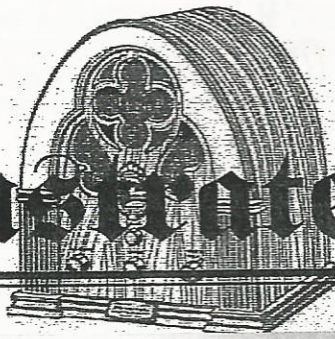


The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

# The Illustrated Press



Number 410

May 2013



## 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

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All Submissions are subject to approval prior to actual publication.

**Deadline for The Illustrated Press is the 1st of each month prior to publication.**

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### **Library Rates:**

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:

It's finally spring, and it's comfortable enough to take some long walks and start listening to some old time radio. Believe it or not we have only one more meeting left before we break for the summer and have our picnic in August. Anyway, I've always thought about writing something about Walter Winchell. He was probably the first gossip columnist and he at one time had the highest rated radio show, even beating out Jack Benny and Fred Allen. Should be an interesting one. That's next month. Bill Shishko had a few kind words to say. ....Thanks for your faithful work to keep the good old medium of Radio alive! I enjoy every issue. I read it while listening to radio classics on Sirius XM Radio. Everyday I am reminded that the pictures on radio are far superior to TV.

Bill Shishko

Thanks for your kind words. Included in this issue is a quiz submitted by Dick LeRoux.

An Old Time Radio fan has asked me to mention: **Everybody Comes To Rick's Place**. There is a new newsgroup launching in early May that promises to be the talk of the year....literally. Over 1000 folks have already subscribed (as

of March 25) and opens the door to discussions about old time radio, vintage movies, retro television, comic books, comic strips, pulp magazines, and more. The moderator, Dave, promises to keep the daily e-mail newsletter busy with frequent contributions, from historians, authors, celebrities and more. It's free to subscribe and anyone subscribed can contribute to the discussions. Postings encouraged but if you prefer to subscribe and be a lurker (someone who just reads the e-mail) that's OK too. The web site is [www.RicksPlace.info](http://www.RicksPlace.info) so take a quick minute and subscribe today.

Message from Dick Olday: It is only the middle of April when I am writing about the increases to our OTR library. Our CD's are up to 1966 with more arriving soon. The cassettes are now up to 9632 and another box of cassettes just arrived. We have received numerous different programs, but several Lum & Abners, Great Gildersleeves, Amos'N Andy and Twenty-First Precincts. Bob and I will continue adding programs and our new catalog will be sent out to members around December. Since summer is coming, it is time to stock up on OTR shows to enjoy on the back porch while the TV networks play reruns all summer long. Our last new catalog had several new shows to choose from and our librarian is waiting to hear from you. I will be back in the fall with another update on our expanding OTR library. Until then you can listen to us on Yesterday USA.com. Our program airs daily at different times for two hours and every two weeks a new program will air.

Trivia Quiz Last month's episode I had the RCA dog on back cover. What was his name. First person to tell me wins 1963 greatest hits on CD. Good Luck!

**Fred Allen**  
By Tom Cherre



Fred Allen, a gifted comic, was probably ahead of his time. He created a unique type of comedy. His *Town Hall Tonight* was like no other radio show of its kind. This hour long show featured segments that would influence other radio shows and much later TV. Sid Caesar with "Your Show of Shows" was a hint of Fred Allen. Rowan and Martin's *Laugh In* was another. "Saturday Night Live" would be another show with a Fred Allen slant. Allen always opted for perfection. He was often at odds with his sponsors, causing him to leap-frog with many different ones. Fred Allen is typically remembered for his long time feud with best friend Jack Benny. He died relatively young at the age of 61. In his short life he had a marvelous career. He was born May 31<sup>st</sup> 1894 with the name John Florence Sullivan in Cambridge Massachusetts. Allen's mother died when he was only 2 years old. His father James and infant brother Robert went to live with his mother's sister Aunt Lizzie. Allen remained with his aunt even after his father remarried. He said it was the best decision he ever made. Allen took up piano as a boy with

the Emerson upright his father bought. He learned exactly two songs- "Hiawatha" and "Pitter Patter, Little Raindrops" and would be asked to play half or all his repertoire guests came to his house. When he worked at the Boston Public Library he became infatuated with a book about the origin and discovery of comedy. He also took up juggling as he learned about comedy. One day a library co-worker put on a show and asked him if he would be part of it with his juggling. He performed his juggling and also did some comedy. When a girl in the crowd told him "You're crazy to keep working at the library; you ought to go stage." Allen decided his career path was set. He set upon a path to appear at several amateur night competitions, soon taking the name Fred St. James. This led to working on the vaudeville circuit at \$30 a week. He billed himself as the world's worst juggler with a mix of clumsy juggling throwing in a variety of comic routines and one-liners. His agent's name was Edgar Allen, and John Sullivan thus became Fred Allen. In 1921 Fred Allen and Nora Bayes toured with the company of Lew Fields. Their music director was a fellow named Richard Rodgers. Many years later when he appeared as a mystery guest on *What's My Line*





Rodgers recalled Allen's act of playing banjo and telling jokes. In 1922 Allen worked in the Shubert Production *The Passing Game*. The show ran only ten weeks, but Allen met one of the show's chorus girls, Portland Hoffa who later was to become his wife in 1927. After they married Allen began writing material for use in vaudeville shows where they could be together. Radio was still in its infancy, when they appeared on a Chicago station WLS program *Showboat*, into which Allen recalled "Portland and I were presented to inject a little class into it." They were very successful in their first radio debut. Allen bounced around gaining success in radio shows, *The Little Show* and *Three's a Crowd*. These shows led to his full-time entry to radio in 1932. After hosting *The Linit Bath Club Revue* on CBS the show moved to NBC and became *The Salad Bowl Revue* (sponsor being Hellman's Mayonaise). The became *The Sal Hepatica Revue* (1933-34), *The Hour of Smiles* (1934-35), and finally *Town Hall Tonight* (1935-39) Later on when Bristol Meyers took over sponsorship the show was given the title *The Fred Allen Show*. Allen's perfectionism caused him to leap from sponsor to sponsor until *Town Hall*

*Tonight* allowed him to chose the right criteria and general theme for his show and this established Fred Allen as a radio superstar. As I mentioned before, Allen's show was like a satirical Saturday Night Live Show, only it was on the radio. There was no other comedy show like Allen's. On the *Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson, he had a Mighty Carson Art Players routine. Long before Carson, Allen had Mighty Allen's Art Players. They lambasted current stars, Broadway Shows, and other radio programs, like Jack Benny. *Town Hall* became the longest-running hour-long comedy -based show in radio history. Fred Allen had to take a year off due to a severe case of hypertension and returned in 1945 with the *Fred Allen Show* on NBC. He featured the DeMarco Sisters, who stayed with Allen for four years doing Allen's opening theme song with their familiar "Mr. Al-len, Mr. Alll-lennnnn.". Allen would usually say something like, "It isn't the mayor of Anaheim and Cucmonga kiddies." Sounds like something Grouch Marx would say. This device became something of a signature greeting for three years. Then came "Allen's Alley". Allen had his monologue and comic segment with wife Portland Hoffa, usually involving gags about her family. Then we entered segment of the most stereotypical characters the radio world has ever known. The list included, sarcastic John Doe (John Brown), dimwitted Socrates Mulligan (Charlie Cantor), town drunk Samson Souse (Jack Smart), pompous poet Falstaff Openshaw (Alan Reed), wry Jewish housewife Pansy Nussbaum (Minerva Pious), and my favorite, Senator Claghorn . Claghorn was a blow-hard bellowing Southern senator by the name of Beauregard. How much southern can

you get? Within a matter of a few weeks Senator Claghorn became one of the most popular characters in all of radio. Listeners across the country began using his many catchphrases, including, "Somebody, Ah say, somebody knocked", "I'm from the South, Suh", "That's a joke son", and "Pay attention boy". Claghorn became so popular Warner Brothers based Claghorn for their Foghorn Leghorn cartoon character. He first appeared the following August in the Oscar nominated *Walky Talky Hawky*.

### Foghorn Leghorn



Other characters also had catchphrases that were almost as famous as Claghorn's, but never reached that same popularity. Titus Moody's was "Howdy Bub", and Falstaff Openshaw's was "That is precisely why I am here." Mrs Nussbaum always greeted Allen saying, "You were expecting maybe ....and then she would go ahead and pronounce the name of a big star like Tulaulalula Bankhead." Every character was a riot and Allen did the most to get the funniest dialog out of each one of them. Allen was later copied by many using similar monologs. Allen used all the stereotypes with his many ethnic diversified characters, and it worked. The listening audience loved it. "Allen's

Alley" did more to give Allen his top ratings for many years. Claghorn, Nussbaum, Mulligan, and Openshaw were never criticized for being anti-Southern, anti-Semitic, anti-New England, or anti-Irish. Their warmth and good humor which they were presented made them acceptable for all, even to the most sensitive listeners. Allen did



employed a team of writers, but they mainly served more or less as a consulting group. Fred Allen had the final edit and rewrite of each week's script, working as many as 12 hours a day on sketches and ideas. Many times Allen's adlibbing caused the show to run a little too long and we would occasionally hear him sign off with "We're running a little late, so good night folks." Also when a joke didn't commandeer a good laugh, or hardly any laugh at all, Allen would comment on the lack of response, with his adlibbed explanation almost always being funnier than the original joke. Years later Johnny Carson, on his *Tonight Show* would use this same technique. Allen's show was so popular, that Ford Motor Company featured it in a Life Magazine ad in April 1948. Next week – Part Two of Fred Allen and his Big Feud.....

**High Adventure by martin  
Grams Jr. Part 2**

Episode #10 "Woman in the Woods"

Broadcast date September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1950

Cast: Inge Adams, Jim Boies, Ross Martin, and Nat Polen

Plot: A mysterious woman (Inge Adams) with a fatal attraction for men and how she proves a stumbling block to two engineers assigned to build an air field in South America.

Episode #11 Secret Thursday

Broadcast date September 10 1950

Cast: unknown

Plot: A story about flying an accountant named George Stradley, who had spent 25 years working for the Harlan Fire Hose Company, but who had wanted to fly. When George gets a Thursday off work he heads for the airport and finds he can fly a plane just because he read every book on flying that he can find.

Episode #12 Barrier

Broadcast date September 17<sup>th</sup> 1950

Cast Mary Ashworth

Plot: Three people learn the true value of one another's characters on a trip together, two men and a girl. That girl (Mary Ashworth) is promised in marriage to John Rockwood, one of the men. The other man Ward Delcamp is also in love with the girl. Through death John binds the girl to him for always, as she chooses to live with money.

Episode #13 "East Side Beat"

Broadcast date September 24<sup>th</sup> 1950

Cast: Don Douglas, Wendell Holmes, Mort Lawrence, Ross Martin, Bryan Raeburn, and Linda Watkins

Plot: Written and directed by Elliot Drake. A serious dramatic public service drama concerning juvenile delinquency.

Bill Harrigan, a cop faces retirement just when he wanted to solve a very special case. He found strange cases committed by a kid because, "nobody likes him" one by one the kid hurts and even kills other boys and girls and finally a pet monkey.

Episode #14 "Who Walks like a Man"

Broadcast date October 1<sup>st</sup> 1950

Cast unknown

Plot: Written and directed by Robert Monroe. The story of Brad Orcoft who once thought that money was everything and went to Africa to make more of it. There he encounters a gorilla "who walks like a man."

Episode #15 Metamorphasite

Broadcast date October 8<sup>th</sup> 1950

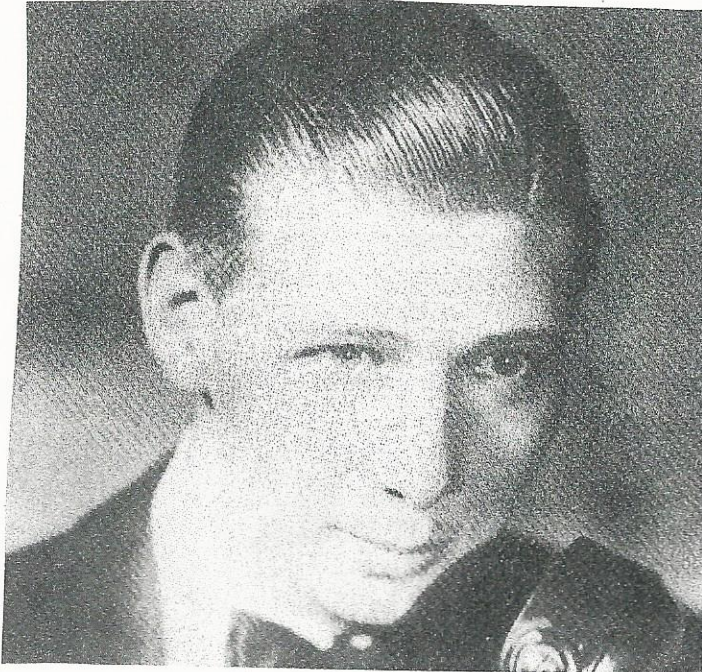
Cast unknown

Plot: written and directed by Robert Monroe The story of a man named Van Marcia who lived a dream of hope and destruction. This was the final broadcast of the series.

When the network was unable to come up with a sponsor the series was cancelled. The producers eventually took it back to Mutual where it first aired, and once again premiered on October 13<sup>th</sup> 1953. George Sanders became the series regular as both the host and narrator. Sanders remained on the series until it ended on September 24 1954. Only 4 shows are known to exist in recorded form. In the late 50s or early 60s a radio program of the same name was produced in South Africa. 32 different episodes are circulating in collectors hands.

Whether these were adaptations of the American scripts is anybody's guess. These recordings are not to be confused with the American broadcasts of the same name. ....Martin Grams Jr.

**Harry Von Zel**  
**By Tom Cherre**  
**With excerpts of conversation**  
**with Chuck Schaden**



Harry Von Zell will probably be enshrined in trivia circles as having committed the notorious blooper of calling President Herbert Hoover by the name Hoobert Heever. He made the verbal faux pas during a live tribute on Hoover's birthday in 1931. It came after a long coverage of Hoover's career, when he had pronounced Hoover name correctly many times. I remember him more for his many years working with Burns & Allen. Harry was born in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1906. Later his family moved to California and Von Zell studied music and drama at the University of California at Los Angeles, or what they UCLA. After some friends more or less tricked him or connived him into singing on a radio program, he received offers from various radio stations to work on the air. He auditioned for Paul Whiteman's radio show and beat out 250 other announcers.

This was in 1930. After that, he headed for New York City and became a CBS staff announcer, working with Fred Allen. Harry Von Zell's broadcast career spanned nearly the entire golden age of radio and he was also prominent in TV after his radio days. Before he died in 1981 Chuck Schaden had an interview with Harry in 1975 asking him all about Fred Allen and his *Town Hall Tonight* series he had in the 1930s. The interview follows. Well, first of all he wrote the entire show each week with a pencil on yellow paper. At that time people who were putting that type of show on with guest stars had at least 3 or 4 writers. Fred Allen was it. Fred would work every day and in a hotel room or his apartment working hard to get the show finished. Fred also had the unexpected in him, meaning he was moved at times to change the script at the very last moment or even depart from the script altogether. Von Zell said that he would throw things to you from left field, and you would darn well be ready to catch it. Among the many sketches featured, were "big businessman sketch," the "Judge Zeke Allen sketch," "circus" "Chinese detective", and "Long Pan" sketch. There were quite a few. and on one occasion they did a "Judge Zeke Allen" hillbilly sketch. A murder was committed and a trial was on. I played Zeb. What we rehearsed never took place. The dialog was changed into a bombardment of adlibs, sound effects, and a cyclone of panamonia only Fred Allen could come up with. The live audience of 1400 was absolutely in an uproar and people at home were thoroughly entertained. It was just another unique slant on the depth of humor that Allen often employed. One interesting anecdote was the time Fred Allen had a talking myna bird on the



show. The bird was named Major Ramshaw, and was noted all over Europe for answering several questions. You could ask him how old he was and he would answer "I'm 12 years old and how old are you"? It could sing like Caruso and many other things. Fred hired the bird to perform on his show. When Allen introduced him on *Town Hall Tonight* he asked the bird if he had ever been on radio. He said nothing, not a chirp. He then asked him to sing a song, and still nothing, not a sound. The bird's trainer would say "Speak up, sing a little song for us." Nothing came out. Pretty soon Fred, getting a little embarrassed said, "Major you may be a bird, but if you were a chicken..." Fred thought that being on the radio in front of a large audience, the myna bird might be frightened, along with the audience, set, and microphones. The Major must be nervous so we'll try again next week. The bird came on week after week never saying anything, not a peep. The did go up higher and higher. Von Zell asked Allen "Well how much do you pay a dumb bird?" Fred answered "I'm paying him double! He said I'll keep it going until we have the biggest rating that radio can possibly have.



The advertising manager of the Sal Hepatica Company never appreciated Fred's humor. He got more angry every week when the bird wouldn't talk. He thought it was ridiculous and was making fools of themselves. Finally the sponsors demanded the bird off the show. Allen persisted that the ratings were great but he lost out and that was the end of the bird. Later on Fred Allen brought an eagle on the show. The wingspan was about eight feet. The studio was 3 stories high so the bird had plenty of flying room. VonZell claimed it was a wild program This was how Allen's mind worked. Allen had a keen eye for talent. Harry VonZell introduced many a new talent for the first time ever on radio. Some of these stars to be were, The Boswell sisters, Mills Brothers, and Kate Smith. Harry had seen Kate Smith for the first time in a Broadway show called "Flying High." She was only 18 at the time. She was, he felt the greatest natural singer he had ever heard. VonZell enjoyed his years with Allen. Harry also announced for Eddie Cantor, Phil Baker, Dinah Shore, and Joan Davis. He is best known for his work on the Burns and Allen Show, where he was featured in the story lines as well as being announcer. He was well liked and probably underrated. He was one of the best..

pictures

ANS. Next month

list of possible people (real name)  
w/ one accomplishment

#1.



#6.



A) Marvin Elliot Miller  
announcer - The Whistler

#2.



#7.



B) Virginia Dwyer  
"Mary Mathews" Another World

#3.



#8.

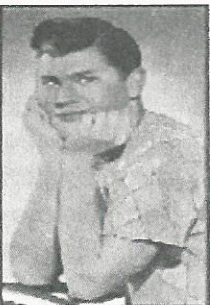


C) William Edward Maguiness  
Major Bowles Amateur Hour

#4.

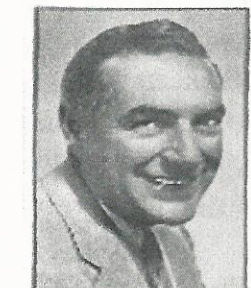


#9.



D) Adolph Marx  
A Day At the Races

#5.



#10.



E) Robert Hastings  
"Archie Andrews"

F) John William Cann Jr  
Gunsmoke

G) Audrey Cotter  
Honeymooners

H) Julius Henry Marx  
You Bet Your Life

I) Verna Felton  
"Hilda Crocker"

J) Clara Ann Fowler  
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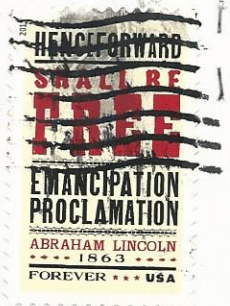
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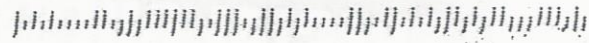
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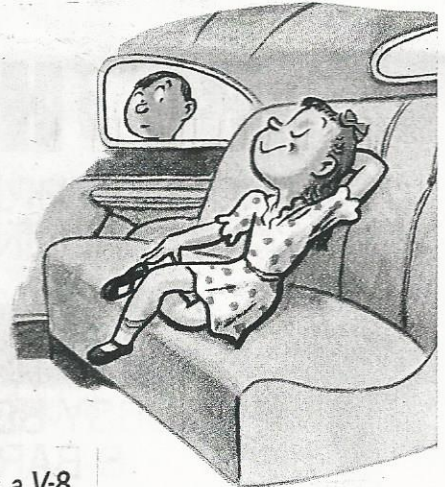
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