

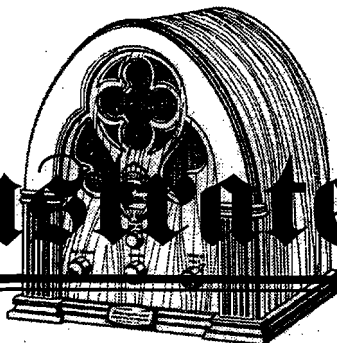
The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

The Illustrated Press

Number 307

February 2003



THE Judy Canova SHOW

Judy portrays a fun-provoking hillbilly girl from Cactus Junction attempting to crash elite society — with usually disastrous results.

If you want to hear good, clean fun, listen in on Judy's fanciful romance with taxi driver Joe Krunchmiller and wealthy Hubert Updyke — the young man-about-town who trades in his cars as soon as the ashtrays are filled. Hear Judy in her flash-backs to her early life in Cactus Junction. Eavesdrop on her uproarious arguments with Pedro the gardener — played by Mel Blanc the man with a thousand voices.

Yes! the Judy Canova Show brings you first rate comedy and out-of-this-world music with "Bud"

Dant's Orchestra and
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HEAR JUDY CANOVA
every Saturday night. See
your daily paper for time
and station.



The Judy Canova Show

The Illustrated Press

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

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56 Christen Ct.
Lancaster, NY 14086

E-Mail Address:
otrclub@localnet.com



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Book Review

Radio Crime Fighters

JIM COX

*Book Review Completed
by Jerry Collins*

Most fans of Old Time Radio are aware of the prolific writings of Martin Grams. Well it is time to share the stage with Jim Cox. Jim had previously written Say Goodnight Gracie, The Last Years of Network Radio, The Great Radio Audience Participation Shows: Seventeen Programs from the 1940s and 1950s and The Great Radio Soap Operas. He has recently completed a new book, Radio Crime Fighters, Over 300 Programs from the Golden Age. All four books have been written and published by McFarland in just the past four years.

The book is somewhat of a combination of John Dunning's Tune In Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old Time Radio, 1925-1976 and Bill Owen's and Frank Buxton's The Big Broadcast, 1920-1950 as well as a whole lot more. The book covers over 300 shows that include the role of some form of a crime fighter. Cox divides the shows into more than thirty categories including; investigators incognito, female detectives, juvenile detectives, federal agents, mature police dramas, private eyes, police detectives, mature westerns, western adventures, journalists, etc.

With each show Cox lists the time slots, sponsors, cast, credits, story lines, history of the show, available shows, available logs, available premiums, books written about the show, good sources of information about the show etc. The book also includes numerous anecdotes about the individual shows.

The book also includes an excellent annotated bibliography that includes 30 books on old time radio. It concludes with a very lengthy and complete index.

It is quite apparent that Jim Cox has put a great deal of time into this book. He has obviously interviewed many people and checked a vast number of sources. He is a true scholar in the area of Old Time Radio.

Radio Crime Fighters is very thorough and complete. If you are interested in crime detection shows, this book is a must both for enjoyable reading as well as research purposes.

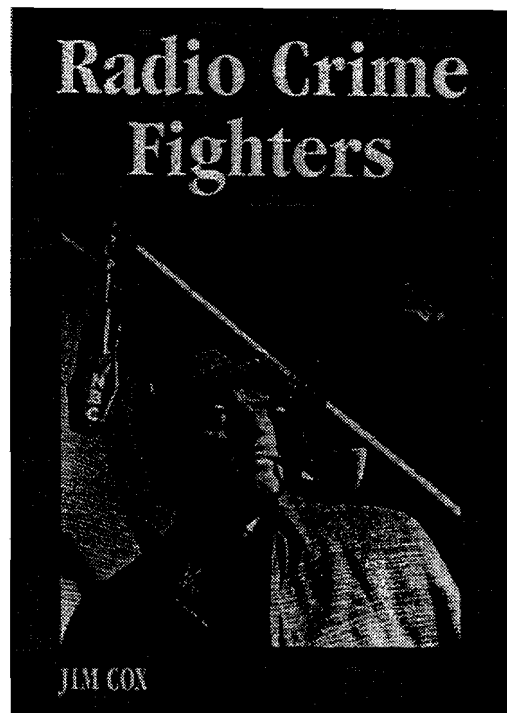
333 pages, illustrated case binding (7 x 10).
Photographs, appendix, bibliography, index.

Price \$45 plus \$4 shipping/handling

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Editor's Note:

Jim Cox has included a note in his book under the review of the show Big Town which explains the origination of our newsletter's name. A generous compliment and a plug for our club which includes the mailing address has also been inserted. We are extremely grateful for this recognition, and heartily recommend Jim's book to our membership.

The Jack Benny Show

By TOM CHERRE

Was Jack Benny really a comedian? Long time friend Ernst Lubitsch, who also directed Benny in the movie "To Be Or Not To Be" told him "Jack! You are not a comedian. You are an actor playing the part of a comedian, and this you do very well. But do not worry, I keep your secret to myself." This sort of sums up the life of Benny Kubelsky or as we all know him as the perennial 39 year old middle class, middle American, middle age, and middle class anyone Jack Benny.

Benny was born on February 14th, 1894 of humble means in Waukegan, Illinois, a small town north of Chicago. His father operated a saloon and later a dry goods store. As a boy Jack helped out in the store and took up playing the violin. As he completed high school, he became very proficient with the instrument, and in fact became a very accomplished violin player.

He got into vaudeville around 1912 and continued in that realm until he entered the navy in 1918. It was in the navy entertaining his fellow troops that his comic talent came to light. While he remained a competent violinist in private, it became little more than a mere prop, which he played ineptly for comic effect. After some persuasion by Ed Sullivan, Jack decided to give the new media of radio a try. And thus began *The Jack Benny Show*.

Benny's radio show was successful in much the same way as Jerry Seinfeld's TV show was. They both got the most out of their ensemble cast members. With people such as Eddie Anderson as Rochester, Don Wilson, Dennis Day, Phil Harris, Frank Nelson, Mel Blanc, Artie Auerbach, as Mr. Kitzle and even Mary Livingstone, how could you go wrong? They could all bounce the insults off of him. His humor came out of the many character relationships they shared. In fact, many of Benny's laughs came when he said little or

nothing at all. We're all familiar with the gag as he's approached by the armed robber who says "Your money or your life" as he hesitates to answer he ends the silence with "I'm thinking, I'm thinking".

Any reference to Benny's penny-pinching or age became so refined over the years that any mere reference to those two items drew laughs. Benny's needling of Don Wilson being fat, and Dennis Day's ignorance were routine. Rochester, Jack's valet, and everything else, had the most fun for insulting and ridiculing his boss in a friendly way providing most of the laughs. His cast was

perpetrated to be the best in the business. That's probably why his show lasted for so long.

His long - standing feud with Fred Allen was always great for laughs. Allen, Jack Benny's make-believe arch enemy was in fact Benny's greatest fan. Allen once wrote, practically all comedy shows owe their structure to Jack Benny's conceptions. After all how many

comedians could get a laugh just out of saying "Well" or even "Now cut that out".

During the show announcer Don Wilson would sneak the Lucky Strike commercials in much like Harlow Wilcox pitching Johnson's Wax on *The Fibber McGee and Molly Show*. Once in a while the Sportsmen, the vocal quartet would sing L-S-M-F-T. And who could forget the auctioneers barking off "sold to American".

One of his funniest routines was the many trips to the vault. There were occasional booby traps along with ferocious lions and tigers, and maybe an alligator in the moat underground. On radio these were spectacular.

After radio, Benny enjoyed much success on television. However he never achieved the same fame as his radio years. After being beat in the ratings by a new show called *Bonanza*, he tuned one night to watch the western and was impressed. He called it quits for TV in 1960 and more or less did guest spots. The world did lose a very great comedian on December 26, 1974. In my book he was the best.



MURDER BY DAYLIGHT

**"Two On A Clue" solves mysteries for
afternoon whodunit fans**

(April, 1945)

Since mystery novels have long provided readers with an ideal escape from reality, and radio programs of similar type have proved equally popular with evening listeners, it's not surprising that there's a new trend toward murder-plus-comedy for daytime dialers. That comparative newcomer to afternoon schedules, *Two On A Clue*, was in fact based on the premise that housewives, too, might welcome the same formula as an escape from the weepy heroics of most soap operas—and the present real-life tragedy of war.

Response has been everything the producers could have wished, with an early rating which indicates some four million "Clue" followers—a respectable figure for even long-established daytime shows. Part of this stems, no doubt, from the fact that many women are avid whodunit fans (surveys have actually shown that they buy more mystery novels than men do). Credit is also due the strong emphasis on comedy, rather than on murder. But greatest contributing factor of all is probably the high standard of production values. From the beginning, director Harry Ingram was urged to consider the series as being of full evening-program calibre. Writing, acting and direction all show the results.

Jeff and Debby Spencer, the title-role "Two," are even rather superior to their fellow-sleuths of the darker hours, in that they are quite a normal couple. He is a lawyer, business-like and quite matter-o-fact about his detective activities. She is a competent housewife and good mother. A well-developed sense of humor is only part of their character. The *Spencers* are devoted to each other and to their son *Mickey* (another innovation, both in the radio mystery-comedy field and in the lack of kiddie-cuteness).

The one persistent note of straight burlesque—aside from the highly incredible regularity with which the *Spencers* come upon corpses and con-men—lies in the other regular character, *Sergeant Cornelius Trumble*. Loyal but slow-witted, *Cornelius* is strictly a comedy cop, of the type which could never make the grade on a real police force. However, as played by John Gibson, he makes an admirable foil for the safe-and-usually-sane *Spencers*, providing most of the gags. In fact, tall, twinkly-eyed Gibson lives his comic character so completely, behind the mike, that his convulsed companions often find it hard to read their own lines.



Debby and Jeff Spencer are two who really find the clues.

High spirits are so much the rule at rehearsals and broadcasts that salaries seem almost like a bonus to the performers—whom Ingram calls "the best cast on the air for this type of show." That they are indeed good actors is proved by the fact that all four regulars are quite unlike the roles they portray. Native New Yorker Ned Wever is almost as sardonic in face and manner as the *Jeff* he plays, but he isn't nearly so straight-faced, and the nearest he ever came to the legal profession in real life was having a lawyer for a father. A graduate of Princeton University and serious Broadway drama, Ned's a devotee of golf, rather than crime detection, writes successful songs as a hobby.

The name *Debby* may fit Louise Fitch like a kid glove, since the auburn-haired, faintly-freckled Iowan looks both debutante and debonair, but she herself admits that she's really a "lousy" housewife, though proud of her cooking. Giggles and good humor are her natural state, and Louise is usually the scapegoat of studio pranks. The dimpled graduate of Creighton University will probably never live down the time her script read: "I should have brung my mink", and Louise said instead:



The Sergeant's a poor detective, has to find his answers in the back of the book—and is usually surprised by the results.

"I should have brung my *monk!*"

Curley-haired Ronny Liss, who plays the 9-year-old son, is really a 14-year-old radio veteran who has been mike-performing since he was two. But, like the *Spencer* offspring, Ronny is passionately addicted to both building model airplanes and gorging on peanut butter. This is sheer coincidence. The character was patterned, not after Ronny, but after a real 9-year-old Micky, son of author Louis Vittes—a down-to-earth touch which may go far toward explaining why this series successfully creates a picture of genuine family life. Despite its dealings with assorted crimes and criminals.



Son Mickey can't stay in bed when Jeff and Debby are on the trail, often lands himself in the middle of all the excitement.

MARILOU NEUMAYER

THE "*CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT*" HEROINE TAKES TO FLYING IN REAL LIFE

(April, 1945)

Literary experts have argued for years over whether art imitates life or life imitates art. But in Marilou Neumayer's case, there's no room for disagreement. The tiny brunette actress is becoming more like her *Joyce Ryan* ("*Captain Midnight*") part every day.



All decked out in 32 lbs. of flying suit, Marilou's ready to take to the air.

Captain Midnight, as its regular followers know, is an aeronautical series with a scripter who really knows what he's talking about. It's no wonder, then, that when Marilou joined the cast and met writer Bob Burttt she soon became intensely interested in aviation. Burttt (with his experience as a barnstormer, member of the Lafayette Escadrille, and U. S. Army pilot) knows all

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there is to know about flying and flyers—and can spin a fascinating yarn with the best of them. The 24-year-old lass was willing just to listen for a while, but when the script called for her to be sworn into the Secret Squadron as “SS-3,” Marilou had had more than enough of inaction—and decided to find out about flying for herself.



She checks flight details and errors with pilot Johnson and instructor Cuny.

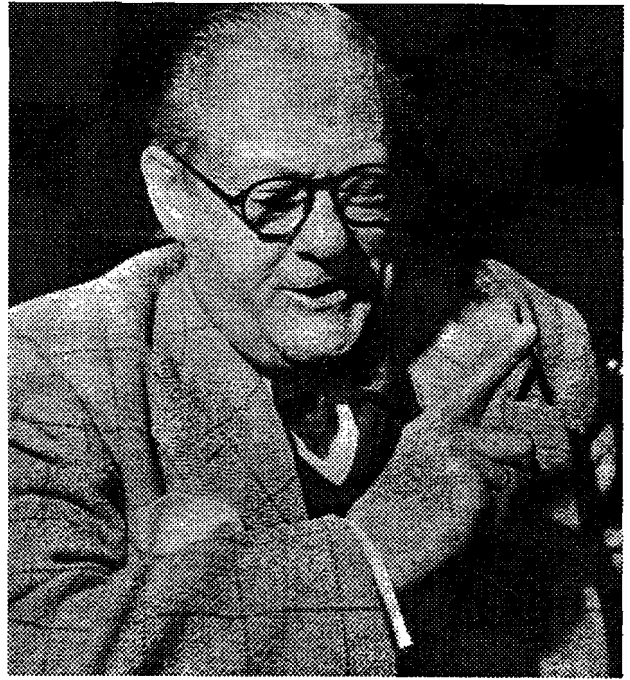
First step was to learn all about planes right on the ground, and she managed that by enrolling for the Civil Aeronautics Administration ground school training course in 1943. Standing just five-feet-one and weighing only 100 pounds, Marilou looks anything but the Rosie-the-Riveter type. Nevertheless, she was an apt pupil, absorbing mechanical details with ease.

The thrilling moment of actually taking off in the air didn't come until June, 1944. But Miss Neumayer thinks it was worth waiting for. And that ground crew training was such good background that she was permitted to solo after just 8 hours of instruction. Now soloing's taken for granted, and Marilou has reached the stage of practicing take-offs and landings. But the determined actress won't be content till she's as good as *Joyce Ryan!*

REVIVAL

No, I am not referring to the new syndicated *Twilight Zone* radio series. I am referring to *Boston Blackie*, *The Mysterious Traveler*, *Johnny Dollar*, *Bulldog Drummond*, *The Lone Wolf*, *Mr. Moto*, *The Cisco Kid*, *Mr. Keen*, *Candy Matson* & *Pat Novak*. Moonstone Publishing has announced plans to publish a series of graphic novels featuring the above named characters. They have already done *Boston Blackie*, *The Phantom* and *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*. In addition to several top artists, they have also signed the award-winning novelist Stuart Kaminsky. It should be very interesting to see the various artist renderings of the above characters and enjoy new stories of our favorite radio shows of yesteryear.

Dick Olday



Lionel Barrymore in his most popular roll
the Mayor of the Town

MEET HIZZONER THE MAYOR

“Mayor of the Town” Gives Lionel
Barrymore His Most Lovable Part

(September, 1943)

Although the *Mayor of the Town* is one of the best known roles on the air, the character has no name, never having been given one by the authors. He is always just “The Mayor.” As a result of this namelessness, the Mayor has become associated in the public mind with Lionel Barrymore, who plays the part, even more than would ordinarily have been the case.

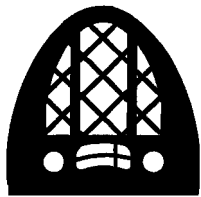
The name of Barrymore is a magic one in the American theatre, but that did not help young Lionel much when he made his start, which was a rather bad one. His grandmother, Mrs. John Drew, gave him a bit in her production of *The Rivals*, and the audience was so loud in its disapproval of the young actor's work that it nearly killed his career at the start. But Barrymore was broke and hungry, and he kept trying, with the persistence that is a part of the tradition of his famous name. In 1915, however, still broke, he decided to give the infant motion picture industry a try. He did—became so successful in Hollywood and in radio.

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Although the *Mayor of the Town* is still in its first year, it is already an unusually popular program with an estimated listening audience of over fourteen million, and much of this popularity must be put down to the good sense and good humor of the show. The Mayor's salty character, good common sense, and effective, if not always conventional, method of dealing with neighborhood problems is typical of the American public servant of the best type produced in small communities, and the character fits in perfectly with Lionel Barrymore's shrewd wit and impatience with subterfuges.

Part of the credit for that, of course, must go to Jean Holloway, and to Charles Tazewell, both well known as writers for the radio, who alternate in turning out the script of *Mayor of the Town*.

Agnes Moorhead, who plays "Marilyn," housekeeper for the Mayor, is also a veteran of radio, having worked in many popular and important star roles.



Old Time Radio Today

by DAN MARAFINO

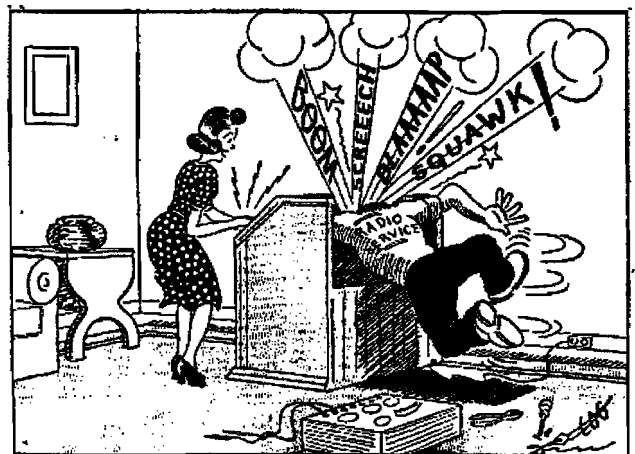
Old Time Radio is a fascinating hobby. It's a piece of Americana that lasted forty years (give or take two or three) and if you're old enough to remember hearing it the first time around when we listened to it using our imagination, then hearing it again today has to awaken your memory. For instance, do you remember where you were when you first heard *The Shadow*? Do you remember when the whole family sat around the radio listening to, oh let's say *Fibber McGee and Molly*. Do you remember sending away for the premiums, the decoder rings, joining radio organizations like the Secret Squadron, or the official Gangbuster's Crimefighters? There were many more, too numerous to list here. Do you remember the absence of profanity when the censor called the shots. Moral values meant something then.

Radio stimulated the mind and made you, the listener, create a vision in your mind's eye of what the actors should look like. There were times when I was but a wee sprout that I used to listen to *Lights Out* or the

Inner Sanctum just before going to bed. This was a big mistake. I tended to sleep with one eye open. Funny how your mind keeps working after spooky shows, but that's what comes from having an active imagination and being young. My nightmares weren't quite that vivid with *Jack Armstrong* or *Superman*.

Would OTR make it on radio as we know it today, would the public accept it and would the sponsors support it? Not a chance. Society today is TV and movie oriented, the eyes have it. I would say without too much hesitation, not a single human being (maybe one) could listen to a half hour program straight through without interruption. It can't be done. When one sat down to listen to a program, chances were he or she would be there for the entire show, excluding commercials, of course. Too bad if you missed a part of the show (sorry no instant replay) and chances were 99 to 1 the program would not be repeated. One also developed the fine art of listening, a lot of us don't do very well anymore. Our lifestyles have changed so drastically in the last 20 to 30 years that it seems like all you hear is "I don't have time for that". Seems to me we ought to slow down a bit and make time. Some things may never pass this way again and wouldn't it be a shame if we missed them.

I guess if you want to hear OTR today without interruption, you can get in the car, turn on the CD or tape and go for a ride—alone. Now you can hear *Dragnet*, *Sergeant Preston*, *Amos 'n' Andy*, Jack, Red, Fred and the whole gang. Enjoy every minute of it it's all we have left.



"Do you mind awfully if I turn it on while you are looking it over?"

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RADIO ODDITIES

It actually happened during a rehearsal of *Blondie* on CBS. The sound man, trying to recreate the sound of a pin dropping on the floor, was unable to duplicate the noise authentically. The producer came to the rescue and suggested: "Try dropping that railroad spike on the floor. We'll cut the volume down in the control room." It worked.

A blind man directed the British Broadcasting Corporation's Monitoring Service. This Service, which grew from a handful of people to 600 "eavesdroppers" was supervised by John Jarvis, who, although blind, had a remarkable memory and hearing. He supervised the service during the Second World War years when it provided the Prime Minister with the latest information from its secret location in the Oratory School for Boys at Cavensham, Berkshire.

When Bud Abbott and Lou Costello first tried to get on radio, they were a comedy team in a burlesque troupe. In order to impress their prospective sponsor with a show of elegance. Bud and Lou pawned their valuables for enough money to buy raccoon coats. The sponsor refused to be dazzled, however, and they didn't get the job. After selling the coats at a large loss, they had to borrow more money for carfare to catch up with their burlesque troupe.

Orson Welles was the first American ever invited to perform as a guest star with the famous Abbey Players of Ireland. He went to Ireland for his health when he was sixteen, and in Dublin he met an actor to whom he introduced himself as Orson Welles, brilliant young star of the New York Theatre Guild. Fortunately for Welles he was able to live up to his word.

James Melton, who owned one of the world's outstanding collections of antique autos, never faced the mike unless he had his "lucky" auto in his lapel. The charm was a tiny replica of an aged Locomobile and was originally owned by Diamond Jim Brady.

Frank Sinatra was a prize fighter before turning to a musical career.

Murder by stabbing sounds realistic on the *David Harding, Counterspy* thriller because sound-effects man Thurston Holmes had a special technique for it—plunging a knife into a head of cabbage.

Although *Duffy's Tavern* was an imaginary bistro, not a day passed without Ed Gardner receiving fan mail requesting food recipes.

The Wisdom of Will Rogers



**Here are some pearls of wit
and wisdom from the great
Will Rogers**

Don't squat with your spurs on.

Good judgement comes from experience and a lot of that comes from bad judgement.

Lettin' the cat outta the bag is a whole lot easier 'n puttin' it back in.

If you're ridin' ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there.

If you get to thinkin' your a person of some influence, try orderin' somebody else's dog around.

After eating an entire bull, a mountain lion felt so good he started roaring. He kept it up until a hunter came along and shot him. The moral: When you're full of bull keep your mouth shut.

Never kick a cow chip on a hot day.

There's two theories to arguin' with a woman, Neither one works.

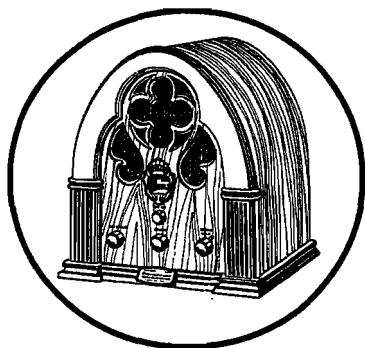
If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop diggin'.

Never slap man who's chewin' tobacco.

There are three kinds of men. The one that learns by reading. The few who learn by observation. The rest of them have to pee on the electric fence.

The Old Time Radio Club

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FIRST CLASS MAIL

