

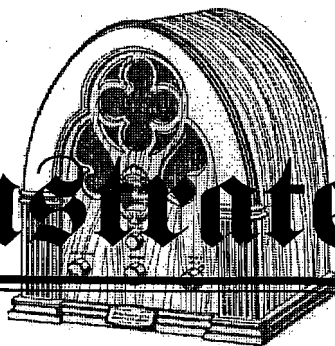
*The Old Time Radio Club*

Established 1975

# The Illustrated Press

Number 321

June 2004



***Roy Rogers***

# 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 the 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 newsletter issues. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The **Old Time Radio Club** meets on the first Monday of the month at 7:30 PM during the months of September through June at 49 Regal Street, Depew, NY 14043. There is no meeting during the month of July, and an informal meeting is held in August at the same address.

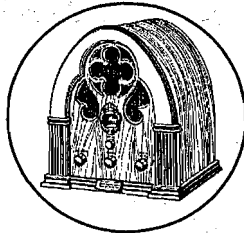
Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome. The **Old Time Radio Club** is affiliated with the *Old Time Radio Network*

## Club Mailing Address

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56 Christen Ct.  
Lancaster, NY 14086

### E-Mail Address:

[otrclub@localnet.com](mailto:otrclub@localnet.com)



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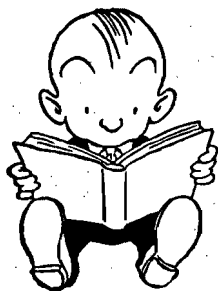
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# A BOOK REVIEW

## Radio Mystery and Adventure *and Its Appearances in Film, Television and Other Media*

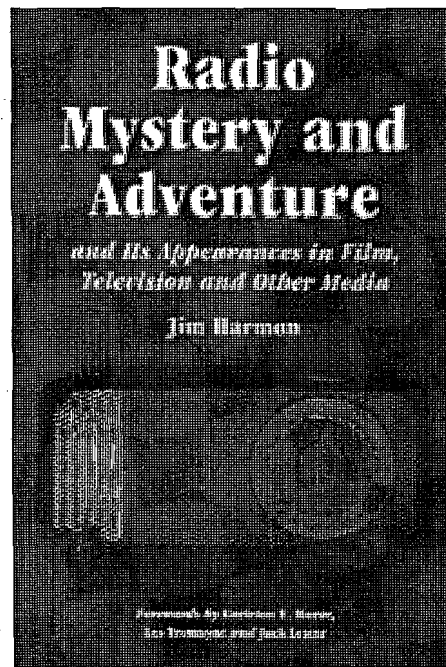
by Jim Harmon

Reviewed by Tom Cherre

Jim Harmon takes 14 different adventure and mystery radio shows and gives us a concise insight to each one. He chooses only those shows with a continuing cast, thus omitting shows like *Suspense* and *The Whistler*. What Harmon does with each show is fascinating. He gives us a soup to nuts synopsis depicting the cast, schedules, sponsors, music, history, and description of each one. Harmon not only gives us the radio information, but includes the shows' carry over to the film, comics, magazines, and any other form of media each show was exhibited in.

The book is a bible of information and facts. Well, not intended to be a reference only book, it contains everything one would ever want to know about each show, and more. It's also a vault full of trivia, with so many interesting tidbits about many characters and the shows themselves. It tells how Sgt Preston met his wonder dog King, the creation of Capt. Midnight's name, and countless other little known facts that are saturated throughout the 286 pages. For this alone the book is worth having. Each chapter even has a section for premiums that were offered by mail during the show's run, and what they might be worth now.

This book is a must for the novice or the serious OTR fan. It would be a welcome addition to anyone's bookshelf for reference or entertainment. Harmon captures the nostalgia from that magical period of time we hold so dearly, and makes us appreciate the medium of the old tune radio days.



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## The Cincinnati 18th Annual Old Time Radio & Nostalgia Convention - A Review

by DOM PARISI

The late, great and funnyman Red Skelton used to say "I dood it!" Well, I finally attended the Cincinnati Convention. Of course, Buffalo members Dick Olday, Jerry Collins and Frank Boncore, for many years, told me over and over—"you should go to the convention, you'll love it." Well, this year Pete Bellanca and I, along with Dick Olday (who offered to do the driving) went. I had a good time, just as the guys said I would.

In a very large room were about 30 dealer tables loaded with OTR cassettes, CDs, MP3s, old movies, comic books, posters, OTR books and magazines and even reel-to-reel tapes. The dealer's room opened at 9:00 AM Friday. I spent most of the morning with the dealers. Bargains could be found everywhere.

## The Illustrated Press

At 3:00 PM on Friday, there was a casting call for non-professional "actors" to try out for parts in the re-creation shows. The room was crowded with "would be actors." It was a lot of fun. (No, I didn't try out for a part.)

At 7:30 PM the entertainment started. First to appear were the Boogie Woggie Girls. Three lovely ladies who sing tunes of the 40s with an Andrew Sisters style. The trio are Marilyn Flippetti, her daughter Mia Filippetti-Wise and Janice Slocun. The ladies are from Elmira, NY and have been singing together for 12 years. They all have full-time jobs and are kept extra busy singing at resorts, clubs and on the Seneca Lake Boat Cruises. They put on an excellent performance.

Radio actors Robert Hastings and Rosemary Rice, as John and Blanche Bickerson were next to appear before the mike. They had the audience in stitches. Their skits were outstanding.

Next on the program were Robert Hastings and Hal Stone in six various Bob & Ray skits. What more can I say? Two funnier guys are hard to find.

After the Bob & Ray skits a recreation of a *Pete Kelly's Blues* radio show came on. Bob Hastings was Kelly, Rosemary Rice played Vita Brant, Hal Stone was Red, Janice Slocun, as Maggie, sang "Can't Help Loving That Man Of Mine." Will Hutchins was "Itch". Dave Davies organized the program. All did a tremendous job. This ended the first day's program.

Early Saturday morning the dealer's room re-opened. At 1:30 the second day's events started. We once again heard from the Boogie Woggie Girls with more songs ("Shoo-Shoo Baby"; "Apple Blossom Time" and more.)

Next in order was Part 1 of *Broadway Is My Beat* with Keith Clark, who I believe is a local actor, playing Detective Danny Glover. Another local, Randy Larson, played Sgt. Gino Tartaglia. Robert Burchett produced the show. A great performance was put on by everyone.

*The Bickersons* with more of their humor were next. Robert Hastings and Rosemary Rice were featured once again. Hal Stone played Doctor Hershey and Will Hutchins announced. Following *The Bickersons* was a re-creation of *The Saint* with Hal Stone in the leading role of Simon Templar. Bob Hastings was Louie the cab driver and Rosemary Rice, Esther Geddes McVey, Will Hutchins and Steve Thomas were in supporting roles.

At 5:30 we broke for cocktails and dinner at 6:00. Dinner was an enjoyable roast beef with vegetables and cheese cake for desert. I'm sure no one left their table hungry!

After dinner the final events started. Once more we heard from the Boogie Woggie Girls as they stepped up to the mikes. (*Fantastic!*) Part 2 of *Broadway Is My Beat* was next. (*Great!*) Then *The Bickersons*—John's operation, with or without anesthesia?

Finally, Will Hutchins as Britt Ponset, performed in an episode of *The Six Shooter*. (Is Britt getting married?) Esther Geddes McVey was Aunt Minnie, Rosemary Rice played Helen (The wife to be?) Bob Hastings was Quint and Hal Stone was Trent. And let's not forget the sound-effects people. Esther Geddes McVey provided the live music (Esther is the wife of the late radio actor Tyler McVey)

Special awards were presented to Tom Monroe, Harold Zigler, Hal Stone, Will Hutchins and Rosemary Rice. They are doing an outstanding job in helping to keep OTR alive. Special thanks to Don Ramlo, Director of Re-creations and to Robert Newman for coordinating the auction, drawings, attendance table and keeping everything running smoothly.

Listed here are some past radio programs the actors appeared in:

### Robert Hastings —

*Archie Andrews* during the NBC era  
*Coast-To-Coast On A Bus*  
*National Barn Dance* - Child singer  
*The Sea Hound* - played Capt. Silver's mate  
*X-Minus One*  
The movie - *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad World* - played Milton Berle's brother in law

### Rosemary Rice —

Archie's friend Betty  
*FBI In Peace & War* - supporting roles  
*When A Girl Marries* - Kathy  
*Young Dr. Malone* - Jill  
*The CBS Radio Mystery Theatre* - numerous roles

### Will Hutchins —

*Sugarfoot* - 1970s TV Show  
*Blondie* - TV, played Dagwood

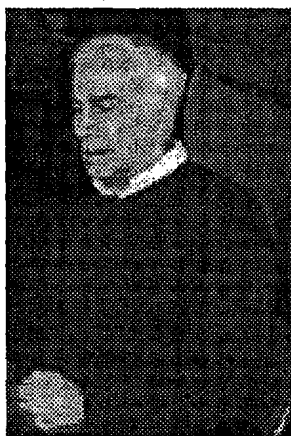
### Hal Stone —

Jughead in *Archie Andrews*

And finally —

While walking around the dealer's room on Friday and Saturday I came upon Martin Grams, Jr. I knew he wrote a number of books on OTR and I expected to see an older man as the author. Martin is 27 years old! He was with his pretty girlfriend Michelle. I asked

Martin if he could spare a few moments. I explained that I was writing an article on the convention. I discovered that Martin became interested in OTR at a very early age. When he was 6 or 7 years old his grandparents presented him with a hand full of OTR cassettes—*Jack Benny, The Shadow* and some others. That he said was what exposed him to old radio shows. He told me that he only has a High School education. (He writes like a scholar.) He said a lot of research at libraries and with collectors and books helped him in getting the material he needs to write his books. I was very impressed with this young man's knowledge and the ability to put it all down on paper. He is a very interesting guy!



DOM PARISI

Books that Martin has written or helped write include:

Have Gun, Will Travel Companion

Information Please

The CBS Radio Mystery Theatre Episode Guide

Alfred Hitchcock Presents Companion

I Love A Mystery Companion

Suspense - 20 Years Of Thrills & Chills

The History Of The Cavalcade Of America

Radio Drama - American Programs 1932-1962

Invitation To Learning - Classics Of Literature - Documents History Of Popular Radio Programs

The Sound Of Detection - Ellery Queen's Adventure In Radio

Inner Sanctum Mysteries: Behind The Creeping Door  
Plus Numerous magazine articles.

The convention was professionally presented. Honors go to all that helped make it a success. Thanks to Bob Burchette and his crew for the hard work they put into this event. As I said, this was my first time in attendance—I really enjoyed it, thanks and please forgive me if I neglected to mention others who also had a share in helping make the convention a success.

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## The Illustrated Press



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All of the above dealers have been endorsed by the **Old Time Radio Club** because of their donations or their direct assistance in helping maintain the various libraries of the Club. A large number of OTR Cassettes have once again been donated at the Cincinnati Convention and will shortly become available to members. When looking to build your own libraries we suggest you contact any of these dealers and tell them you were referred by the Club.

Because of the increased availability of low priced CDs packed with multiple OTR recordings in the MP3 format most dealers today are faced with lower sales. This has created a problem in that fewer dollars are now available for unearthing and obtaining transcription recordings for a quality transfer to cassette or audio CD. There have already been several long established dealers who have decided to close up shop because of this problem. We would hate to see more names added to that list and therefore heartily recommend that you help by patronizing these dealers. The majority of the recordings that are out there today most likely came from dedicated dealers who were willing to invest their own money, time and any profit made back into the hobby.

While we're on the subject of the hobby in general, have you encouraged any of the younger generation to lend an ear to OTR? Maybe giving them a disc or cassette to play on their boomboxes? We need to build the interest of the younger crowd in order to keep the hobby alive and flourishing.

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### **Announcer and Comic Finally Hit the Big Time**

**A look back in the past of Peoria, Illinois**

March 23, 1949: When the Eddie Cantor radio show is broadcast from the Peoria Armory in a couple of days to celebrate the grand opening of the new Peoria Heights Pabst plant (Cantor's radio sponsor), some of the pro-

gram's hilarious moments are expected to come from Harry Von Zell, a stocky comedian/announcer known for his spontaneous witticisms and infectious giggle. Von Zell is really in the big time now, but he remains pretty much a genial human sort of fellow who admits to certain incapacities.

As we barged into his Hotel Pere Marquette room on short notice, he was finishing getting dressed before a mirror having a battle with a bow tie.

"As far back as I can remember, I wanted to get into the entertainment business as an actor, a comedian," Von Zell said.

But at the time, vaudeville was on the rocks and he couldn't crack the movies. So he decided to try the only field open at the moment—radio.

"It was no trick to get on the air in those days," he recalled. "If you could play a tune on a hairpin, you were in." So he landed a job as a part-time announcer and entertainer on KMIC in Inglewood, Calif.

From that start, he graduated up until he was putting on *The March of Time* program back in the early 1930s. But being a straight announcer didn't sit too well with a fellow who wanted to be a comedian.

So when Fred Allen gave him a chance to fill in for his announcer Allen Reed, Von Zell grasped the opportunity. He became so well-liked on the show that Allen put him on full time.

"But the transition to the *Fred Allen Show* taught me a great lesson in humility." It seems he was so much a part of *The March of Time* program that everyone from listeners to sponsors practically regarded him as "Mr. March of Time" in the flesh. Executives argued and held long conferences over releasing him. A substitute was finally found for *The March of Time*, and Von Zell went to Fred Allen.

"But many times long after that, with Westbrook Van Voorhies announcing my old program people were not even aware that it was another voice, not mine, they were listening to, and would say to me, 'Great job you're doing on *The March of Time*, Harry.'"

(Later, Von Zell became such a good comedy actor that he became a regular member of the cast of *The George Burns & Gracie Allen* television show.)

(Thanks to Verna B. Priller of Peoria, IL  
for sending in this article.)



## **ROY ROGERS**

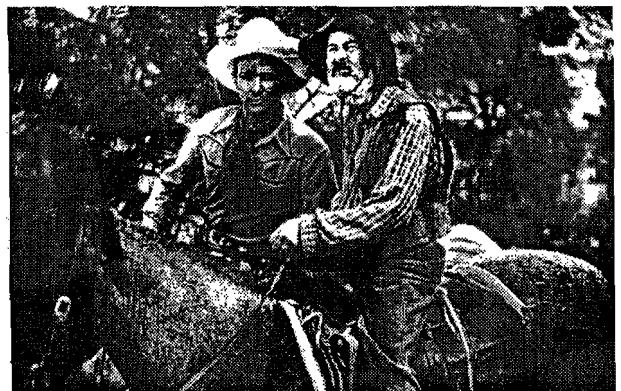
by **TOM CHERRE**

Roy Rogers may have had the crowning title of "King of the Cowboys", but his early childhood lacked any semblance of the same. Born as Leonard Slye on November 5th, 1911 in Cincinnati Ohio, Leonard grew up in the small community of Duck Run. Too small to find on most maps, Duck Run had a sparse population of 40 give or take a few. It was close to Portsmouth, another small town where Leonard's dad worked at a shoe factory. Growing up in poverty, Leonard virtually had no recollection of ever wearing a pair of shoes until he started going to school. Roy recalled later in life, as a child, the soles of his feet were as tough as elephant's hide. The family could not afford the luxury of listening to a radio, but they did have an old victrola. In their collection of the old cylinder records, there were plenty of the Swiss yodel ones. Leonard would listen continuously to them and found out he had a natural ability to yodel.

When Leonard was 18 the depression hit his family very hard and his dad lost his job at the shoe factory. His older sister who was then living in California suggested

they pull up stakes and give California a try. Leonard and his father both got jobs, with Leonard driving a truck hauling gravel. Unfortunately that job didn't last either and he was out of work again. Having some music ability, Leonard could play guitar, carry a tune, and even yodel, he latched on to a group called "Sons of the Pioneers". In the beginning they played mostly socials for food, snacks, and lodgings. Many times they would convey their wishes for southern fried chicken. On one occasion a mother and her young daughter filled their request. He was attracted to a young Arline, who eventually became his wife. The band played on radio and became quite popular. This led to some movie spots on many of Republic's western movies. In time Leonard would have some supporting roles going by the name of Dick Weston in a few of the Gene Autry movies. His big break came however, when Gene Autry, Republic's biggest star threatened to quit. Republic, afraid they would lose Autry, signed Dick Weston to a new contract and also a new name. The studio felt he had some good music talent, showed some promising acting ability, and photographed well. Thus Leonard entered the beginning of his illustrious Roy Rogers career. The Roy Rogers name was conceived by his being a big fan of Will Rogers and the legendary country singer Jimmy Rogers. Besides that he liked the sound of Roy Rogers.

Gene Autry finally did settle with Republic, but now he had a friendly singing cowboy rival to contend with. Roy was married to Arline with two girls when Gene joined the Air National Guard leaving Roy as the main western cowboy star at Republic. His familiar title of "King of the Cowboys" was born and he lived up to it. Roy was riding high in the saddle when disaster struck. After his wife Arline gave birth to son Dusty she died shortly after. Roy had to cope with bringing up three young children by himself. For the past few years a young actress name Dale Evans had co-starred as Roy's romantic interest in a couple of his movies. Dale had been married and divorced three times previously and



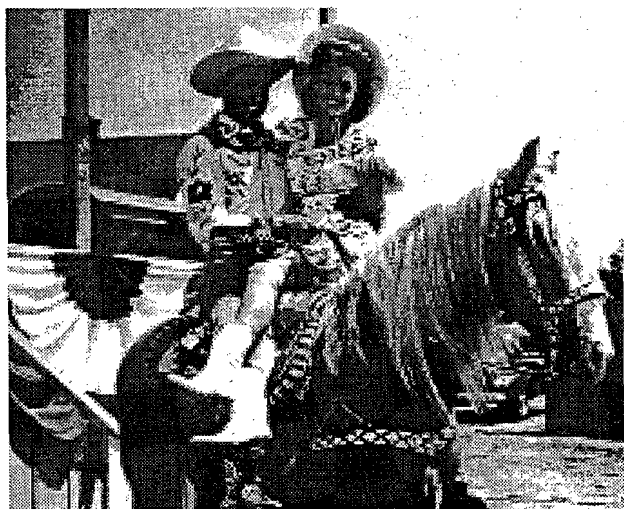
Roy and dear friend and sidekick Gabby Hayes

no thoughts for a fourth. Eventually as years went by they got together and tied the knot and Dale became his Queen of the West.

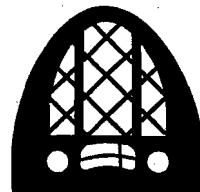
Their movies, every one of them, made money. Their radio show only complimented their movies all the more. Kids and grown ups alike would flock the movie shows to see them on many Saturday afternoons. This guaranteed Roy and Dale financial wealth and success for the rest of their lives.

Of course there were the many premiums attached to their names, like toys, mugs, comics, cameras, (of which I personally owned one) and many others which only added to the pot of gold. Names like Roy, Dale, their sidekick Gabby, trigger and bullet were as popular as any stars in the business. Not to say everything was always rosy and peachy, Roy and Dale suffered major tragedies in their family including the deaths of three of their children. Roy and Dale both religiously inclined managed to overcome the many hardships they had to bear and survived. They went on to a successful TV show with a popular theme song of "Happy Trails" written by Dale. Roy and Dale had a great run. They were decent, kind people caring for others. They continued their charity work in retirement and were worthy of their king and queen titles. Who could forget Roy's closing words, "Until we meet again, may the good Lord take a liking to ya" That says it all.

For you trivia fans, Roy had three Triggers—Trigger, Trigger, Jr. and Little Trigger. You can still see Trigger in the Roy Rogers museum. They say he still looks good for the age of 75.



Roy proposed to his leading lady while riding Trigger



## **RADIOLDIES**

by **DAN MARAFINO**

### **Radio Personalities Anecdotes**

The original title of Orson Welles' *Mercury Theatre* was *First Person Singular*. The author was said to have taken credit for introducing the first-person narrative technique that became popular on shows like *Dragnet* and *Sam Spade*.

Abbott and Costello were Hollywood's top box-office team during the 40s.

Despite his *Gunsmoke* disappointment William Conrad did eventually leave his mark on television. He served as narrator on *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle* and *The Fugitive*. He also starred in the detective series *Cannon*, *Nero Wolfe* and *Jake and the Fatman*.

Jack Benny was not only the most successful comedian in radio, he also revolutionized radio comedy. He was the first to realize that the listener is not in a theatre with a thousand other people, but in a small circle at home. —Fred Allen

In 1936, NBC received more than 50,000 letters in response to Arch Oboler's first *Lights Out* script. "Burial Services", which related the terror of a paralyzed girl buried alive.

Bob Hope, aka "Rapid Robert" delivered jokes with machine gun speed, averaging 115 per radio broadcast.

Jack Webb wanted to cast Lloyd Nolan as Friday and move behind the camera to direct the *Dragnet* TV series.

More anecdotes will follow in the September issue of the Illustrated Press.



# THE WOODEN RADIO

by Martin Braun

I remember the Detrola table model radio being on the end of the kitchen counter close to the window. Part of the morning ritual was turning it on to hear the mellow voice of Clint Buehlman giving the weather and traffic reports. If I was real lucky he would be giving the school closings, and maybe, just maybe, he would be closing mine.

The radio was magic. I didn't know how it worked. I could figure out the gas stove. Just a pipe to the burner, light a match and one could boil water. I crawled behind the refrigerator one day, only to find a mechanical hutch for dust bunnies. One couldn't get excited about a stove or fridge. What made the radio work? I peeked in the back, being careful not to get a shock. The five tubes glowed with a reddish-orange light. I could see the dial cord move when I turned the tuning knob. Oh, it has some wires, and a metal chassis, but unlike my bike or scooter, I couldn't see what made it work.

On Sunday evenings my parents would take it into the living room, place it on a chair and would listen to our special programs. "Good evening Mr. and Mrs. America and all the ships at sea" — Wow! The same guy who was talking to us was broadcasting to the ships far out at sea! Yes, we enjoyed the *Lone Ranger*, *Guns* and all the usual favorites, while we waited for television to be improved. Maybe next year my dad would buy a TV, but for now the radio would do.

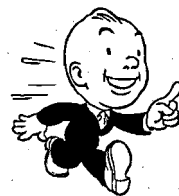
Even after the TV came, the radio was still part of the morning routine. With the advent of top forty stations of the 1950s and early 60s the old wooden radio seemed out of place. Old programs should come out of it not the "latest and greatest hits" but still the radio did its yeoman duty. Through the years with technical study, I found out how it worked. I was able to keep it in repair by replacing tubes, line cord and dial cord. It is a simple radio.

A few years ago, I was able to purchase a "state of the art" radio. It is completely solid state, microprocessor-controlled and has 32 memories. It took me a few hours just to learn how to operate it. It covers the broadcast band and the entire high frequency region. It can do all modes: AM, FM, Sideband and Radioteletype, as well as being controlled by a computer. It does this with cold

efficiency; and I do mean cold. It has no tubes. No red glow from tubes. It has no memories of school day mornings and Sunday evening programs. The Old Wooden Radio is mine now, and with it I can tune in to the warmth of bygone years. I still peek into the back of it, because real radios glow in the dark.

## LATEST ADDITIONS TO THE CASSETTE LIBRARY

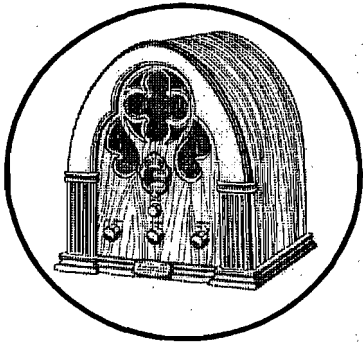
- 3372 Family Theater "The Flame & The Sword" 2/28/51  
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**Hold on a minute . . .**  
*Just a reminder that The Illustrated Press will not be published during July and August. Have a great summer.*

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**TONIGHT**

AND EVERY TUES. WED. THURS.

**7:15 P.M. (E.W.T.)** ★ **WIBX**

ALL CBS STATIONS COAST TO COAST