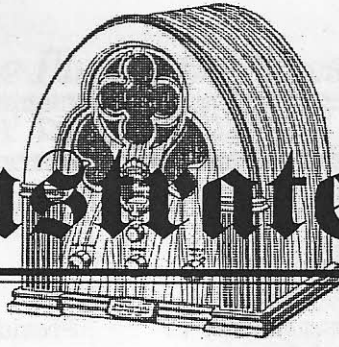


The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

# The Illustrated Press



Number 374

November 2009



## Happy Thanksgiving

# The Illustrated Press

## Membership Information

Club Membership: \$18.00 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, \$18.00; 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 St. Aloysius School Hall, Cleveland Drive and Century Road, Cheektowaga, NY. There is no meeting during the month of July, and an informal meeting is held in the month of August.

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

Old Time Radio Club  
56 Christen Ct.  
Lancaster, NY 14086

E-Mail Address  
[otrclub@localnet.com](mailto:otrclub@localnet.com)



All Submissions are subject to approval prior to actual publication.

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

c/o Tom Cherre, Editor (716) 833-9713  
144 Fontaine Drive  
Cheektowaga, NY 14215

E-Mail address: [skylark68\\_1999@yahoo.com](mailto:skylark68_1999@yahoo.com)

Web Page Address:

[members.localnet.com/~robmcd](http://members.localnet.com/~robmcd)

## Club Officers

### **President**

Jerry Collins (716) 683-6199  
56 Christen Ct.  
Lancaster, NY 14086  
[collinsjf@yahoo.com](mailto:collinsjf@yahoo.com)

### **Vice President & Canadian Branch**

Richard Simpson (905) 892-4688  
960 16 Road R.R. 3  
Fenwick, Ontario  
Canada, L0S 1C0

### **Treasurer**

Dominic Parisi (716) 884-2004  
38 Ardmore Pl.  
Buffalo, NY 14213

### **Membership Renewals, Change of Address**

Peter Bellanca (716) 773-2485  
1620 Ferry Road  
Grand Island, NY 14072  
[pmb1620@gmail.com](mailto:pmb1620@gmail.com)

### **Membership Inquires and OTR Network Related Items**

Richard Olday (716) 684-1604  
171 Parwood Trail  
Depew, NY 14043-1071  
[raolday@yahoo.com](mailto:raolday@yahoo.com)

### **Technical Manager / CD and MP3 Librarian**

Bob McDivitt (716) 681-8073  
109 Poinciana Pkwy.  
Cheektowaga, NY 14225  
[robmcd@verizon.net](mailto:robmcd@verizon.net)

### **Cassette and Reference Librarian**

Frank Bork (716) 601-7234  
10 Dover Ct.  
Lancaster, NY 14086  
[frankbork209@yahoo.com](mailto:frankbork209@yahoo.com)

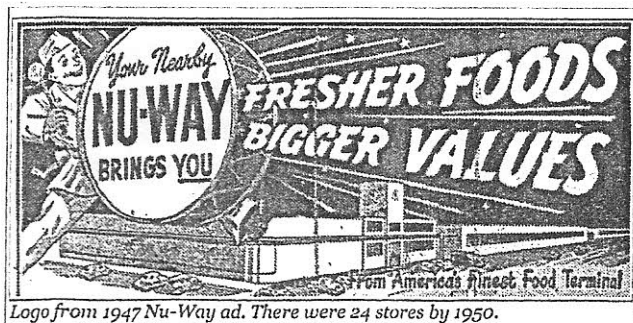
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Audio cassettes and CDs are \$1.95 each and are recorded on a **club supplied cassette or CD** which is **retained** by the member. Rates include postage and handling and are payable in U.S. funds.



## Editor's Two Cents

When you talk about local old time radio people Clint Buehlman immediately pops into mind. He was a hero when he closed the schools during snowstorms. Yes there were no sweeter words to a ten year olds ears then hearing "All public and parochial schools are closed". He had all those classic jingles. The way he talked to his engineer, and the way he could sell a product, he was a one of a kind. Buffalo Bob Smith was also a legend in Buffalo radio, making it big nationally with "The Howdy Doody Show". I also came across a piece on old timer John Corbett. He worked with Ed Dinsmore on the very popular audience show "Breakfast at Laube's Old Spain" from 9:15 to 10:00am. He also dee-jayed a nightly show "The Club Canandaigua" every week night. Johnny got his start at Syracuse where he met Chuck Healy and also met Ada Jane Kreinheder, his future wife. Corbett later hosted "The Speaker of the House Show" on WBEN TV, which was on right before "The Meet the Millers Show". Those shows bring back memories. Hope you enjoy some photos of those glory years.



Logo from 1947 Nu-Way ad. There were 24 stores by 1950.



## Betsha Didn't Know

This month's cover of the IP shows the entire Gildersleeve clan. It might not be Thanksgiving dinner, but it's close. I'm sure you all know "The Great Gildersleeve" was a spin off from McGee & Molly. It was actually the first spin off from any radio show. I bet sha didn't know Hal Peary previously to doing Gildersleeve played seven different parts on one show of "Tom Mix Ralston Straight Shooters Show". He'd play the sheriff, the villain, the

judge, a Chinese cook, an Indian chief and others. And there was also another actor on the same show going by the name of Willard Waterman. Peary eventually left Gildersleeve due to an impasse with Kraft. Waterman took over and did a capable job, but I still liked Peary for that unforgettable laugh and for when he lost his temper and became short of breath. I just think he did a great job as Uncle Mort. And as Gildy would say Have a good turkey day. "Good Night Folks".

We now continue with part two of Old Time Radio a Dieing Hobby by Jerry Collins with coincidentally "The Great Gildersleeve".

**The Great Gildersleeve.** I can say without reservation that this was my favorite comedy show. It was never short of plots. Stories dealt with the family, Gildy's many girlfriends, the Jolly Boys and frequent conflicts with the mayor as well as Mr. Bullard and Gildersleeve's job at the water department. The show began in August of 1941 and remained on the air until 1958. Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve had played the part of McGee's next-door neighbor and constant antagonist before moving to Summerfield to raise his neice and nephew. In fact it was in this role that Gildy (Hal Peary) developed his trademark laugh. This became a first for network radio, a supporting actor leaving one show to become a star on another show. Gildersleeve was played by Hal Peary (3/30/85) and Willard Waterman (2'2/95). Marjorie was Lurene Tuttle (5/28/86), Louise Erickson (still alive-born 2/28/28) and Marylee Robb (8/2/06), while Leroy was played by Walter Tetley (9/4/75). Judge Hooker was Earle Ross (5/21/61), Chief Gates

was played by Ken Peters (1/12/98), while Richard Peavey was played Richard LeGrande (6/29/63). Birdie Lee Coggins was played by Lillian Randolph (9/12/80), while the popular Arthur Q Bryan (11/18/59) played Floyd the Barber. A partial list of Gildy's many girlfriends included Lelia Ransom-Shirley Mitchell (still alive-born 11/4/17), Eve Goodwin-Bea Benaderet (10/13/68), Nurse Milford-Cathy Lewis (11/20/68) and Adeline Fairchild-Una Murkel (1/2/86). Gildersleeve also enjoyed the company of schoolteachers, music teachers, and even Mr. Bullard's sister. Richard Crenna (1/17/03) played Bronco Thompson, while Mr. Bullard was played by Gale Gordon (^/30/65).

**I Love a Mystery.** Most of the show's episodes are gone. Members of the younger generation are not familiar with the show. Still the show has quite active and almost cult following. The show featured the three members of the A-1 Detective Agency; Jack Packard-Michael Raffetto (9/30/90) and Russell Thorson (7/6/82), Doc Long-Barton Yarborough (12/19/51) and Jim Boles (5/26/77) and the Englishman Reggie Yorke Walter Patterson (The early part of winter in 1941) and Tony Randall (5/18/04). The three members of the agency reminded one of soldiers of fortune, The Three Musketeers, and even Robin Hood and his merry men. In fact the three had originally met while fighting with China in the Cinese-Japanese War of the late 1930s. Gerry Booker was played by Gloria Blondell (3/25/86). Mercedes McCambridge (3/2/04) was a semi regular performer on the show. Much of the success of the show can also be attributed to its writer and creator, Carlton E. Morse (5/24/93). He also hired very competent performers

most of them veterans of "One Man's Family", Moore's other popular endeavor. The "I Love a Mystery" shows were in serial form taking place all over the Western Hemisphere as well as the United States.

**The Adventures of Sam Spade.** The character of Sam Spade was taken from the book and subsequent movie "The Maltese Falcon" by Dashiell Hammett (1/1/61). Most experts consider that it was the finest detective show in radio history. Sam Spade was played by Howard Duff (7/8/96), one of radio's best actors and Steve Dunne (?). Duff was an announcer with Armed Forces Radio during World War II. When he decided to audition for the role of Sam Spade, he had to compete against over 100 other actors to get the role. Effie was played by Lurene Tuttle (5/28/86). Dick Joy (10/31/91) was the announcer. William Spier (5/30/73) was the director. Lud Gluskin (19/13/68) was the music director. The writers were Gil Dowd (12/17/57) and Bill Tallman (?). Sam Spade was on the air from 1946-51 and sponsored by Wildroot Cream Oil.

**The Aldrich Family.** The show was radio's finest family comedy. It was on the air from 1939-53. Ezra Stone (3/3/94) was marvelous in the role of Henry Aldrich. Dickie Jones (?) and Bobby Ellis (?) also played the part at different times. Henry had a number of friends; Homer Brown played by Jackie Kelk (9/5/02), Willie Marshall was Norman Tokar and Toby Smith was Dick Van Patten (still alive-born 12/9/28). Mr. and Mrs. Aldrich were played by House Jameson (4/23/71) and Katherine Raht (12/2/83). Mary Aldrich was played by a variety of actresses including Mary Shipp (still alive-born

9/17/15) and Betty Field (9/13/73). Will Brown played by Ed Begley (4/28/70). Dwight Weist (7/16/91), Dan Seymour (7/27/82) and Harry Von Zell (11/21/81) were the announcers at different times during the long run of the show. The show was sponsored by Jell-O and always began with Mrs. Aldrich calling Henry.

**The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.** The character of Sherlock Holmes was created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (7/7/30) and brought to radio through the promotional efforts of Edith Meiser, who was also the show's first writer. Little was done with the character as it transitioned to radio, the movies, and then television. In fact the format of having the announcer interviewing Dr. Watson remained standard throughout the complete run of the show. From Basil Rathbone (7/21/67) to Jeremy Brett (9/12/95) the character was played to perfection. Others to play the part of Sherlock Holmes were; Tom Conway (4/22/67), Ben Wright (7/9/89), John Stanley (12/2/82) and Sir John Gielgud (5/21/00). Dr. Watson was played by Nigel Bruce (10/8/53), Alfred Shirley (7/24/67), Ralph Richardson (10/10/83) and Ian Martin (7/25/81). The announcers were Joseph Bell (?), Knox Manning (8/26/83), Leslie Charteris (4/15/93), Dennis Green (?) and Anthony Boucher (?). The show made 221 B Baker Street famous. Sherlock Holmes was on the air from 1930-55 and was sponsored by George Washington Coffee, Bromo Quinine, Petri Wines, and Clipper Craft Clothes.

Next month we will continue with one of my favorite shows, The Jack Benny Show.

Illinois : Radio Comedy's Mount Olympus

By Ryan Ellet

Although Chicago does not hold the storied place in the history of radio's golden age that New York and Los Angeles do, most recognize its contribution to the medium, especially in the early 30s, before it was supplanted permanently by its coastal competitors. From early soap operas to Little Orphan Annie to Jack Armstrong, Chicago birthed many classics. As the nation's second largest city all through the old time radio era, its not surprising that a good number of programs and performers emerged from its streets. Included on such a list are Staats Cotsworth, Brett Morrison, and Arch Obler. But beyond the windy City, downstate Illinois (i.e. the rest of the state outside Chicago's metro area) has produced its fair share of golden age stars as well. Luminaries include Don McNeil (Galena, IL) Wyllis Cooper (Perkin IL) and Marlin Hurt (DuQuoin IL). While the old time radio genres of adventure, horror, soap opera, and morning talk were all greatly enhanced by these Illinois natives, perhaps no greater contribution was made to old time radio by the Prairie State than in the genre of comedy. Illinois can stand toe to toe with any other state in the union in boasting of its radio comedic pantheon. Can any state match the homegrown line up of Jack Benny, Jim and Marian Jordan, Edgar Bergen, Charles Correll, and Paul Rhymer? When evaluating the true comedy giants of the era, these performers or their creations were among the most popular during the golden age and continue to be some of the most fondly remembered today. That these stars emerged from across the state, not just Chicago, adds to the accomplishment. Lets kook at the hometowns of these OTR legends and see what soil led to this crop of talent. Chicago, naturally, is well represented, being the birthplace of both Jack Benny and Edgar Bergen, though neither spent much of their childhood there. Between the birth of the two, Benny in 1894 and Bergen in 1903, the city was in the midst of a population boom, doubling in size between 1890 and 1910 from one million to two million. A considerable portion of that growth can be attributed to foreign immigration, which many other cities were experiencing as well. Both Benny and Bergen emerged from that demographic explosion, Benny from Polish parents and Bergen from Swedish parentage. Benny's family moved to Waukegan IL, the city which still proudly acknowledges him as a native son. What

a drastic change this would have been for the Kubelskys (Benny's given surname). At the turn of the century Waukegan numbered less than 10,000 citizens and at forty miles from downtown Chicago, would have seemed a world away from the metropolis' burgeoning neighborhoods in those pre-automobile days. Bergen's family headed the opposite direction and ended up in tiny Decatur, MI, in the southwest corner of the state. The town currently has roughly 2,000 residents ; population numbers from 1900 couldn't be found but Decatur would have been an even bigger change for the family of Johan Henriksson Bergren than that experienced by the Kulelkys. Illinois can still claim Beren both by birth and because he returned to Chicago as a teenager where he graduated from high school. Of the four men and women remaining on Illinois' radio comedy dream team, three hail from Peoria, interesting. Jim and Marian Jordan and Charles Correll were born within eight years of each other (1896, 1898, 1890, respectively) in or very near this central Illinois city. During that decade the blue collar bug grew from roughly 40,000 to 55,000 inhabitants. There certainly was nothing about the city to suggest that two of radio's most celebrated series, comedy or otherwise, would be the brainchild of Peoria natives. Then as now, it was it was a manufacturing area surrounded by fertile Midwest farmland. If Waukegan was a world away from Chicago, then Peoria, 131 miles south and west of the Midwest capital city, would have seemed a universe away before interstates criss-crossed the state. Indeed touring vaudeville shows would have provide the three a rare glimpse of the world beyond central Illinois. Because of its historical geographical location (once the nation's population center) and demographic mix, Peoria became a popular metaphor for average America. What could succeed there could succeed around the country. Thus by the 20s and 30s it gained a quirky reputation among vaudeville performers which has persisted since among entertainers and public policy makers. If it plays in Peoria, it'll play anywhere. The city was the epitome of average, but its place in radio comedy history is anything but average. The final star in Illinois' radio comedy hall of fame sidewalk belongs to Paul Rhymer, creator of Vic and Sade. Born in Fulton IL, along the Mississippi, he grew up in Bloomington, another central Illinois town. Of the six featured comedy stars, Rhymer was the youngest and only one born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1905) While far from a cosmopolitan city,

Bloomington and its sister city, Normal, had a combined population of 73,000 in 1900, pretty sizable for the farming region in which it is located. Bloomington and Normal are the homes of Illinois Wesleyan University and Illinois State University respectively, so the area lacked the roughness of both Peoria and Chicago. Perhaps this helps explain the dry, understated humor of Rhymer's Vic and Sade compared to his homestate comrades, themselves a relatively understated bunch. Each of Illinois' native comics had a unique comedic style that contributed to their enduring popularity. They wouldn't still be appreciated today if they hadn't. Yet their brand of comedy also has some great similarities. None were of the loud and brash school of entertainment, ala some of the East Coast contemporaries like Al Jolson, Jimmy Durante, and Ed Wynn.. While other comedians dominated their radio programs, delivering joke after joke sometimes in an over the top manner, the Illinois "School" of radio comedians were quieter and more reserved, delivering the payoff lines to others. Benny fed lines to supporting cast while Bergen fed the best lines to a dummy. Even the McGees, the biggest hams of the bunch, let their supporting players deliver a good portion of the weekly whoppers. Correll, too, was always the front man but never the king joker, leaving that to others, especially the Kingfish. Rhymer's creation had no jokers at all. Benny, Bergen, Fibber, and Andrew Jones were all ultimately, the butt of the joke. Perhaps reflective of the Midwestern sense of 2<sup>nd</sup> rate status compared to their East Coast brethren, their characters were the hapless victims of a cruel world, never the ones to grab a world by the throat and shake. In the end, the characters portrayed by these men and women were working stiffs just trying to get their small piece of the proverbial pie. The Golden Age of radio would still have been golden even without the contributions of these illustrious Illinoisans. But the Land of Lincoln can make a strong case for calling itself the Land of Radio Comedy Legends and the nation's cultural history surely would have been the poorer without the state's native sons and daughter.

Ryan Ellett is an Illinois native who calls Kansas home. He's a teacher by trade and enjoys listening to and reading and writing about old time radio in his free time. He can be reached at Old time Radio

1. Hap Harrigan 2. weight 3.
- 3 Coming mother-Henry Aldrich
- Well now I wouldn't say that-Mr. Peavy
- Silly boy - The Mad Russian
- Heavenly Days-Mollie McGee
- Now cut that out-Jack Benny
- What a revolting development this- Chester A Riley
4. Oh Marie
5. Vic & Sade

Here 's a little old time radio quiz to test you knowledge of the old shows. Answers are at bottom left page. Good luck!

## 1. Which is out of place?

|             |              |                  |
|-------------|--------------|------------------|
| Lone Ranger | Hop Harrigan | Hopalong Cassidy |
| Gene Autry  | Tom Mix      | Roy Rogers       |

## 2. Jokes were never made about Jack Benny's...

|                |        |            |
|----------------|--------|------------|
| Blue Eyes      | Weight | Age        |
| Violin Playing | Toupee | Sifingness |

## 3. Match the radio cry with the radio character

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| "Coming Mother"                         | Mollie McGee    |
| "Well now, I wouldn't say that"         | Jack Benny      |
| "Silly boy"                             | Chester Riley   |
| "Heavenly days"                         | The Mad Russian |
| "Now cut that out!"                     | Henry Aldrich   |
| "What a revolting development this is!" | Mr. Peavy       |

## Today's Toughies...

### 4. What was the theme music from 'Life with Luigi'?

"Just a Little Love, a Little Kiss"

|                |            |                  |
|----------------|------------|------------------|
| "Aphrodite"    | "Oh Marie" | "Oh My Papa"     |
| "Annie Laurie" |            | "Poor Butterfly" |

### 5. Which famous radio pair was from Crooper, Illinois?

|                |                |                   |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Lum & Abner    | Ethel & Albert | Abbott & Costello |
| Martin & Lewis | Vic & Sade     | Sweeney & March   |

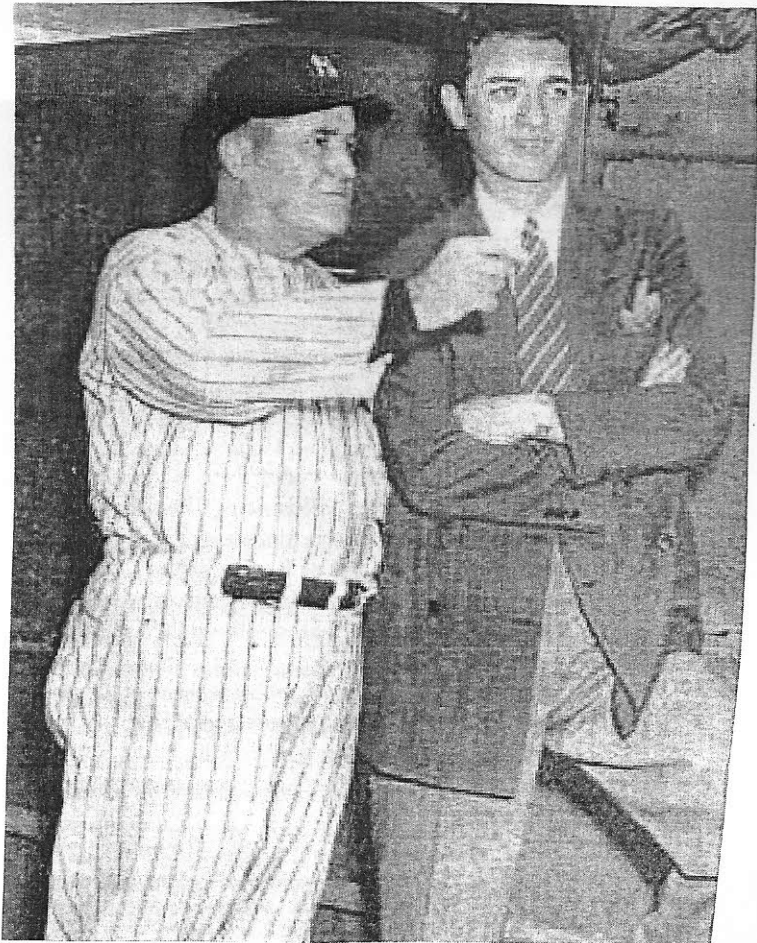


### Mel Allen

By Tom Cherre

Well, baseball is still going on and the Yankees are still alive, as I am at the keyboard so why not do a baseball feature, and perhaps write about the supreme voice of the Yankees, Mel Allen. Mel like Red Barber had his roots from the deep South. He was born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1913. He was a three letter man at the University of Alabama. He did the PA announcing at the college football games. When the regular announcer quit for the college games Mel was picked to take his place. Soon after graduating in 1937 Mel took a train ride to New York City for a week's vacation. As it turned out he stayed there for the next 60 years. He applied for a staff announcing job for CBS and got hired at \$45 a week. He did some big band remotes and game shows including *Truth or Consequences*. In his first year at CBS he announced the crash of the *Hindenburg* interrupting Kate Smith to do so. In 1938 Allen landed his first baseball assignment doing color for the World Series. He got a big break when Garnett Marks, one of the Yankee broadcasters miss-pronounced Ivory soap the Yankee sponsor at the time. He called it Ovary soap, and he did it twice. He got fired and Mel Allen was in the press box. He soon became the Yankees and Giants lead announcer. His most popular catch phrase was "How about That?". Allen recounted an anecdote that occurred in his first year doing the Yankee games. Lou Gehrig had been force to retire because of his sickness. Speaking with Allen in the team dugout, Gehrig told him "Mel, I never got the chance to listen to your games before, but I want you to know they're the only thing that keeps me going." Allen waited

till Lou left then broke down in tears. Allen was there for all the great ones. Gehrig, DiMaggio, Joe McCarthy Lefty Gomez, Heinrich, Rizzuto, Berra, Casey Stengel Mantle, Maris and many more. I grew up listening to him in the 60s when Ballantine Beer was sponsor. I still remember the jingles. Mel just had that great voice and style. His other catchphrases were "Hello there everybody" to start the game, and "going, going, gone" on home runs. His "Three and two-What'll he do" were all classics. He got fired in 1963 for no explained reason. He was brought back in later years due to much fan support. Baseball is not as enjoyable anymore for two reasons. It's too slow and you don't have a Mel Allen behind the Mike. I had a Joe McCarthy story to tell, but that will have to wait. "So long Everybody".





### Now to continue with part 2 of The Case of the Holy Scepter:

By Frank Edward Bork

They built a face for it like a Roman chapel, with rubies and other jewels, just above the entrance way. An earthquake had buried the entrance for over a 1000 years. About three years ago a German archeologist, Herr Wolfgang Von Altson found the temple. It is he who sent the cross as a Christmas present to Bishop Burke, his good friend and cousin. On his mother's side of the family, Edwards added. "Pray continue," said Holmes. "How large is the cross." "The cross itself is about eight hands high with a base. The entire cross is solid gold and worth a small fortune. There are 28 stones mounted on the cross, rubies, emeralds, and other precious stones. It was packed in a heavy wooden crate with metal straps. The box was shipped by Moran and Wells, with guards all the way. I received it just yesterday. We uncrated it and inspected it very carefully. It was perfect. About 2pm yesterday, my assistant and I stepped out for a cup of tea. My clerk Miss Fisher, was in the shop the entire time of my absence. When Jack and I returned, we went directly to the storeroom where the cross was locked, but it was not there. I ran out to question Miss Fisher, who was with a customer at the time. As soon as the customer left I asked her what happened to the cross? She said she knew nothing as she had been busy with customers the entire time, and she did not have a key to the storeroom. She further stated that no one had been even near the storeroom door, and that she had not heard anything unusual. There is only one window in the storeroom and that has bars on it. There is no other door except the one I locked myself. "As I recall," said Holmes, "Harrogate St. W

is a street lined on both sides with small shops and restaurants. I think, Mr. Edwards, we had better have a look at your shop" said Holmes as he walked over to his coat and deerstalker's hat. "Come Watson, I shall need your help." In minutes we were standing in front of our flat hailing a hansom to take us to Harrogate St. W. As we waited I wrapped my muffler around my neck and pulled down my cap against the snow and the cold. It took us just thirty minutes to get to Harrogate from Baker St. Although the snow was coming down quite heavy, there was very little traffic about for this time of day. It seemed that most people preferred to walk. We arrived at the door of the shop which was typical of other shops in the area. It had a large glass door in its center, with large French windows on either side, with religious articles on display for sale. The shop on the outside had the appearance of being well-kept and cared for, with a sign above the door stating the owner's name: Darryle B. Edwards Dealer in Religious Artifacts. When we entered we were greeted by Miss Norma Mary Fisher. She was pleasantly dressed, but her appearance was marred by tear stains on her cheek. "This Norma Mary" said Mr. Edwards to Holmes and myself. "Now now Norma Mary, you musn't carry on so" said Holmes. "We are here to help find the cross. We know it was do to no fault of yours that the cross was stolen". As we looked around the shop I noticed how tastefully the articles were displayed and how clean and well-kept the shop was. A medium sized room with a small office on the left and the storeroom directly in the rear with a rear entrance next to the office which had a bar fixed across the opening. The rear door opened inward, so with the bar in place, it would be impossible to open the

door even an inch. Holmes examined the door and frame with his magnifying glass, but said nothing, except the usual mnnnn and ahh” Next he did the same with the storeroom door and studied the floor between the two doors. “May I have the key please” he then said to Mr. Edwards. He gave him the key. Before unlocking the door, Holmes examined the key with his glass and again said nothing. He then inserted the key in the lock and worked the lock several times before opening the door. The door opened inward, so quite certainly the hinge pins could not be removed from outside the room. As we entered the room I saw nothing unusual, in fact, it was just another storeroom, with shelves lining the four walls and a large table in the center piled high with merchandise. Holmes, without a pause, went directly to the window. This has not been opened in years, barred as it is, and the sash has been nailed down in four places. The door has not been jammed and the lock has not been picked. “Mr. Edwards, how many keys to this door and who has them”? “The Lock is new, just last year, and I have the only keys, Mr Holmes,” said Darryk Edwards. “I have one here on my key chain and one at home in my strong box”. “Did you check to see if the key at home was still there recently?” “Yes Sir just last evening when I returned from the shop. It is still there in my strong box. “How long has Miss Fisher been in your employ? And do you trust her completely? “:Mr. Holmes , Really! Exclaimed Mr. Edwards, “I’ve known Norma Mary for many years. Her brother Ralph and I are best friends. Why we went to school together, even roomed together at the University for four years. Yes Mr. Holmes I trust Norma Mary completely. She is both honest and faithful to my employ. I must

say Mr. Holmes I am shocked and hurt that you would ask such a question.” Mr. Edwards” said Mr. Holmes “I must know all the facts and all the problems you may have if I am to help you.” “I understand Mr. Holmes, It’s just that I have known the Fisher family for so many years that they are as close to me as my family. I even address Norma Mary’s mother and father as uncle and aunt, and believe me Mr. Holmes, I would trust anyone in their family with my very life. A smile came across Holmes’ face and he said very pleasantly, “I understand Mr. Edwards, Thank you for being so frank. Holmes turned and examined the shelves and walls. “Hello, What’s this?” he exclaimed looking at the ceiling, just above one of the shelves. I looked up at the yellowing white ceiling, which was criss-crossed with pieces of board to hold the ceiling plaster up. “I see nothing Holmes, “ I said. “That smudge Watson there. Can’t you see it man?” he said impatiently. “Where, Holmes? Oh yes I see it, but what has that to do with the missing cross?” said I. “Unless I am very much mistaken, Watson that is how the cross left this room. “Here help me with these packing crates.” We carried several of the crates over to where Holmes had pointed to the spot on the ceiling. After placing one on top of the other, Holmes climbed up on top of them so he could reach the ceiling plaster where the spot was. “Ah ha”, said he. This section of the plaster is loose. Look here,” and he pulled the entire section up and out of the way. There was an opening large enough for a man to crawl through. “I’ll wager this is how they got the cross out of the storeroom.

*Hmmmmmm the plot thickens. I’m Mr Holmes is on to something. Stay tune to next month for part three.*

The Copycat Shows of Old Time Radio  
By Jack French 2009 Part One:

(Note: This topic was discussed in detail by Mr. French in a forum at the 2007 Friends of Old Time Radio Convention held in Newark, NJ, but this is the first time in print.)

Over a hundred and fifty years ago, a philosopher Charles Caleb Colton wrote: "Imitation is the sincerest of flattery". In 1820 he couldn't have been thinking of the Golden Age of Radio, but if his words are true, then many OTR programs were flattered by their competitors. Copycat shows arrived almost as soon as network programming began. Any successful series was subject to imitation versions, hoping to garner some of the same audience. Even if they could not duplicate the acting skills or writing talent of the original, they could mimic the program as closely as time and budget would allow. Lum 'n Abner which began on radio on NBC Chicago in July 1931 on a regional basis sponsored by Quaker Oats, switched to a sustainer in 1932 and quickly became one of the most popular shows on radio. Two actors not only played the leads and supporting cast but also wrote the scripts, Chester Lauck as Columbus "Lum" Edwards and Norris "Tuffy" Goll as Abner Peabody. They were two country bumpkins in Pine Ridge, Arkansas and soon after the program started, they were in charge of the Jot 'em Down Store. Before 1932 ended, their first copycat series appeared, The Misadventures of Si and Elmer. They were two country bumpkins in the rural village of Punkinville and their syndicated series introduced them as correspondence school detectives. While they weren't storekeepers, neither were Lum and Abner until 1933. Perry Crandall portrayed Si Perkins and William H. Reynolds was Elmer Peabody, perhaps no relation to Abner Peabody. Elmer spoke with a lisp so he always addressed Si as "S-s-s-s-si." It is believed that a total of 130 episodes each 15 minutes long were recorded of which 95 are in circulation today. But Si and Elmer would not be the only show to copy Lum 'n Abner, there would be at least two more. In 1932 another imitation series began airing in syndication: Eb and Zeb. Produced out of a San Francisco studio, Al Pearce played Eb (with a lisp) and Bill Wright was the voice of Zeb. Sponsored by Shell Oil Company they were shopkeepers in the little town of Corn Center. Sometimes the plot line involved several episodes in a convoluted story, like Lum 'n Abner and in other shows, Eb and

Zeb merely traded a string of old vaudeville jokes. This series aired for about 10 years and over 300 episodes are in circulation. The third series to parrot Lum 'n Abner came out of Station KHJ in Los Angeles. Although it was syndicated and probably 333 shows were originally recorded, only five episodes have survived so we don't know a great deal about it, including the identity of the cast members. The show was called The adventures of Detective Black and Blue. This time the two shopkeepers were in Duluth so most of their adventures take place around Lake Superior after they become "detect-atives". No first names were ever used on the air for Black (the dullard) and Blue (the smarter one). We do know two of their sponsors because radio premiums for this series still exist; a Sherlock Holmes type cap from Iodine toothpaste and a brass badge from Folger's Coffee. This show aired from October 1932 to February 1934. Despite the claim by their announcer that their adventures were thrilling and amusing there was nothing in the surviving copies to confirm either attribute. The writing is pedestrian and in most episodes the only action has already happened and Black and Blue merely recite their memories of the incidents. Their slogan "Detectives Black and Blue---"good men, tried and true" was used on most episodes. Out of Detroit's WXYZ in 1936 came The Green Hornet. With largely the same cast and crew of the popular Lone Ranger, this modern day crime fighter took to the air to the music of the Flight of the Bumble Bee composed by Rimsky-Korsakov. Within three years the Green Hornet was so popular its name inspired a copy cat comic book, The Blue Beetle, however the chief similarity was in names. The Blue Beetle was Dan Garret, a policeman, who operated without a sidekick like Kato. However when The Blue Beetle came to radio, they found a theme song that sounded quite a bit like that of the Green Hornet's. And like the WXYZ hero, The Blue Beetle hid behind a mask, fought crime, and was a problem for the local police.

Next Part two of Copy Cat Shows of OTR



# The Old Time Radio Club

THOMAS R CHERRE  
144 FONTAINE DR  
BUFFALO NY 14215-2038



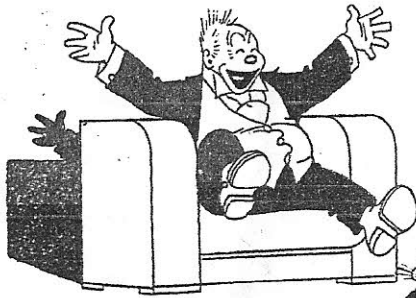
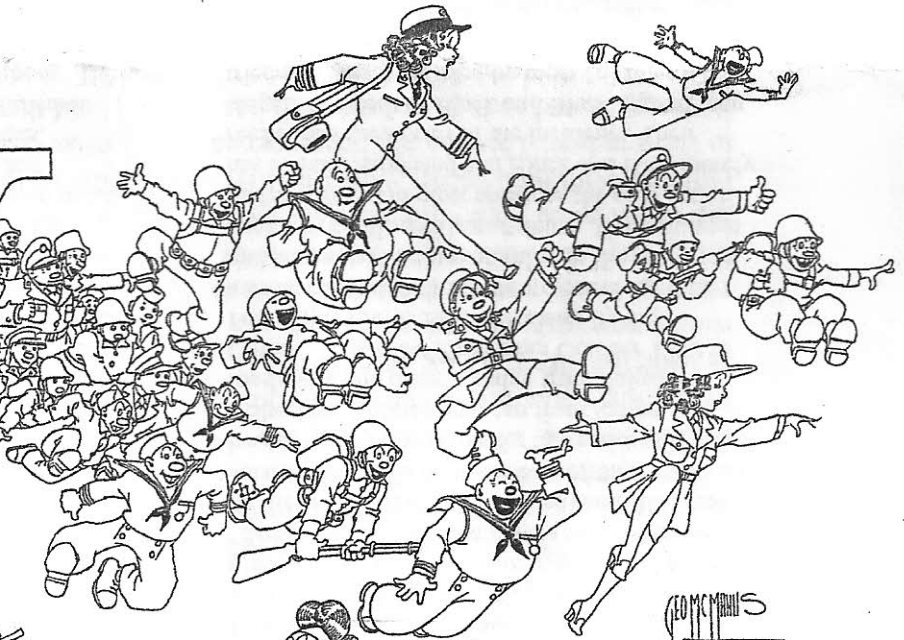
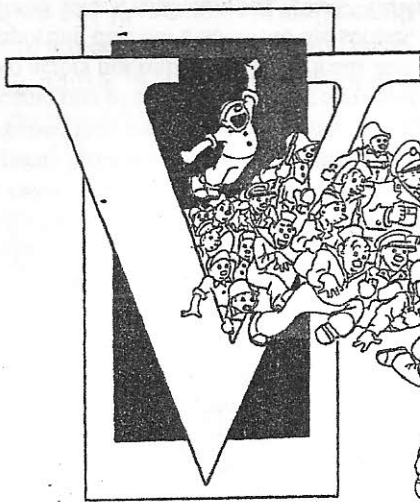
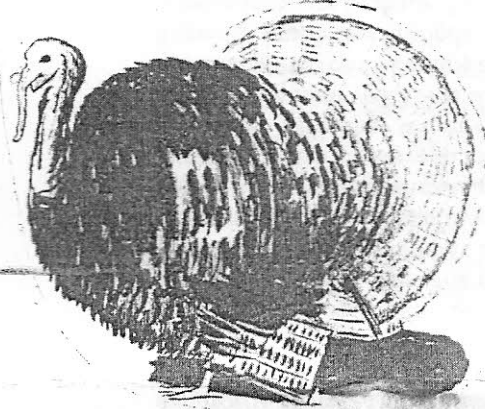
Gary Cooper



## FIRST CLASS MAIL



JIM BESHIRE (C)  
123 DAVIDSON  
SAVANNAH, GA 31419



McMANUS  
V.E. DAY  
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