

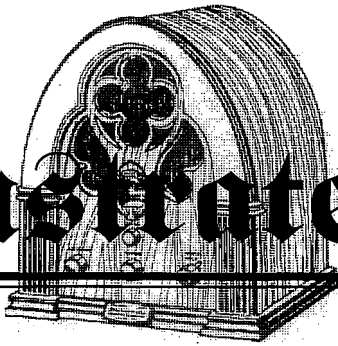
*The Old Time Radio Club*

Established 1975

# The Illustrated Press

Number 317

February 2004



Gracie Allen tries to get a rise out of her napping hubby George Burns while celebrating New Year's Eve in 1949. But George appears to be too pooped to party. The comedy duo would soon toot their own horn with the TV premiere of *The Burns and Allen Show* in 1950. But at this point, George was probably ready to tell his wife to just, "Say good night, Gracie"

***Welcome to a New Year in The Old Time Radio Club***

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## Membership information

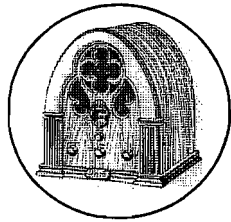
New member processing, \$5 plus club membership of \$17.50 per year from January 1 to December 31. Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing and a monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows: If you join January-March, \$17.50; April-June, \$14; July-September, \$10; October-December, \$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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Lancaster, NY 14086

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**Library Rates:** Video cassettes are \$1.85 per month; audio cassettes are \$1.95 each and are recorded on a club supplied cassette which is retained by the member; records are \$.85 per month. Rates include postage and handling and are payable in U.S. funds.



## HOW I PAID MY INCOME TAX

*(Or You can't do Business with Bergen)*

by CHARLIE McCARTHY

It happens this way, see—I'm sittin' in my study nonchalantly marking a deck of cards, when who pops his beezers in the door but Bergen—the Swedish nightingoon. From the look in his eye, I can see he's about to lay the groundwork for a double-cross.

"Charlie," he says, with a look of fatherly affection in his good eye, "I'd like to talk to you."

"See my secretary for an appointment," I says demurely, "and perhaps I can squeeze you in about half past Thursday."

"Now, Charlie," he says, "we've been together a long time, haven't we?" I had to admit that this had the basis of truth and he continued, rubbing his hands, "And we've been very, very close."

"Yes," I cracked, "especially you." I've known him long enough never to agree with anything he says until I find out what cooks. That's why I stall him off in this case—with polite chitchat.

Next he goes into that hardship routine. He says, "Charlie, I've done a lot for you, with the thought in mind that you'd be a comfort to me in my old age."

"Well, haven't I?" I says, thumbing an old copy of *Esquire*.

"Well, anyway," he continues, "today there's a little matter which I would like to discuss with you." As soon as he says "little matter," I know it has something to do with my allowance. And sure enough, he whips out an official-looking card and says, "Sign here."

"Oh, no, you don't," says I. "Let me see what I'm signing." He gives me some double talk about an *Employeeswithholdingexemptioncertificate*. I ask him to drag that past a little slower. It turns out to be a form from the *Collector of Infernal Refuge*.

"Bergen, I refuse to sign anything until I've called my lawyer," I says. But before I can reach for the phone, he shoves a pen in my hand and points to a dotted line. Of course, I'm not going to stand for this stuff without reading it, so I looks it over. It turns out to be the new *Pay-As-You-Go* tax plan. If I gotta pay as I go, I'm gonna stay right here.

Anyway, there's three boxes to check. The first one says, "Married person living with husband." That lets me out. You know I'm not living with my husband. I left him, the brute beat, me. The next box says, "Single person not married, not head of family, not nothin'." That's comin' closer. The third one covers my case exactly . . . "Single husband not married." So I check it off.

Before I sign, I ask Bergen for a breakdown on this shakedown. And he says the government wants 20% of my salary. This is ridiculous on the face of it, 'cause I don't make that much.

"But, Charlie," says Bergen, with one hand in my pocket, "the government needs money, and money doesn't grow on trees." The only answer to that one I could think of was "Yours did." And, anyway, I just ain't got the mazoola—the happy cabbage.

"What about your piggy bank?" asks Bergen, trying another angle. "Don't you have anything in that?" "Not a sow," I says, "not a sow."

"That's the trouble with you, Charlie," he says, turning on the heat, "you're too careless with your money. I sometimes wonder where it all goes."

"Can I help it if I'm a spendthrift?" I says. "A penny here and a penny there and before I know it, a whole nickel's gone." And Bergen says, "That's just the trouble—a fool and his money are soon parted." If that's the case, why do I have so much trouble getting any from him?

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"Nevertheless," says Bergen, "You will have to figure out 20% of your salary and pay it to the government." So I starts to work on it. I puts down 75 cents. It looks so small on the paper that I tear it up and write it in five-inch numbers.

That doesn't help much, so I start to figure: "Twenty times 75 is what I got to get . . . First, I multiply zero times zero. It comes out a goose egg. Then I multiply zero times seven and I get another zero. I've done all that work and what do I have to show for it? Nothin'—so I take another tack. Five into two goes . . . oh, oh, it doesn't work. There's no use forcing it, so I drop the seven and push in another goose egg. I sauté the goose egg, slop it around, and the whole thing comes out 131, except February, which has 28."

Bergen brings up the question of expenses, so I decide to make a list of my assets and liabilities. When I get through, it looks something like this:

### ASSETS

*One scout knife with broken blade*  
*One sling shot (pre-war rubber)*  
*One deck of cards (three missing)*  
*Two glass doorknobs*  
*One horse's tooth (bicuspid)*  
*One pair of loaded dice*  
*Four telephone slugs*  
*Bicycle chain with missing link*  
*Horned toad (see top bureau drawer)*  
*Willys-Knight radiator cap (vintage '22)*  
*Marbles—6 aggies—1 realie*  
*One forged report card (slightly bent)*  
*Yo-yo with broken string*

### LIABILITIES

*Bergen*  
*Bad debts (25 cents to Bergen)*  
*Mortgage on scooter bike (held by Fifth National Bank—President, Skinny Dugan)*  
*W. C. Fields*  
*Miniature golf course*  
*4 cents owed for gum drops (try and get it)*  
*D in history*  
*One unsigned report card*  
*Bottle of hair tonic bought for Bergen (total loss)*  
*A set of military brushes (ditto).*

After I subtracted the liabilities from the assets—or is it the other way around?—I find that my net income runs into four figures—all zeros. The way I figure it, the only way for me to pay this is for Bergen to raise my allowance. I explain this to him as gently as possible. Picking himself up off the floor, he snaps the double lock on his pocketbook.

"The whole thing is so ridiculous," I says. "The way things are now, I just can't afford to earn a living." He said, "You shouldn't feel that way—you're in the lower brackets." I said, "Lower brackets, nothing—I'm on the bottom shelf."

Then he gives me that Alcatraz routine. "You're going to jail," he exclaims. "I'll call my lawyer," I barked. "I'll get out a writ of hideous corpuscle, nol contendre, and epso saltso."

"But Charlie," he interrupts. "Don't Charlie me," I said, "There's more here than meets the F.B.I. I'll fight this thing, Bergen. . . I'll take it to the highest court in the land." I'm lettin' off steam, when I happen to turn the blank over. Bergen says, "You'll have to pay this or else . . ."

"Wait a minute," I shouts, "Not so fast, bucket-head . . . I just happened to look on the back of the card and I just happened to, see a most amazing fact."

"What do you mean?" Bergen cracks.

"What do I mean?" says I, in my best legal manner. "I shall quote: 'Withholding tax shall not apply where the individual makes less than twelve dollars a week.'"

"But, Charlie . . ." says Bergen.

"But, Bergen," says I. "You louse . . . you've ultra-violet-ed my trust."

"I'm sure I can explain," says Bergen. "I was only trying to look out for myself—I mean the government."

"Why, you penny-pincher," I shouts. "Get away from me . . . Don't touch me Bergen . . . Leggo my la-pel, Bergen, before you steal my coat! I'll clip you, so help me . . . I'll mow you down!"



**Among Charlie's Liabilities: Bergen himself (according to McCarthy), Foe W. C. Fields — and that threatening saw!**

# —JACK BENNY—

by *TOM CHERRE*

My first recollection of Jack Benny probably took place in the early 50s around the kitchen table with the rest of the family. I was just a little squirt, but I distinctly remember a gravel throat voice come out of our radio. That voice was Rochester. I was always puzzled how a person could be named after a city. My parents also listened to Bing Crosby, and of course *The Shadow*, which pretty much roundel out the usual slate of Sunday shows. I particularly remember the *Jack Benny Show* because it was funny and had some pretty interesting characters in it. As club member Dan Marafino put it, in today's society, old time radio could never exist. The attention span where someone could listen to a radio show for 30 minutes is not there. It just wouldn't happen. 50 years ago, that's another story. It is like Dan said, it's a cable TV and movie oriented society.

This February 14th would have marked the 110th birthday of Jack Benny, It's fitting that Jack was born on Valentine's Day since he was loved by just about everyone that knew him. He may have been a cheapskate and miser on radio, but in the real world he was actually



With Mel Blanc (Jack's long suffering volatile violin instructor, "M'sieu Le Blanc").

extremely generous and a soft touch for those less fortunate. His good buddy Fred Allen would hand out fivers, tens, or twenties to his friends that were down on their luck. If Jack knew of a fellow performer out of work he would work him in the show for a bit part and pay him for his service rather than just give him a hand out. He didn't want to hurt his pride.

Jack was also a peace-maker. He would have made a great Secretary of State. Years ago, Jack Paar and Ed Sullivan had an out and out major league fight over the difference in salaries paid for guests on each other's show. They hated each other delivering heated tongue lashings at each other. When Benny was a guest on Paar's *Tonight Show* he dropped a bombshell by bringing up the Paar-Sullivan feud. He persuaded his two good friends to make up and eventually they became friends again.

Another thing that impressed me about Jack Benny was his general sensitivity on material he used on his show. Each week he'd go over the script with his writers making sure nothing was offensive in nature. In today's world just about anything goes, and anything or anyone is fair game. TV comics use sex, religion, and foul language as fodder for jokes. Nothing is sacred when the subjects of assassinations, physical deformities, lambasting national figures and religion are normal criteria for poking and garnishing laughs. Jack Benny's jokes and gags would never, I mean never offend anyone. That's the way it had to be. Even with Mr. Kitzle, the loveable Jewish character played by Artie Auerbach, Jack would say "Don't do any jokes that were specifically Jewish or Black jokes. Just do jokes that can be done by any member of the cast and then have them done by Kitzle". My favorite Mr Kitzle joke was the time Jack and the crew were taking the train to New York and he happened to meet Mr Kitzle at the station. After exchanging greetings Jack asked him where he was going. Kitzle answered he was just there to pick up his son who was coming home from college. Jack asks him what college, and Mr. Kitzle answers in his thick Yiddish accent "Southern Methodist". This line was received with a long laugh and loud applause. Mr Kitzle always went about telling Jack his favorite show was The Ed Solomon Show and his favorite singer Nat King Cohen. I really got a kick out of Mr Kitzle.

Another note that confirms Jack's attribute of compassion was right after he had finished the movie "To Be Or Not To Be" with co star Carol Lombard. As soon as the movie was wrapped up Lombard boarded a plane for a war bond selling tour. Shortly after, there was a fiery crash killing Lombard. Jack was so shaken up after hearing the news, he announced that he would not do his Sunday show. He couldn't go on the air and tell jokes

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**Jack & Mary Celebrating their 13th wedding anniversary, January 1940**

and be funny. On the occasion of FDR's unexpected death, Jack cried and then refused to do another Sunday broadcast. This was the real Jack Benny, warm and sensitive. He was a giving and caring soul.

Jack's movie career never really amounted to much. He made 21 movies, and the only one he really loved was "To Be" with Lombard. After doing about a dozen mediocre movies, Benny thought this one would finally catapult him to fame. Unfortunately this was not to be. It was Lombard's last film when it was released posthumously. It was awfully hard for movie goers to laugh at scenes showing the lovely Lombard when the thought of her violent death was still fresh in their minds. Instead of a highly successful movie "To Be" was again just a mediocre flick, and Jack's movie career never blossomed. Benny's film career may have been lackluster, but his radio career was a different story.



**While in the Navy, Dennis Day visited his co-stars (1945): Don Wilson, Phil Harris, Rochester and Jack.**

Jack Benny passed away the day after Christmas 1974. Three days later on December 29, Bob Hope gave a truly beautiful eulogy of Jack admitting that Jack was indeed stingy. He only gave us 80 years of his life. Hope said Jack found great joy in the joy he brought to others. Hope summed up Jack Benny's life saying Jack had another quality that's become as rare as a nickel candy bar. That quality was taste. You didn't have to chase the kids out of the room when he was on the air. His radio show was a classic and Jack was a masterpiece ensemble. And as that little squirt in the 50s I still remember his warm friendly closing "Good Night Folks".

## Edward Wanat, Sr.

### EULOGY

I would like to thank all the family members and friends here today for joining in this memorial service for the passing of the soul and spirit from the mortal body of my father and my best friend Edward Joseph Wanat, Sr. The sentimental and emotional man who shared with me many things, stories, events and personal feelings. The people, places and things that made him the man he was. The good and the bad times throughout his life. He shared with me many stories he would not have shared with anyone else. He shared with me in his triumphs and in his disappointments. He was a man that would cry openly during a sentimental movie and would laugh hysterically at a funny one, a man of many virtues, beliefs and worldly experiences. A man full of knowledge of radio and music. I know he is here with us in spirit. I also know he is his with Family and everyone he enjoyed in life. He is probably sitting right now in that big recording / movie studio in the sky. He's doing his *Command Performance*, the *Kraft Music Hall*, the *Lux Radio Theatre* and the *Philco Radio Time*. He's with Paul Whiteman and the Rhythm Boys with Bing Crosby singing "Blue Skies Smiling At Me". I can picture him with Bing Crosby and Bob Hope planning a new Road Movie. He is debating with Jack Benny on who is really 39. He's singing "Mammy" with Al Jolson, and old banjo eyes Eddie Cantor and dad are looking to find some Whoopee. Yes he is with his Favorite Ladies of Stage, Screen and Music. He is sitting under the apple tree with the Andrew Sisters and swinging with the Dorsey Brothers. He is singing through a megaphone with Rudy Vallee "Heigh-Ho Everybody Heigh-Ho". He knows what really happened to Glenn Miller. He's riding with Gene Autry the Singing Cowboy on Champion. He is roaring at the likes of George Burns and Gracie Allen. Knowing Dad he is telling Fibber McGee to clean out his closet. Oh Boy Dad everything had to be in it's place with you. He's telling Abbott and Costello that he's on

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first! Ted Lewis and Dad want everyone to know that "Every Body is Happy!" His Soul is in the spirit world enjoying and acting with every Star every Movie, every Radio Show, every Slapstick, Black Faced, Vaudevillian Routine, Song and Dance number that made him happy in life. Forever now he is truly a part of it all for all eternity. Yes Dad Thank You for your friendship and love and putting all your trust in me to take care of everything you wanted done. I will never forget your heel to toe walk tapping through the house as you walked around in beat with your music. I will hear that all the time and especially all of the great times we spent together. Dad, Thanks For The Memories.

Edward Wanat, Jr.



### DAGWOOD and HIS WIFE RUN TRUE TO FORM — EVEN IN PRIVATE LIFE

Comic strips have been accused of everything from frightening the kiddies to distorting the human race beyond all recognition. A few—the homey type—have managed to recreate the humorous incidents of daily life in cartoon form. But only one of them has managed to recreate cartoon characters in the flesh.

"Blondie" is its name. Created by cartoonist Chic Young of King Features, *Blondie* and *Dagwood Bumstead* have carried their marital mishaps and average-suburban Americanism, not only into movies and radio, but right into actual, everyday life.

Penny Singleton and Arthur Lake have been playing the roles for so long now—fourteen films for Columbia Pictures and more than four years of radio for CBS—that even they can't tell you where the *Bumsteads* leave off and their own personalities begin. As Lake puts it, "instead of being a man portraying a character, I feel like a character portraying a man."

The only big difference between their lives and the *Bumsteads*' is the way they make their living. And, of course, there's also the minor fact that, while both are happily married, it's not to each other! In appearance alone, Penny and Arthur resemble their cartoon prototypes to an amazing degree. Yet the most startling similarity of all—Blondie's own trademark is the single fraud in the whole situation.

New York theatre-goers of the '30s remember Penny as a freckle-faced, five-foot-three bundle of energy who sang, danced and clowned through musical shows—with a mop of chestnut curls. Today's blonde ringlets are the only Hollywood touch in Penny's make-up.

Like Blondie, Penny has two children. Her first-born, "DeeGee" (Dorothy Grace), is of school age now and just the right size for the identical mother-and-daughter costumes which both dote on. More like the home-loving cartoon cutie than any actress has a right to be—from the studio viewpoint—the star is completely devoted to her family and has never shown any compunction about interrupting her career for them. Just in the past year, *Blondie's* impersonator—whose real names are Dorothy McNulty by birth, Mrs. Robert



Dagwood and Blondie, of comic-strip fame, are played by Arthur Lake and Penny Singleton—on both air and film.



Dagwood and Blondie hear a few words from Boss Dithers (Hanley Stafford) — who also plays *Baby Snooks' Daddy*

Sparks by marriage—took time out for: (1) The arrival of a second daughter, Robin Susan; (2) packing up to follow her film-producer husband, now a Marine, to make a home for him wherever she could be near his station.

Penny's life might have been much the same if she'd never heard of "Blondie." But those who know actresses don't really think so. Suppose she'd been playing *Dracula's* daughter—or *Frankenstein's* wife?

In Lake's case, there has been an even more direct tie-up between his role and his private personality. The blue-eyed, brown-tressed six-footer parts his hair with a Dagwoodish dash, wears "jazzbo" ties and a hat just slightly too small for his head.

A favorite Hollywood story is the one about the time that Lake—just like *Dagwood* with a forgotten letter in his pocket—forgot to mail his Yuletide greetings until the day after Christmas. It may have been sheer showmanship, but friends still treasure those envelopes with the telltale "Dec. 26" postmark!

There's strictly nothing phony about Arthur's Bumsteadian appetite. *Dagwood* may gorge himself on quadruple-decker sandwiches from the Bumstead ice-box. Lake is known for the damage he does to refreshments at any neighborhood gathering. As though that weren't enough, he even has a soda fountain in his home. All of which is little short of amazing—for both Penny and Arthur are children of the theatre. Kentucky-born Arthur Silverlake was the son of a former circus acrobat and an actress, and made stage entrances before he could read and write. Philadelphia-born Penny was the daughter of a newspaperman and started singing in a local movie house before she was nine. Yet—somehow—both found, not only a perfect career but a perfect private life, in two comic-strip characters.

April, 1944



## A BOOK REVIEW

### Radio Program Openings and Closings 1931 - 1972

by Vincent Terrace

Reviewed by Ken Krug

Here is another OTR reference book which can be used either to jog the memory of the older fan or as a tool to help identify specific programs, sponsors, actors and actresses and in some cases the theme music used. It is a comprehensive alphabetical listing of 444 radio programs broadcast within a forty-one year period, including what is known as the "Golden Age".

The author gives a brief description about the type of show (adventure, comedy, drama etc.) plus the story line, sponsor, networks, years of broadcast and principal cast. Each listing includes a script-like opening sequence which indicates the placement of the theme music, announcer, his opening remarks plus commercials if any. The closing sequence is also described in the same manner as the program's opening. An interesting highlight of the listings is when the show's opening and closing format has a major change, such as sponsor or star, the revised format is also described.

There are three Appendices in the book. Appendix "A" is an alphabetical list of sponsors plus the programs they backed. Appendix "B" shows the name of the program and any commercial product slogan or jingle associated with the show's sponsor. Appendix "C" briefly lists programs containing a description of announcements concerning the Second World War.

I'd recommend for anyone building a library of OTR reference books.

284 Pages, illustrated case binding (7 x 10), appendices and index. Price \$45.00, Postpaid Price \$49.00.

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## The Illustrated Press



### The Charioteers

*Improvising Novel Arrangements  
is Their Specialty*

Harmony groups are plentiful in radio—but a harmony group that never uses a single written note of music is certainly unusual. And that's the story on "The Charioteers," featured on Bing Crosby's *Kraft Music Hall*.

Whenever they get a chance, the five members pictured above (baritone Ira Williams, first tenor Wilfred Williams, bass Howard Daniel, second tenor Eddie Jackson, and pianist James Sherman) get together for a practice session in which they think up and try out new arrangements. By the time the musicians have all the kinks ironed out of a song, they can't forget it. Even years later, some one of the boys will recollect just how they worked out a number.

Not that these lads are a crew of musical ignoramuses, unable to reduce their rhythmic thoughts to writing. All are college-trained, and Howard Daniel was once a

violin instructor at Wilberforce University, Ohio. It was under his sponsorship that the original "Harmony Four," of which he and Wilfred are survivors, made its appearance. The present combination takes its name from the famous Negro spiritual, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," which was formerly used as a theme song.

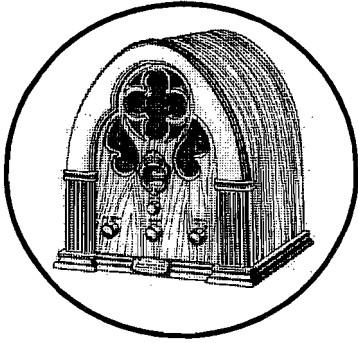
(April, 1944)

### LATEST ADDITIONS TO THE CASSETTE LIBRARY

- 3314 Dragnet "Tom Laval" 10/1/49  
Dragnet "Mother-in-Law Murder" 11/24/49
- 3315 Movie Town Theatre "Baby Doing Well"  
Movie Town Theatre
- 3316 Ellery Queen "The Message In Red" 11/7/45  
Ellery Queen "The Armchair Detective" 3/27/46
- 3317 Box 13 "Blackball Is Murder" 9/5/48  
Box 13 "Actor's Alibi" 9/12/48
- 3318 Nero Wolfe "The Killer Cards" 1/12/51  
Nero Wolfe "The Calculated Risk" 1/19/51
- 3319 Green Hornet "Superhighway Robbery" 11/12/45  
Green Hornet "Grand Larceny on Wheels"  
4/23/46
- 3320 Fred Allen "Psychopathic Spectacular" 1/4/48  
Fred Allen "Scalping Baseball Tickets" 4/25/48
- 3321 Quiet, Please "Take Me Out To The Graveyard"  
11/3/47  
Quiet, Please "Three" 11/10/47
- 3322 Gunsmoke "Personal Justice" 9/27/59  
Gunsmoke "Hinka Do" 10/4/59
- 3323 Escape "The Grove of Ashtaroff" 2/29/48  
Escape "Jimmy Goggles, The God" 3/7/48
- 3324 Escape "The Invader" 3/29/53  
Escape "A Sleeping Draught" 4/5/53
- 3325 Rocky Jordan "Escaping Nazi War Criminals"  
2/28/45  
Rocky Jordan 4/11/45  
Rocky Jordan "The Battered Bride Groom"  
10/31/48
- 3326 Dragnet "The Big Tooth" 2/15/53  
Dragnet "The Big Smoke" 2/22/53
- 3327 X Minus One "The Last Martian" 8/7/56  
X Minus One "The Snowball Effect" 8/15/56
- 3328 Counterspy "Carbon Consul" 11/3/50  
Counterspy "Stolen Secret" 11/12/50
- 3329 Dragnet "Missing Women" 9/3/49  
Dragnet "The Sullivan Kidnapping" 9/10/49

**The Old Time Radio Club**

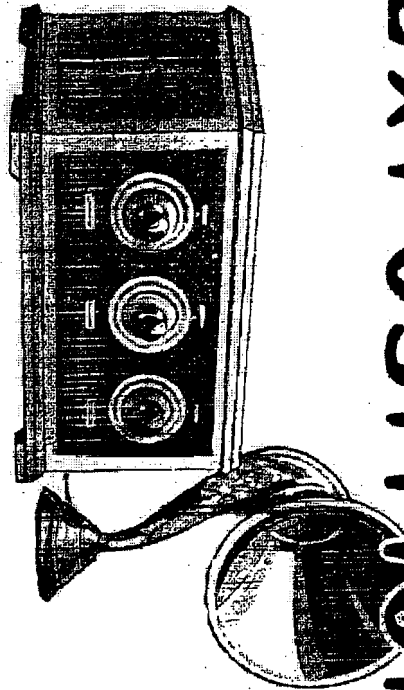
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