks are also extended to him.

Addresses for the above dealers can be found on the next page.

Leo Gawroniak P.O. Box 248 Glen Gardner, NJ 08826	Great American Radio P.O. Box 504 Genesee, MI 48437
Barry Hill Rt. 1, Box 197 Belpre, OH 45714	Radio Memories 1600 Wewoka St. N. Little Rock, AR 72116
Vintage Broadcasts c/o Andy Blatt 42 Bowling Green Staten Island, NY 10314	Gordon R. Payton The SciFi Guy 118 East Palmer Avenue Collingswood, NJ 08108

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## A Book Review

By JIM SNYDER



Jim Cox has written a new book about radio's "golden age." It is titled *THE GREAT RADIO AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION SHOWS*. This is Jim's sixth book and his second on "old time radio," the first being *THE GREAT RADIO SOAP OPERAS* which came out in 1999.

Jim is a prolific writer about radio. Besides the two books mentioned above he is now working on his third book on radio and he has also been a frequent contributor of articles to a number of old time radio publications, including this one.

*THE GREAT RADIO AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION SHOWS* has separate chapters about seventeen of these shows including *House Party*, *Talent Scouts*, *Break the Bank*, *Breakfast Club*, *Bride and Groom*, *Can You Top This?*, *Dr. Christian*, *Dr. I.Q.*, *Double or Nothing*, *Information Please*, *Queen for a Day*, *Stop the Music*, *Strike it Rich*, *Take It or Leave It*, *Truth or Consequences*, *Welcome Travelers*, and *You Bet Your Life*. Each chapter begins with the "premise" of the show, lists the people associated with it and their positions, the music, sponsors, the Hooper or Nielson ratings for the shows, as well as a listing of the dates and networks where they appeared.

With that factual information out of the way, Jim tells us at great length about the show itself and gives us a great deal of information about the people connected with it. These chapters are full of factual and detailed information as well as many interesting stories and sidelights. Each chapter is also illustrated.

Following the seventeen chapters, there is an appendix of other radio audience participation shows. Here is found a brief description of over 400 shows, probably the most comprehensive listing of such shows ever published.

*THE GREAT RADIO AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION SHOWS* runs 264 pages and is available for \$49 post-paid from McFarland & Company, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640. The toll free phone number for credit card orders is (800) 253-2187.

Jim's earlier book on the soap operas is also still available from the same source for \$59 postpaid.

**Ed. Note:** See the October 1999 issue of the *Illustrated Press* for a review of *THE GREAT RADIO SOAP OPERAS*.

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## The Falcon

He was going to spend a fine, lazy, quiet Easter, Michael Waring announced. For whole week, he intended to forget that he was the Falcon, and devote himself to wearing slacks and slippers, smoking his pipe, listening to the radio, and eating home-cooked meals. He wasn't even going to think about the work that made his days full of tension, excitement, frequently danger—the robbers, murderers, spies, black-market operators, or similar malefactors whom he outwitted and brought to justice. He was going to relax.

He should, of course, have known better. Mike sketched this idyllic program for himself on Good Friday evening, upon hearing Nancy Collins' news that she was leaving New York for a week, to stay at her Cousin Carol's house in Connecticut. "Richard—Carol's husband, you know—is going away on a business trip," she explained, "and Carol asked me to come up and stay with her and Dickie. She's the nervous type, and being all alone in that big house scares her. So I said I would."

"And leave me here in town all alone?" Mike asked, looking hurt. "You can't do that, Nancy." "I can and I will," Nancy asserted. Mike snapped his fingers. "I've

got it. You call up Cousin Carol and tell her I'm coming along. A week in the country is just what I need for my health." "There is absolutely nothing wrong with your health," Nancy objected. "And Carol mightn't want another guest."

"She'll love me, once she gets to know me. As a matter of fact, if she's inclined to be nervous, a man around the house would be a positive advantage."

As he usually did, Mike had his way. He and Nancy drove on Saturday to the Drews' big white house just outside Darien. It had once been a farmhouse, but the Drews had modernized and redecorated it, throwing two rooms together here, adding a sun porch there. Set back a hundred feet or so from the road, it was beautiful and a bit isolated.

Richard Drew wasn't leaving until Easter Sunday afternoon, and for twenty-four hours Mike enjoyed exactly the sort of domestic peace he'd envisioned. He went to church Easter morning, ate a tremendous Easter dinner, and filled the ears of young Dickie, aged seven, with highly colored accounts of his exploits. He was present when Dickie gave his mother an Easter gift, but no premonition told him that the incident meant his plans were about to be interrupted.

Dickie's gift was an Easter egg. It was about the size of a turkey egg, but no self-respecting turkey would have produced anything so gaudily red, green, and purple, combined in a nightmare design. "I thought it would make a good paperweight for your desk," Dickie told Carol.

"Oh—why yes, Dickie," Carol said, rallying from the first shock of seeing the monstrosity. Carol, a little brown-haired woman with bright blue eyes, prided herself on her home. Everything in it, from dining room table to the smallest ash tray, had been chosen with painstaking care, to fit into the overall pattern, and the most casual glance was enough to reveal that this Easter egg would fit into no pattern whatever—unless possibly that of a junk shop. She held the egg gingerly in one hand and looked at it guardedly. "It is very heavy," she said. "I should think it would make a lovely paperweight,"

Dickie beamed. "I bought it Friday," he said, "from a man that came to the door selling things. He was a funny little man, with a white mustache, and he looked so poor I thought I ought to buy something from him, so I took the money out of my glass bank. It was only fifty cents." "And well worth it, too," Carol said loyally. She put the egg on an end table. Maybe, she told Nancy later, she could think of a way to get rid of it without

hurting Dickie's feelings. The opportunity presented itself late Sunday afternoon, when Nancy and Carol were alone in the house, Mike and Dickie having gone with Richard to the station. And, rather oddly, Carol found she didn't want to get rid of the egg . . .

The doorbell rang, and Carol went to answer it. Nancy, sitting at the far end of the living room, heard the rumble of a man's voice, and Carol saying clearly, "Yes, he did. But—" More rumbling interrupted her, with the sound coming nearer all the time, until Nancy could distinguish words. "It was a mistake, you see, lady, but I'm willin' to do the fair thing. The boy give me fifty cents for it, and I'll buy it back from you for a dollar, just so's there won't be no hard feelings—"

Nancy, her startled gaze on the archway between the living room and the hall, saw Carol appear, backing slowly and fascinatedly away from a little man in shabby clothes and with a startlingly white mustache. The man was smiling, and while his smile was servile there was something vaguely threatening about it, too. His eyes, scampering past Carol's retreating figure, lit on the Easter egg. "There it is, lady!" he exclaimed. "Come on—sell it back to me for a dollar, whaddaya say?" "I—no, I don't want to. Won't you please go away?" Carol said in a frightened voice, and abruptly he scowled at her. "Now, lady, I don't want to cause no trouble, but you better give me that—"

From the window seat, where she had been watching unobserved, Nancy stood up. She wasn't frightened; on the contrary, she was suddenly quite angry. "You heard what my cousin said," she told the little man. "She doesn't want to sell it back to you. Now get out of here and stop bothering us!" The man's mouth, under its white mustache, dropped open, and he fell back a step. "Wait a minute," he said. "No need to get huffy, is there?" "None at all," Nancy said. She walked quickly to the fireplace and picked up a poker. "Get out!" The little man obeyed, rather hurriedly. Peering through the front window, Carol and Nancy watched him go down the street until he turned the corner. Carol was shaking.

"He frightened me terribly!" she confessed. "If it hadn't been for you, I think in another minute I'd have let him have—that dreadful egg—and I didn't want to give it up at all, though I can't think why I should want to keep it!" Nancy picked the egg up and hefted it thoughtfully. "I can't think why he should be so determined to get it back, either," she said, frowning. Neither could Mike Waring when—having waited until Dickie was out of the room—they told him about the incident. "It's only a painted hunk of some kind of metal," he said. He twisted it between his hands. "Doesn't unscrew or come

apart." He glanced up at Nancy, narrowing his eyes. "A little fellow, you said, with a white mustache?" "Yes," Nancy nodded. "Very white." "Could it have been a false one?" She looked doubtful. "Mmm—yes, I suppose it could, come to think of it." "Oh, well." Mike put the egg back on the table. "Probably just some crank. I wouldn't worry—I, don't imagine you'll ever see him again."

They did see him again, though. The weather, which had been fine earlier in the day, turned wet and drizzly as the sun went down. Dickie was put to bed, and Carol went soon after, complaining of a headache. Mike touched a match to the logs in the fireplace, and he and Nancy settled down to a game of cribbage together. In the middle of the game, he reached over and laid his hand on hers. "I like this," he said softly. "The firelight—and the rain on the windows—and you."

"Why—Michael Waring!" Nancy blushed, and she tried to smile, but she couldn't hide her pleasure. Mike was usually as sentimental as a treasurer's report. She began to think that bringing him up to visit Cousin Carol had been an excellent idea.

"We ought to do it more often," Mike said, and at that moment—to Nancy's intense disgust—the doorbell rang. "I'll get it," Mike said. He was up and halfway across the room when Nancy leaped after him. "It might be the man with the white mustache!" she whispered excitedly. "Be careful, Mike!" Mike didn't answer. He turned on the porch light, glanced briefly through the curtain on the door, and swung it open. "Good evening," he said pleasantly.

It wasn't White-mustache who stood outside. In fact, it wasn't a man at all. Their visitor was unmistakably, even blatantly, feminine, from the eyelashes on which clothes-hangers could have been hung to the feet shod in lizardskin shoes with heels like slightly oversized toothpicks. Good looking, Nancy conceded, if you liked the type; herself, she didn't.

"I'm sorry to intrude," the vision said in a throaty, dramatic voice, "but could you possibly help me? My car—" She gestured behind her, into the darkness of the street, and batted her eyes appealingly at Mike. "It has a flat tire." Mike seemed to grow two inches. "Of course!" he said with unnecessary gallantry. "Be right with you."

"It's a shame," the woman murmured while Mike rummaged in the closet, "to drag your husband out on a night like this—" "He's not my husband," Nancy said, and at once wished she hadn't, because the woman's darkly penciled eyebrows went up a quarter of an inch.

"Here we are!" Mike announced jovially, as if changing a tire on a rainy night were an experience he'd been looking forward to all his life. Nancy stayed at the door for a minute after they'd gone, trying to see them; but the darkness and the rain swallowed them up. "Huh!" she said finally, in deep scorn and to nobody in particular. "All very fine, but I'd like to see her before she does her make-up job in the mornings!"

It was nearly an hour before Mike returned to the house, and when he did return he had the woman, whose name seemed to be Mrs. Lattimore, with him. They were laughing like old friends, and Nancy noticed that while Mike's clothes were very damp, Mrs. Lattimore's were still beautifully dry. Obviously, she had sat inside the car while Mike worked.

"I brought Mrs. Lattimore in for a drink, Nancy," Mike said cheerily. "Make mine strong." He stood on the hearth, dripping, and after a minute he began to steam a little. "Scotch and plain water for me, please," Mrs. Lattimore said. "And no ice." She leaned back in her chair and gazed around the room. "What a perfectly charming place you have here—" "The name is Collins," Nancy said. "But it isn't my place. It belongs to my cousin." Her dislike for Mrs. Lattimore, strong enough at the start, was growing by the minute. She looked at Mike and saw that he was beaming fatuously. "You ought to get those wet clothes off," she said acidly. "You'll catch your death of cold." Mrs. Lattimore sipped her drink, and suddenly she gave a little cry of surprise and pleasure. "Oh, how wonderful!" she exclaimed, and put down her glass and picked up the Easter egg, all in one series of quick motions. "Where did you get this?" She looked up at Nancy excitedly.

Nancy felt her heart give an alarmed, warning jump. "The little boy that lives here—my cousin's son—bought it to give his mother," she said, and added directly, "Why?" "It's nineteenth-century Bavarian a lovely piece. You see," Mrs. Lattimore said with disarming candor, "I'm a dealer in antiques. Oh, not a dealer, really—I dabble, and occasionally I import a few things. But I know good stuff when I see it, and this is really good. I wonder—" She paused, struck by a sudden thought. "Do you suppose the little boy's mother could be persuaded to sell it to me?" "I doubt it," Nancy said. "And anyway, she's gone to bed." "But I can offer her a good price. Say—fifty dollars?" Holding the egg in her long, slender hand, Mrs. Lattimore looked from Nancy to Mike and back again, questioningly. "I'm sorry," Nancy said. "It's not for sale."

"Or even—" Mrs. Lattimore laughed deprecatingly at her own extravagance. "Even if I went to a hundred?"

*(To be continued next month)*



### **Christmas Party Photos**

Dick Simpson  
Jerry Collins  
Ed Wanat



Pete Bellanca  
Dan Marafino

Linda Dececco  
Ed Wanat



Frank Bork  
Ken Krug





Dick Olday  
Don Friedrich



Ray Olivieri  
Dom Parisi  
Pete Bellanca



The Wives . . .  
Finally Taking  
A Break

**A Reminder . . .** It's membership renewal time once again, and in order to remain a member we must receive your dues (\$17.50) by the end of February. If the mailing label has 1/02 printed after your name it means your membership is expiring and this will be the last issue mailed to you. Please send your check in today while it's still fresh in your mind.

# The Old Time Radio Club

49 Regal Street  
Depew, NY 14043

## FIRST CLASS MAIL

