

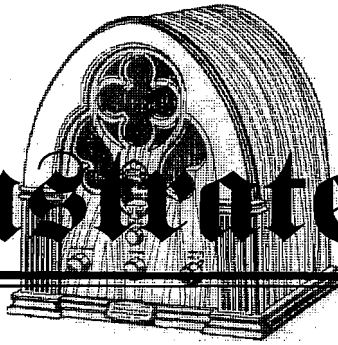
The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

The Illustrated Press

Number 319

April 2004



Fibber McGee & Molly and Friend

The Illustrated Press

Membership information

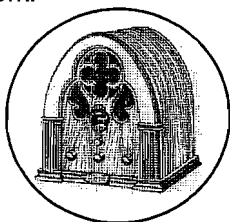
New member processing, \$5 plus club membership of \$17.50 per year from January 1 to December 31. Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing and a monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows: If you join January-March, \$17.50; April-June, \$14; July-September, \$10; October-December,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

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**Send all articles, letters, exchange newsletters,
etc. to: *The Illustrated Press***

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Reference Library

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209 Cleveland Drive
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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.

"Tain't Funny McGee"

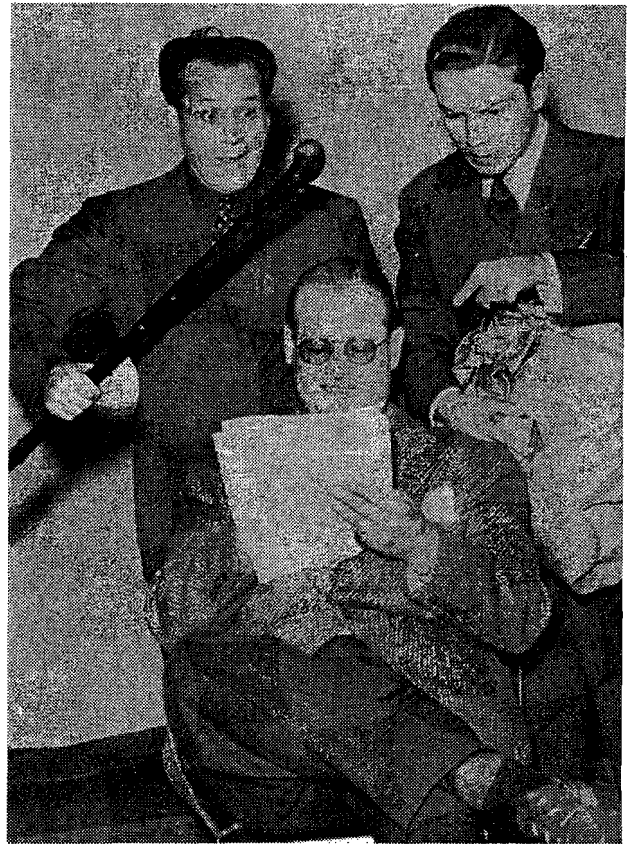
**FIBBER MCGEE and MOLLY NEARLY
DIDN'T MAKE THE GRADE**

"At the end of the first year," says Don Quinn, scripser of the program, "*Fibber McGee and Molly* was just a punk show. We were all ready to give up." Eight years passed without giving up. The result of this persistence was a beautiful white colonial house in San Fernando Valley which the Jordans own, enough money in the bank never to worry again, a friendship for Mr. and Mrs. America that is warmly reciprocated, and an extremely high listening rating indicating that *Fibber McGee and Molly* stand at the very top of all programs with an audience estimated at forty-five million.

Years of lean living from a trunk, years of tough audiences in tank towns, years of practicing their family humor with each other because there was no audience to be had! All this toughened up Marian and Jim Jordan to



Molly uses a bit of McGee persuasion on the unwilling Fibber



Fibber, Bill Thompson and the guy who writes the script, Don Quinn

withstand a frosty reception when at last they finally did achieve an ether audience.

They began to streamline the show. Built up one character, shaved down another. Played for the laughs in ordinary daily life. Sympathetic Molly became even more sympathetic. Unhandy Fibber became still more unhandy. The program began to catch hold. Audiences liked them.

Blustering Fibber and sharp phrased Molly are as simple and as kindly in private life as on the air. Their mode of living is comfortable, not pretentious. The Jordans are childhood sweethearts from Peoria, Illinois. Of their two children, Kathryn, 20, shows promise as radio performer, Jim, Jr., 18, is at the University of Southern California.

Plain, homey family the Jordans. They like to do things together, just as they did when they met at choir practice in Peoria and fell in love. That's when Fibber was a postman and Molly a pretty girl with one eye on the stage and the other on Jim Jordan. Now the whole family like to gather around the piano for a community sing, giving



Wallace Wimple, in the person of Bill Thompson, in a moment of justifiable depression, thinking of "Sweetieface"

out with the old time favorites that were part of their ancient vaudeville act. They dance a lot. Jim, Sr. does a super-duper rhumba. Pleasant-faced Marian goes for the Irish jigs and square dances. All pitch in for an old-fashioned picnic barbecue when the kids bring their friends home.

Fibber goes in for the manufacture of garden furniture in his carpenter shop in the basement. Does pretty well, too, though you'd never think so after listening to a Tuesday night script, Fibber and Molly love prize fights. They go to them together and home the same way, which is unusual. They read mystery stories with each other and, before rationing, took long trailer trips.

So it goes, Mr. and Mrs. America listen in on a warm, sympathetic and humorous family life, and the Jordans really live it. (June 1943)



A Quiz for The Old Time Radio Club

by Francis Edward Bork

1. Raised in a small mining town, she married a titled Englishman. Name the Radio Show.
2. Who was the announcer on the *Jack Benny Show*? What was the name of the desert sponsor?
3. What was the name of Amos 'n' Andy's Taxi Company?
4. Name the High School Jack Armstrong attended?
5. Who signed off his Radio Show with "Goodnight Mrs. Calabash, wherever you are" ?
6. Henry Aldrich had a sister, what was her name?
7. What was the name of Blondie and Dagwood's dog?
8. What sponsor said their product was 99 and 44/100 percent pure?
9. Give the full names of the three Detectives on the *I Love A Mystery Show*.
10. Name Captain Midnight's side kick.

Answers

1. *Our Gal Sunday*
2. Don Wilson . . . Jello
3. The Fresh Air Cab Company
4. Hudson High
5. Jimmy Durante
6. Mary
7. Daisy
8. Ivory Soap
9. Jack Packard, Doc Long and Reggie Yorke
10. Ichabod Mudd



The Andrews Sisters

By Tom Cherre

When we think of the 1940s World War II usually pops into our mind. FDR, big bands, maybe Abbott & Costello, and if you are any kind of music fan you have to include The Andrews Sisters. Born in Minneapolis, this swing singing harmony trio had a Greek and Norwegian background. The girls were fond admirers of the Boswell Sisters who were very popular in the 30s. In 1936 The Andrews Sisters auditioned for Larry Rich's touring Kiddie Show. He was impressed with their three-part harmony and he asked them to join the show. That was their springboard and their career was launched when they recorded "Bei Mir Bist du Shoen" an old Yiddish song. This catapulted them into instant stardom as they were soon featured on radio shows and movies.

My first recollection of the Andrews Sisters was probably in one of the old Abbott & Costello movies. Laverne, Maxine, and Patty appeared in 17 movies, most of them out of Universal. Universal never really took their talents to full advantage. Most of their movies were hits, but were nothing but nightmares to the girls. The costumes and makeup were poor. The lines the girls had were robotic and often said in unison. They more or less accentuated their bad points. Although not what you would call glamour girls, the cameras were less than kind to their good traits. They soon tired of Universal and many of their 30 day B movies.

As far as their music career, it couldn't have been better. Their radio show, *Andrews Sisters 'Eight to the Bar'* had the theme of a dude ranch with Gabby Hayes offering comic relief. The show was a big hit often having guest stars, the likes of Bing Crosby, Ethel Merman, and



The Decca recording session for "The Freedom Train" (their only Decca session captured on film) finds the sisters with Bing Crosby (center) and Irving Berlin on May 29, 1947.

Hogey Carmichael. Their theme song was "Apple Blossom Time". This was also a great vehicle for popularizing all their hit records. They were also frequent guests on the *Bing Crosby - Kraft Music Hall*, the *Bob Hope Show*, *Fred Allen Show*, *The Texaco Theatre*, and many others, The Andrews Sisters were actually the most popular vocal group up until the Beatles came along. They had 113 top 30 hits according to Billboard. Outside of Bing Crosby the Andrews Sisters sold more records than anyone else in the 1940s. They collaborated with Bing many times with popular songs and also for Christmas music.

In the 1940s The Andrews Sisters symbolized the girl next door type. In most of their movies they were usually in military garb, conveying their patriotism to all the boys over seas. They did many USO shows and also traveled over seas and visited hospitals and army compounds. In fact they were synonymous with World War II.

In today's sexual oriented music world, the Andrews Sisters might not have made it. Don't get me wrong. They were multi-talented. Their smooth harmonic blend was like no other. Their style was unique, however Betty Grable, or Rita Hayworth, they were not. The sisters were also known to have their little spats. Mostly Patty, lead singer would have differences with her two older sisters as far as money and control of many of the lyrics they were to sing. Patty eventually departed from the group in 1953 in less than amicable terms. They eventually buried the hatchet and reunited in 1956. By then the music was changing over to rock and roll and the younger fans were changing over to a different style. Laverne and Maxine have passed on and Patty now 83 leads a quiet life.

It's hard to believe that one of the greatest music groups to ever record music is rarely heard on the radio today.

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Years ago when the Andrews Sisters met the McGuire Sisters, Hollywood was planning to do a movie of the Andrews Sisters, with the McGuires playing the part. Laverne said this could never be. They're too good looking. Whether she was kidding or not I don't know. After seeing them in their movies, and hearing their music from their records and radio shows, I have to admit they were simply sensational. To me good music died about 25 years ago. I would surely had enjoyed seeing someone like the Andrews Sisters perform during the Super Bowl halftime than what I saw instead.



Maxine, Laverne and Patty during the production of "Road to Rio" (Paramount, 1948) in which they star opposite Bing Crosby.



BOOK REVIEWS

Buffalo Memories, Gone But Not Forgotten

by GEORGE KUNZ

Reviewed by **JERRY COLLINS**

Regular readers of the Illustrated Press might wonder why, after they have read so many of my book reviews on Old Time Radio, I am reviewing a book like this. Why is he reviewing a book on Buffalo memories? What if I live in New York City, Los Angeles or Little Rock, Arkansas. What do I care about Buffalo except maybe the Bills, the Sabres and their occasional snow storms.

There are a few reasons why you might enjoy this book. If you are interested in "Old Time Radio" are you also a fan of trolley cars, Crystal Beach Amusement Park, roller coasters, old movie theaters, old breweries, Pierce Arrow cars, Buffalo architecture, great railroad terminals, ice boxes and coal furnaces. Dirigibles, fountain pens, horse drawn vehicles, Monopoly, Sherlock Holmes, Western Union telegrams, Deco Restaurants and Sattlers, the Flu Epidemic of 1918, Charles Lindbergh, box scooters, Soap-box Derby races, trading stamp wars, outdoor ice skating, the end of prohibition, band concerts, daily grocery shopping, scarlet fever quarantines, the Victrola, the ice cream parlor, dish night at the movies, Wurlitzer Jukeboxes, food canning, family owned drug stores, Big Little Books, diners, Christmas shopping in the 1930s and the rag-man, milkman and ice-man. If the question produced a number of positive responses, then this is the book for you whether you live in Buffalo or not.

George Kunz taught Latin and English in Buffalo and at Williamsville South High School for close to 35 years, retiring in 1985. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s until his death in 1995, Kunz wrote numerous articles based on his recollections of life in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Most of these articles were published in the Buffalo Evening News. The Canisius College Press has assembled 150 of these articles into Buffalo Memories, Gone but Not Forgotten.

NOTES...



Frank Bork will be taking on the responsibility of the Cassette Library. He is replacing Dan Marafino who has done an excellent job in updating and organizing the collection. Frank is also handling the Printed Materials Library.

* * *

Dear Mr. Belanca,
Sorry about the delay in sending my renewal for 2004. Time seems to slip by and things like this are forgotten until a reminder comes. I really enjoy the monthly issues of the Illustrated Press. I was very sorry to learn of the passing of Ed Wanat, Sr. I never met Ed but did have dealings with him in his position as the Reel-to-Reel librarian. The note he added with each order was over and above the call of duty. I felt that I knew him from those notes. Please pass on my sympathy to his family.
Grant R. Brees

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Six of these articles deal with Kunz's recollections of the early days of Buffalo radio. "Back to School and the Radio Serials Cure" dealt with George Kunz's recollections of *Little Orphan Annie*, *Captain Midnight*, *Tom Mix* and *Jack Armstrong All-American Boy*. "Sunday Evenings, When Radio Ruled the Living Room" recalled those evening spent listening to the *Jack Benny Show*, *The Eddie Cantor Show*, *The Edgar Bergen Charlie McCarthy Show*, *Manhattan Merry-Go-Round* and *Grand Central Station*. "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes in Recalling the Big Bands on Radio" creatively connects the cigarette companies and the broadcast of Big Band Music i.e. *Camel Caravan*, *Lucky Strike Hit Parade*, *Old Gold Supper Club* and many more.

"The Truth About Orphan Annie's Under Cover Organization" dealt with George Kunz's membership in the Orphan Annie Secret Society. With that came the secret code and the ability to decode messages. Personally I did my decoding with *Captain Midnight "Doo-Doo-Be-Doo in Buff-a-Loe"*, should be altered based on the city you live in. George Kunz's version discusses radio jingles used by Sattlers, Victors, Erie County Savings Bank, Kaufman's Rye Bread, Iroquois and Stein Beer, Wildroot Crearn Oil, Frontier Fuel Oil Company, City Service Taxi, Loblaws, Super Duper, Queen-O and Basil Movie Theater chain.

For radio fans the most important article would be, "Radio Was Born in Buffalo in 1922, and it Burped, Screeched and Sputtered." Canisius College Press has granted permission for the use of excerpts from this book for book reviews. I have carefully chosen eight paragraphs that give us a view of the birth of radio in Buffalo.

Advertised in newspapers as "The New High Power Federal Buffalo Broadcasting Station," the incipient radio operation chose its call letters WGR, after the initials of a founder, George Rand. WGR's studio was at 1739 Elmwood Avenue.

Local radio pioneers clustered about their sets, sharing earphones to catch that magical gurgling from Buffalo's Baby Radio. Indeed, the newborn made a good share of burps, screeches and sputters.

Early receivers were the size of a shoebox, their apparatus consisting mainly of a crystal tube to snare the broadcast signal and a series of coils to magnify the sound.

Despite careful nursing, reception was so weak that only by concentrating between tight-fitting earphones could a listener decipher the exciting whispers of the infant.

"Radio Week" in Buffalo began on May 21, 1922. Advertisements promoted sales of sophisticated radio sets. "The Crystal Radio Receiver is not an experiment," they insisted. "It is a highly developed instrument." Cost of such a device was about \$25, a considerable investment 70 years ago.

Programs on Buffalo's WGR during Radio Week were hardly pulse agitators: a clergyman's lecture on "Six Points to Success," a concert from Victor's Furniture Showroom, another lecture by Dr. Julian Park of the University of Buffalo on the advantage of a college education, a program of Hawaiian singers accompanied by a pianist named W. J. Gompf.

Some years would elapse before the loudspeaker enabled radio to be enjoyed simultaneously by a roomful of people, before the advent of programs of general family appeal.

It was enough, however, in May 1922, to catch voices magically propelled from a studio on Elmwood Avenue. After all, how much further could science be expected to go. (Buffalo Memories, Gone but Not Forgotten. Stories by George Kunz, pp. 219-220).

George Kunz's book is one of those books that are so hard to put down. The world that we are living in is full of strife and chaos. It is wonderful to take a nostalgic trip back to a world with special memories for most of us. It is a world that is gone forever. Still this brief trip is well worth your effort. If you are over 55 the book will bring back some wonderful memories.

Speaking of Radio

CHUCK SHADEN

A Book Review by JERRY COLLINS

Few people have played a greater role in the revival of "Old-time" radio than Chuck Shaden. He has been the host and producer of *Those Were the Days* that has been broadcast in the Chicago area since 1970. During these years Shaden interviewed hundreds of radio personalities. Some of these interviews are already available on cassette. The book, Speaking of Radio, contains 46 interviews with some of the greatest of all radio stars.

Like most fans of the media, I have certain shows that I prefer over others. Shaden categorizes the interviews according to the shows that they are most frequently associated with. My favorite shows are well represented in Shaden's book. Tops on my list of favorites shows would be the *Great Gildersleeve*. Chuck Shaden includ-

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ed interviews with Hal Peary, Willard Watterman, Lillian Randolph and Mary Lee Robb. The *Jack Benny Show* was represented by five interviews; Jack Benny, Don Wilson, Dennis Day, Frank Nelson and Phil Harris. Elliot Lewis, Alice Faye and Phil Harris were also interviewed about their role on the *Phil Harris Alice Faye Show*. Interviews with five members of the *I Love a Mystery* cast, Russell Thorson, Jim Boles, Mercedes McCambridge, Tony Randall and Carlton Morse were also included in the book. Three of my other favorites; *The Shadow* (Bret Morrison, Alan Reed, Ken Roberts and Alice Morehead), *The Adventures of Sam Spade* (Howard Duff and Lurene Tuttle) and *The Charlie McCarthy Show* (Edgar Bergen, Don Ameche and Ken Carpenter) were also well represented in the book.

If you were a *First Nighter* fan, Les Tremayne, Olan Soule and Barbara Luddy were all interviewed by Chuck Schaden. The list of other top radio stars that were interviewed also included; Jim Jordan, Kate Smith, Eve Arden, Ed Prentiss, Virginia Gregg, Howard Koch, Ezra Stone, Norman Corwin, Arch Obler and Jay Josten.

For fans of "Old Time Radio", Speaking of Radio gives us the extra background that we are all looking for. The book is well written and well organized. The interviews are very informative. If you are like me you will really enjoy the Don Wilson, Alice Faye, Elliot Lewis, Jim Boles, Russell Thorson, Lurene Tuttle and Ken Roberts interviews.

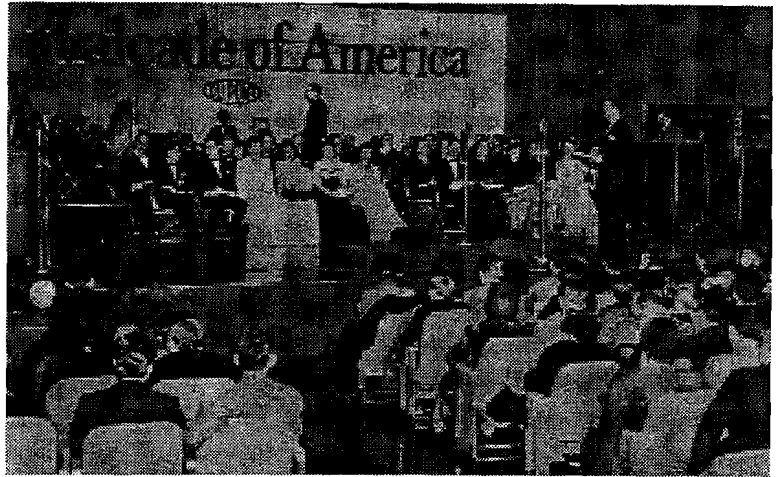
HARRY BARTELL

Veteran radio Announcer /Actor Harry Bartell passed away in Ashland Oregon on February 26, 2004. Born in New Orleans, Louisiana on November 28, 1913 he was 90 years old.



Know Your History

On February 22, 1924, in Washington, D.C. President Calvin Coolidge became the first president to deliver a radio broadcast from the White House. Coolidge's speech commemorating the 192nd anniversary of George Washington's birth was broadcast from his White House study and heard live on 42 radio stations from coast to coast.



Authentic setting of Cavalcade of America as it was presented each week. Enormous sound effect boxes, at right, are required.

Cavalcade of America

When the Cavalcade series was first presented, few people in radio thought it would succeed. Likely to be tagged as "long-haired" and an "educational program" those in the know felt that a show devoted to historical drama would find a very small listening audience. But Cavalcade has proved that Americans are interested in their country and its great names. The producers of the show were far-sighted enough to see that if the program was to have any real value, it must not be a dry, dusty, rehash of what teachers taught in the grade schools.

It is interesting to note that an early Cavalcade story on George Washington was unique in that it ignored the Revolutionary War, and outlined the hero's remarkably prophetic experiments in agriculture. And when Edison was ethered there wasn't a whisper about his famous light bulb.

The program was designed to re-awaken in the public mind a consciousness of those ideals and inheritance that are most basically American. With this objective, the show was submitted to an air audience as an informative and exciting type of entertainment, and while the objective was not obvious, it served its purpose. The stories are conceived by authors from historical records, and selected by a Planning Board that works in close harmony with the sponsor. After the story has been okayed by the Planning Board it is scheduled for broadcast some six or eight weeks ahead. Then the research department gets busy digging out all the facts concerning the person and his period. The material must be authenticated by sponsor, Planning Board, and Research

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The supporting cast gathers around one microphone.

Department before final acceptance. Dr. Frank Monaghan, of Yale University, is maintained as Historical Consultant to see that the scripts are absolutely without bias. John Anderson, drama critic of the New York Journal-American, serves as critic. Homer Fickett is director.

Briefly, *Cavalcade* tells the history of America through the lives of the country's greatest men and women, with all the dramatic vividness of which radio is capable. Responsibility for such full-blown pictures lies at the pen points of a galaxy of writers such as Robert Sherwood, Norman Corwin, Maxwell Anderson, William Saroyan and Carl Sandburg, and a dozen others equally prominent.

The actors and actresses who insure that the *Cavalcade* episodes are presented at their dramatic best are Paul Muni, Helen Hayes, Raymond Massey, Burgess Meredith, Lynn Fontanne, Ethel Barrymore, Alfred Lunt, and many others. The show is so constructed that the burden of characterization falls almost entirely upon one person.

Sound effects for *Cavalcade* are a story all their own. Present day mechanics in that field can master almost any sound of a current nature they have to cope with, but when it comes to reproducing an 1885 grindstone, or a Dutch bowling match on the New Amsterdam Green, then research of a very exacting and accurate nature is required for this is a show in which radio paints its setting with sound—it has to be good.

At first, *Cavalcade* used a regular stock group of actors and went purely historical. Recently, however, the public has been too occupied with rushing current events to give much thought to things of the past, so the show has a modern theme—war, heroism, and problems of the home front. It is still biographical, but the characters presented are modern heroes and heroines, and the show has a direct bearing on the present conflict.

Teachers, ministers, mothers and public officials have sanctioned the program as have all leading radio editors. In 1937 it was designated "The Radio most acceptable and worthwhile for the general family."

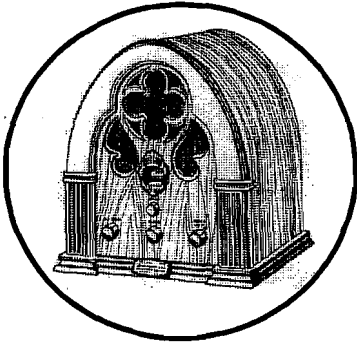
Regular members of the acting company, such as Karl Swenson, John McIntire, Arlene Francis, and Ed Jerome have been with the show for many years. Harking back to the technique used in the old stock company days, Ed Jerome will star as Abe Lincoln one week, and the next performance turn up as the butler with a one line exit. Don Voorhees, director of the dramatized musical background, is a *Cavalcade* fixture, the only absolutely permanent one in the show. *Cavalcade* is today's history. What passes through air-ethered show weekly may be immortal tomorrow. (June 1943)

LATEST ADDITIONS TO THE CASSETTE LIBRARY

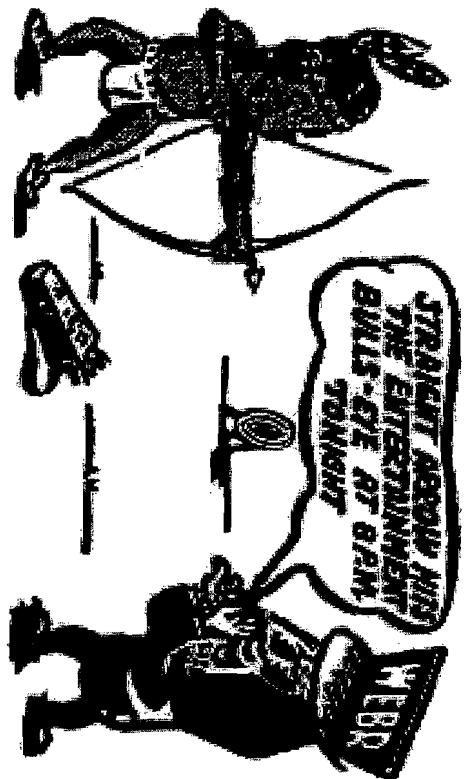
- 3354 I Cover The Waterfront "Audition Program" 8/29/55
Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar "Audition Program"
- 3355 Inner Sanctum "Lady With A Plan" 4/9/46
Inner Sanctum "Make Ready My Grave" 4/23/46
- 3356 Ozzie & Harriet "House Cleaning" 2/6/49
Ozzie & Harriet "Valentine Card" 2/13/49
- 3357 Lives of Harry Lime "Too Many Crooks" 8/3/51
Lives of Harry Lime "See Naples & Live" 8/10/51
- 3358 Whistler "The Calculator" 11/23/52
Whistler "So Soon" 11/30/52
- 3359 Adventurer's Club "Hunting A Man Eating Tiger" 3/15/47
Adventurer's Club "British Columbia Gold" 8/3/47
- 3360 Fibber McGee & Molly "Problems Hanging A Picture" 4/23/40
Fibber McGee & Molly "McGee, Theatrical Director" 4/30/40

The Old Time Radio Club

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