

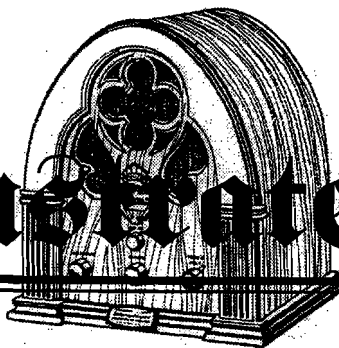
The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

# The Illustrated Press

Number 309

April 2003



***Adventures of Ozzie & Harriet***

# *The Illustrated Press*

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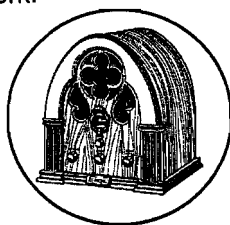
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## Club Mailing Address

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### The Broadcasting of Notre Dame Football

by JERRY COLLINS

As I promised in last month's issue of *The Illustrated Press* I will review the major events in the broadcasting of Notre Dame football. Although based heavily on Paul F. Gullifor's book *The Fighting Irish on the Air*, this is not a book review. I am aware that not everyone is a Notre Dame football fan. If you are one of those, I think that you would discover that much of what I mention could easily apply to other teams.

Since Notre Dame lacked a good stadium until Rockne field was built in the late 1920s, most of their games were played on the road. In fact many of their earlier teams were called the "Ramblers" not the "Fighting Irish." Thus the broadcasting of Notre Dame games became essential.

The Notre Dame senior class of 1922 filmed football games that season and played them back at the local Blackstone Theater. Tickets were \$.39/game or \$1.00 for four games with proceeds to go to fund the senior ball.

Gridgraphs were also used for the first time in 1922. Someone would stand behind a 4' x 8' piece of glass. With the lights dimmed he would move a flashlight to indicate the location of the football. Game reports came from Western Union. The October 28, 1922 game with Georgia Tech was attended by a crowd of 1,500 in the

gym. The Notre Dame band played and cheerleaders led the crowds in their routines.

WGAZ broadcast the Notre Dame-Indiana game on November 4, 1922. This was the first radio broadcast of a Notre Dame football game. The game did not include any commercials and was not publicized nor promoted. *South Bend Tribune* sports editor Eugene Kessler phoned in the play by play account of the game from the press box to his newspaper. This was not unusual as many newspapers carried play by play accounts of baseball and football games. What was unusual was that Kessler's account was broadcast on the radio.

In 1923 the Notre Dame-Army game at Ebbetts Field was broadcast on WBAY (New York City). One week later the Princeton-Notre Dame game was broadcast on WJZ. Station KDKA broadcast the Notre Dame-Carnegie Tech game later in the season. WNAC (Boston) carried many of the Ivy League.

If you have noticed a pattern, Notre Dame went east for all its big games. Army would never travel to South Bend. Consequently the broadcasting of college football games progressed much more quickly in the East.

Radio broadcasting was also developing quite rapidly in Chicago. KYW carried all games at Stagg Field in Chicago. WGN carried the Notre Dame-Nebraska game in 1924. The Rose Bowl that featured Notre Dame and the Four Horseman against Stanford and Ernie Nevers was carried by WGN, KDKA and WGBS.

WEAF covered the 1925 Notre Dame-Army game in New York City. The broadcast was then fed to WFI (Philadelphia), WJAR (Providence), WGR (Buffalo) and WCAE (Pittsburgh). Also in 1925 the Penn State and Notre Dame game as well as the Notre Dame games at Northwestern, Minnesota and USC were all broadcast.

In 1928 the Red and Blue Networks as well CBS began broadcasting all Notre Dame road games. Local stations were the only ones carrying home games. All of the 1929 games were on the road because of the construction of a new stadium. Consequently all the games were broadcast on the radio.

Notre Dame coach Knute Rockne was very pro-radio. He even announced the Northwestern-Dartmouth game on November 24, 1928 when Notre Dame had a bye. The 1930 dedication of the new stadium featured Notre Dame vs. Navy. With NBC and CBS carrying the game, it became the first Notre Dame home game to be broadcast on national networks. Tragically, CBS radio also carried Knute Rockne's funeral on April 4, 1931.

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When Notre Dame began to broadcast its football games in the 1920s the Big Ten schools boycotted Notre Dame. This forced the Irish to travel further for football games and also led to the broadcasting of even more football games. This also helped to create a bond between Notre Dame and Eastern Catholics. This would subsequently lead to the development of what would become known as the "subway alumni." It would also lead to the heavy recruitment of football players in cities like Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Boston, Philadelphia and New York City.

Most football experts consider the Notre Dame-Ohio State game of 1935 one of the greatest college football games of all time. The game was originally going to be broadcast only in the state of Ohio under the sponsorship of the Ohio Oil Company. Fortunately Ohio Oil backed down and relinquished their rights to CBS and NBC. Fortunately the whole country was able to hear one of the greatest comebacks in football history. The names of Bill Shakespeare, Andy Pilney and Wayne Milner were heard throughout the country.

Beginning in 1930 and extending into 1960, WSBT carried all Notre Dame football games. In 1936 WSBT began distributing Notre Dame football broadcasts to a series of neighboring stations that would eventually form the Notre Dame Football Network. Jim Britt became the announcer for the Irish games. By the following year Jim Britt moved to Buffalo.

Almost all college football teams have one announcer that is mostly associated with that team. Joe Boland is that announcer that is synonymous with Notre Dame football. Boland graduated from Notre Dame in 1927, having played tackle with the Four Horseman and having played in almost the whole 1925 Rose Bowl game. He coached at Notre Dame from 1934-41. He also did some free lance announcing with WSBT that included announcing the 1935 Ohio State game. After a brief coaching stint at Purdue in 1941, Joe Boland returned to his South Bend announcing career. In 1947 Boland established the Notre Dame Broadcasting Network that included 15 radio stations from Northern Indiana and Michigan. By 1955 the Irish Football Network was the largest specialized radio network in the world and it included Armed Forces Radio, Alaska, Hawaii, over 50 stations in the Midwest as well as key stations in New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Buffalo, San Francisco, New Orleans, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Cleveland and Milwaukee.

In 1958 Notre Dame betrayed Boland by putting the Notre Dame games out to bid. In 1956 the Mutual Network outbid Joe Boland. Ever loyal to Notre Dame, Joe Boland combined with Harry Wismer to announce

the Irish games for Mutual during the 1956-57 seasons and for ABC in 1958 and 1959. By 1956 the Mutual Network included WGN in Chicago and WOR in New York City and 358 other stations. On February 26, 1960 Joe Boland died of a massive heart attack.

With Boland's death WSBT broke with Notre Dame and began carrying Purdue and Indiana games. WNDU, the University station, became the sole local outlet for Irish football games.

ABC outbid Mutual for the rights to Notre Dame games and continued broadcasting games through the 1967 season. The announcing was done at different times by Harry Wismer, Dan Peterson, Jim Gibbons, Moose Krause, Jim Morse and Frank Sweeney.

In 1968 Mutual outbid ABC and regained the rights to the Notre Dame. Mutual/Westwood Broadcasting and would retain these rights into the 21st century. The announcing has been done by Van Patrick, Don Criqui, Al Wester, Pat Sheridan, Tony Roberts, Tom Pagna and Allen Pinkett. Buck Jerzi has been the statistician since 1968.

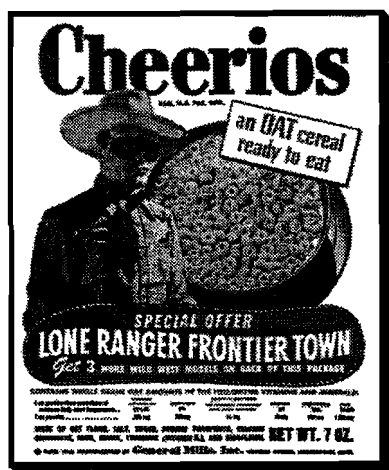
In next month's edition of the *IP* I will discuss the TV broadcasting of Notre Dame football games.

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## COMMERCIALS

by TOM CHERRE

Commercials, commercials, where would we be without them? They're an evil necessity, but frankly speaking, they pay for the show. Times were, when we would relate with certain sponsors to a particular show, like Chevy and Dinah Shore, or Kraft Foods and Perry Como. In the early TV days with *I Remember Mama* Peggy Wood would be pitching Maxwell House Coffee every week. Those days are long gone. I'll tell you, I can't remember one sponsor from two shows I watch each week, *Raymond*, and *King of Queens*. In the old radio days one sponsor usually presented the whole show. On *Fibber McGee & Molly* announcer Harlow Wilcox would neatly inject Johnson's Wax into every episode without ever breaking the flow of the show. Jack Benny and Don Wilson would use a similar format in making you aware of Lucky Strike cigarettes. Arthur Godfrey once said "If you have a good show and present the commercial the right way, listeners will buy the product". It certainly seemed to work that way for Lipton soup and tea. ----->



"A fiery horse  
with the speed  
of light,  
a cloud of  
dust  
and a  
hearty  
Hi-Yo Silver"

Many of the old radio western and adventure programs acted as vehicles for pawning off gadgets and premiums to the younger set. I myself, remember sending away for a Captain Midnight Ovaltine secret decoder ring. Those days are over, and I think it's sad the way times have changed. I guess that's what they call progress. Anyway how about a little fun with a radio show—sponsor match game. The first person to give me the correct answers wins a very sweet prize. Either e-mail me at Skylark68\_1999@yahoo.com or tell me at the next meeting. Don't go crazy the prize is under \$1000.00 Good Luck!

1. Burns & Allen Show
2. Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy
3. Mr. Keen Tracer of Lost Persons
4. Tom Mix
5. Roy Rogers
6. Wild Bill Hickok
7. Gunsmoke
8. Amos 'N' Andy
9. Casey Crime Photographer
10. Whistler
11. Suspense
12. Mr. District Attorney
13. New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

- a. Rinso
- b. Signal Oil Co.
- c. Petrie Wines
- d. Bristol Myers
- e. Chase & Sanborn Coffee
- f. Kelloggs Cereal
- g. Post Cereal
- h. Roma Wines
- i. Maxwell House Coffee
- j. Ralston Purina
- k. L&M Cigarettes
- l. Anchor Hawking Glass Co.
- m. RCA Victor

(Answers next month)

## Arch Oboler's Blood Chilling Dramas are full of Technical Innovations

*LIGHTS OUT*, among its many distinctions, has one rather unusual one. It is probably the only program on the air that invites the listeners to tune out before they ever get started listening. After the drama is introduced, a voice, in the accents of doom, says: "It—is—is—later—than—you think!" A moment later the same voice announces: "*Lights Out* brings you stories of the supernatural and the subnormal—dramatizing the fantasies and the terrors of the unknown. We tell you this frankly so if you wish to avoid the excitement and tension of these imaginative plays, we urge you, calmly but sincerely, to turn off your radio now."

After this unusually arresting opening, it is unlikely that anyone would so much as move out of earshot of the radio, much less turn it off. On the contrary, it is estimated that at least ten million listeners sit around their sets with tingling spines and tense nerves, straining intently for each word that Arch Oboler has written. These tales of suspense, imagination and mystery were written and directed by the master hand of Arch Oboler as a personal relaxation. He hopes they also have brought public relaxation from war headlines. They were first aired from Chicago in 1936 and quickly became one of the memorable series of the ether, bringing Oboler his first national recognition as radio's most sensational creative talent. These dramas continued for two years, until at last, Oboler required a vacation from the arduous task of writing, directing, and producing a new play each week.

Following a six month's vacation in Europe, Oboler returned to the United States and began the *Arch Oboler Plays* series which ran through the greater part of 1939. *Lights Out* moved to CBS in New York in 1942, and is now being broadcast from the Coast, on sixty-eight stations, and with eight additional stations on the repeat show.

The program has gained steadily in public favor, along with the other mystery and hair-raiser series which are proving so popular during this period of "escapism", and is now rated among the top shows of its kind on the air. For originality, imagination and mastery of the technique Oboler is hard to equal, the unusual inventiveness of his themes being in themselves startling. One grips you with its story of a spiteful woman who turned into a cat, another holds you enthralled with the tale of a newspaper columnist who jumped out of a win-

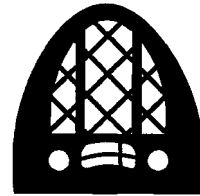


Arch Oboler, right discussing an involved point in one of his dramas with Bette Davis and Lou Merrill, actor.

dow to his death and later returned to haunt his publisher, another renders you spellbound with this question: "Is there a living monstrous thing in the world (besides Hitler) which turns men into beasts, or does the craze to kill come from within?" and still another takes the listener on a breathless ride along a mine-strewn road in Tunis in a U. S. Army jeep that can whizz through fire and brimstone, flood and forest, with the greatest of ease.

Oboler's imagination, never flags or slows down, and his technical invention keeps pace with his plots, for many of the technical innovations in radio drama, now accepted as standard on many plays of this character, were first introduced by him in this series. But he never drags in a technical stunt, a new sound effect, a new treatment of music behind the drama, without a real reason. What Oboler invents must always be merely incidental to the story. For with this master of his form neither the technique nor the name-star takes precedence. The story is the thing, always the story.

And this insistence on story value is entirely justified, judging from the tense and motionless listeners who sit by their radios completely out of our everyday world, while the voice of Fate announces: "It is later than you think!" However, no "listening radio casualties" have been reported as yet. (August 1943)



## RADIOLDIES

by DAN MARAFINO

"What's that on your forehead?"

"Oh, you noticed. It's my radio eye. I see radio with it."  
"Don't be ridiculous, no one can see radio, you mean you see the radio."

"No, I mean, here, let me explain. Would it surprise you if I were to tell you I can see the *Shadow* and I know what all the radio personalities look like, and I haven't looked at pictures? I see all this through what I call the mind's eye. I simply close my two eyes and let my radio eye do it's thing."

"Well I'll be a monkey's uncle."

"When I'm watching all my favorites, I'm oblivious to what's going on around me. I am, shall we say, in the ether. Now I'm watching Don Wilson sell Jell-o and Jack is standing next to him."

"You can really see all this?"

"Sure, wanna try?"

"What do I have to do?"

"Listen, three quarters of this is listening, without that, forget it."

"O.K. I'll close my eyes."

"See anything?"

"McGee's going to the closet, oh boy here it comes. Look at all that stuff, pots, boxes, roller skates wow, what a mess. Did you see that?"

"Sure did. Close your eyes, use your imagination and it'll come to you naturally, if you listen real hard."

"Thanks buddy."

"You're very welcome."

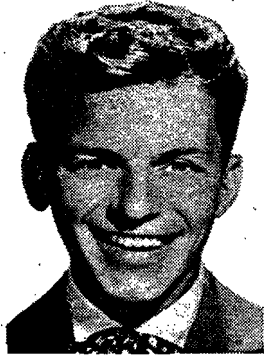
"And that's all there is to it"



This time it's Frank Sinatra on radio, specifically, in guest star roles. I must thank good buddy Frank Bork for letting me borrow his Frank Sinatra set to dub. Needless to say, I couldn't have done it without you.

Now, to the review. Twenty ninety minute cassettes take a bit of time to copy, but when there's singing involved, in this case Sinatra, it's a very enjoyable chore.

# FRANK SINATRA



We all know Frank can sing; but way back when he was getting along as a singer, someone (don't ask me who) found out our boy could not only be funny, but could act as well. Witness *Lux Radio Theatre*, *Rocky Fortune*, *Family Theatre*, and one of the best shows I've ever heard, "To Find Help" on *Suspense* with Agnes Moorhead.

Mr. Sinatra also had a good time with the verbal sparring and harmonic singing anytime he and Bing Crosby got together. Make no mistake, the competition between the two was fierce, but in a friendly way. Aside from guesting on a slew of programs (Sinatra was VERY much in demand) he also found time to host shows. He helped Bill Stern more than once and was darn good. He did *Mail Call*, *Command Performance* and much more.

Frank's radio career went from 1942 to 1954 when he left radio, not because he wanted to, but rather he had to. His movie career was taking off and he simply did, not have the time to devote to radio. He still continued with the singing career, pumped out the movies, formed the *Rat Pack* of Dean Martin, Peter Lawford and Sammy Davis Jr. Las Vegas was Frank's hot spot and his popularity was bigger than ever.

I can't tell you how much I enjoy this hobby, being able to listen again to the people and programs I grew up with. I missed a lot when I was a pup, but I remembered the important ones like *Superman*, *Let's Pretend* and the really good stuff. Next month I'll be back with another review. I'll look at the program *I was a Communist for the F.B.I.* Till then I'll sign off.

P.S. The complete 20 tape set of *The Frank Sinatra collection* will be handed over for numbering and put into the cassette library A.S.A.P.

## Mystery Show Realistic

Eriest studio in radio was the one where *I Love A Mystery* aired over CBS. Evidently the artists felt that grisley things around them helped sustain the mood of their acting. Among other things in the room were grinning skull ash trays while the coat tree had been fashioned from a real skeleton.



## Beer, Rum and Coke

(August, 1946)

When the Andrews Sisters start slamming home the notion that "Money Is the Root of All Evil," they may put their hearts into it—but never their pocketbooks. Since 1937, this powerhouse trio has waxed some 20,000,000 discs, for each of which the lasses get two cents in hard, cold cash. And none of 'em has ever been known to turn up her nasal resonance chambers at a shining copper yet.

Last year alone, the veteran triumverate unloaded on the public about 5,000,000 versions of their pungent ditties. It certainly, looks as if, after nearly a decade as top-of-the-heap recording artists, the gals are still climbing the coin-machine trail.

Just what it is that Maxene, Patty and LaVerne have (and their numerous competitors and imitators haven't) is still open to question. Except from the bookkeeping angle, their notes are scarcely golden, and their pulchritude not unusual. But somewhere along the route of their fourteen years in show business, the Andrews Sisters have managed to pick up a potent style of delivery that wows the listeners, sends every tune they warble sliding right into the groove.

Among their assets is undoubtedly arranger Vic Schoen, who has been with them ever since their "Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen" days. (That was the minor-keyed Jewish melody that yanked the girls out of obscurity and into national prominence almost overnight.) Also on the

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credit side of the ledger is manager Lou Levy, now married to Maxene, who has chosen every ballad the girls have ever gone to work on. Lou is president of the Leeds Music Company, has a special system of his own for spotting hit tunes. If he can just remember a song two days after he hears it, it's bound to be solid.

Other sister acts have also had expert advice and assistance, however, and yet never managed to get any further than the cheap vaudeville and small-time band bracket. What makes these three juke-box royalty is fundamentally their own. They have a zest, a kind of earthy gusto that gets under the skin of John Doe or G.I. Joe, makes him relax and feel good. The girls like to sing, like the people they're singing to and that genuineness gets across.

Seldom mentioned are the non-vocal talents which have enabled the Andrews Sisters to use their Decca Record triumphs as springboards to success in every type of theatrical career. On road tours, Maxene, Patty and LaVerne are always sell-outs, display a natural gift for costume, stage effect, timing, and all the other tricks of skilful showmanship. Both personal appearances and radio programs have demonstrated their flair for comedy, particularly in the case of blonde Patty, who clowns for the sheer fun of it whether or not there's anyone around to see her.

Only in the movies have the girls failed to show any special talent for the medium. Though they've made numerous pictures, and fans have flocked to see them, something of their usual gay exuberance is lost on the screen. The girls are philosophical about it, though, grateful that they've improved so much since their first venture, "Argentina Nights." A glance at that one sent them "screaming from the projection booth," and their critical opinion was upheld by the "Harvard Lampoon," which voted their performance the "most frightening of the year." (The swing-singing trio enjoy life too much to hold grudges, felt no ill will at this ungentle treatment by "those nice Harvard boys." "We'd like to sing at a Harvard prom," they said. "We'd scare 'em to death.") As far as their Hollywood career in general is concerned, the sisters want it made clear that they've never tried to sell looks—and don't want to.

With all these varied interests, life is caviar and champagne now as far as income is concerned—but it's still hard labor as to hours. Maxene (group spokesman) says, "All you need for success is the constitution of a couple of commandos." Working up an "Atlanta, GA" or a "Rum and Coca Cola" is a time-consuming chore in itself, with the three lasses, plus Vic Schoen, suffering, arguing, holding noses, sneering and generally going through creative agony.

Oldest sister red-headed LaVerne, now 29, is the only one who reads music, so her job is to interpret various passages—besides carrying the "bass" part. The youngest, 25-year-old Patty, is the hoarse-voiced lead singer. Her specialty is originating novelty ideas. Brown-haired Maxene, 27, gets into the swing with a "tenor" or "would-be soprano," also dreams up counter-melody and trick wordage. Result may be boogie wogie, calypso or a sagebrush melody, depending on what the aggregation thinks is the trend of the times—but it always had the distinctive Andrews touch.

The girls are spending those hard-earned pennies with the glee and enthusiasm they bring to everything they do. They've established "Mom" (Norwegian-born Olga Solli) and "Pete" (their Greek father, a former Minneapolis restaurant-owner) in a well-landscaped Hollywood suburban estate. Since the whole family loves dogs, they've managed to surround themselves with sixteen of them, all very much in evidence. LaVerne, who goes in for frilly clothes and luxuries, has treated herself to eight fur coats (a kind of hangover from memories of wintry days in Minneapolis). And it's LaVerne, too, who owns the showpiece of the establishment—a specially-built bed, which is seven feet across and perfectly round.

Hi-de-ho-ing has made the Andrews Sisters rich, but it's never made them high-hat. They're still friends with the folks back home who remember them when they started out in a "Kiddy Revue" as youngsters; still act the same as the three unknowns who barnstormed with Larry Rich and Leon Belasco. Tapdancing Patty has been known to tell reporters, "I'm ignorant and that's why I'm happy"; Maxene snaps gum when she feels like it till the welkin rings. And nobody has a last name as far as any of them are concerned. Completely brash, and completely unassuming, the girls like nothing better than a joke, enjoy repeating Groucho Marx's crack when he saw them on a train: "I thought they made their trips by broomstick."







"All wrong for radio" said the big executive who first auditioned Edgar and Charlie, which shows how wrong even a big executive can be.

## My First Audition

By EDGAR BERGEN

Charlie and I were working the Chez Paree in Chicago, but we wanted to get into radio. The quickest way, I figured it, was to interest advertising agencies. So I sent out a batch of telegrams modestly worded: "Come and see my act at the Chez Paree if you want a man with ten years' successful experience in vaudeville and night-clubs, who can write comedy and play it." Nothing happened. So I went to call on them, in person. The first interview was a little disconcerting. "You write your own stuff? We have dozens of people who write good comedy." "Ventriloquist?" shrugged the second. "It's probably all right to be one, but not on radio." "You work with an audience? That's no good," another uttered his pronouncement. "I disagree," I ventured timidly. So I was out.

Then somebody pulled some wires and the really big chance came. Charlie was goggle-eyed. I was practically speechless—which went for both of us, of course! A fellow in charge of new talent at NBC was going to give us an audition. We sent our pants out to be pressed, got haircuts (at least, Charlie did), and presented ourselves promptly at the appointed hour. We did our stuff.

"That act will never go on radio." Mr. Big said bluntly. "The jokes aren't funny. The voice isn't right. The diction is dreadful." "Nuts to you," muttered Charlie, and

he held his thumb in the region of his nose as we turned and went, we thought forever.

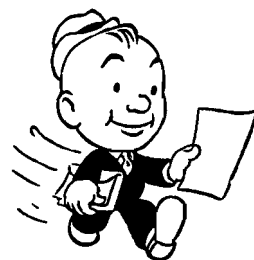
But forever is a long time. In this case, it turned out to be a little less than six months. By then we were back in New York, doing our act in the Rainbow Room at Radio City, and when Elsa Maxwell threw one of her famous "400" parties for Noel Coward, Charlie and I "entertained." Then Elsa went on Rudy Vallee's radio show and when she began to talk about the way she lined up her party talent, Rudy suggested she introduce us on one of her NBC radio parties.

They asked us to come back a second week, and a third. "Maybe we should get a little more money," I suggested mildly, at this point. "Maybe," Charlie broke in. "Positively. Or I quit the act, and then Bergen will have to do all the talking."

It wasn't until we had been on the Vallee broadcasts about four months that I woke up to what was happening. A letter came addressed merely "Edgar Bergen, New York"—and I got it. "We're famous, Bergen," Charlie chortled. "Don't be silly, Charlie," I squelched him. But I was feeling pretty good myself. We'd done it, at last.

And Mr. Big, who gave us the brush-off on our First Audition—what became of him? Why, he got to be a Vice President. of course!

*(Thanks to The Golden Radio Buffs of Maryland for the use of this article)*



## RADIO ODDITIES

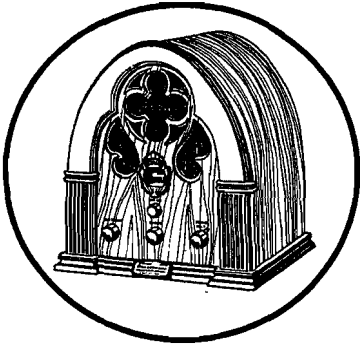
A manual of foreign dialects—Chinese, German, Greek, etc. was published for the use of radio comedians and villains. The book took fifteen years of research.

When *Information Please* began in 1938 only \$400 was allotted to a program. Five years later the cost of each program was from five to ten thousand dollars.

American radio stations contributed 8,000 programs of fifteen minutes or more to the Second War Bond Drive, in addition to 118,000 spot announcements. This was a total of seven million dollars of program time.

# The Old Time Radio Club

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