

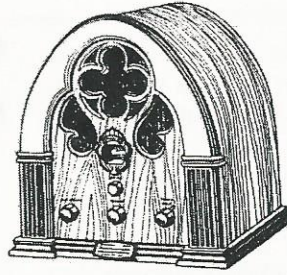
The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

# The ILLUSTRATED

# PRESS

Number 417



February 2014

**Tonight!**  
**DUFFY'S TAVERN**  
 9:00 WSPD

# Laughs

Tired of shows old and stuffy?  
 -Stay at home and listen to Duffy!

**"DUFFY'S TAVERN"**  
 With "ARCHIE"  
 VARIETY SHOW

**TONIGHT 8:30- EST WJAS**

SPONSORED BY SCHICK INJECTOR RAZOR.

**SOMETHING**

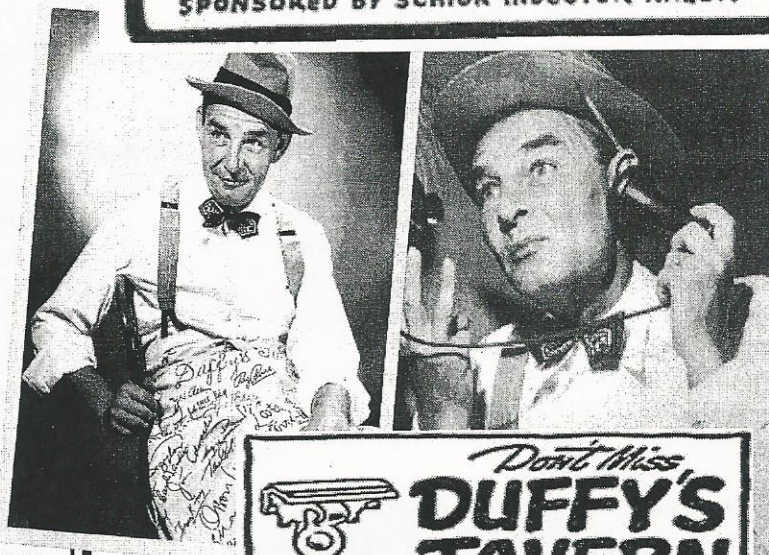
**SO DIFFERENT**

**THAT**

**PEOPLE**

**TALK!**

**Meredith Willson & his TALKING PEOPLE!**  
 Wednesday 10:30 WTOL



*Don't Miss!*  
**DUFFY'S TAVERN**  
 Tonight  
**FRANK FAY**  
 GUEST STAR  
 7:30 WBBM

SCHICK INJECTOR RAZOR

**MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION**

Club Membership : \$20.00 per year from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>. Members receive a media library listing and a monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows: If you join January-March, \$18.00; April-June, \$14.00; July-September, \$10.00; October-December, \$7.00. All renewals should be sent in as soon as possible to avoid missing issues of the newsletter. 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 p.m. 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 a Club picnic in August.

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

**CLUB MAILING ADDRESS**

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Lancaster, NY 14086



All submissions are subject to approval prior to actual publication.

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**Library Rates:** Audio cassettes and CDs are \$2.00 each are recorded on a club supplied cassette or CD which is retained by the member. Rates include postage and handling and payable in U.S. funds.



## Editor's Two Cents !

Well, for the first time that I can recall, our meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather. I have had it with winter so far. With a snow blower in the shop for almost a month waiting for a part I have had it with shoveling. Anyway, I would like to tell our members and friends of members that our Knight's Council is holding an Old Time Movie Night tentatively scheduled for Saturday February 8th at 7:30 pm in the St Al's auditorium. We will feature a Gene Autry movie with a cliffhanger serial, a cartoon and Three Stooges flic. Free popcorn included. Admission is a canned good or non-perishable food item. This is right up our alley. Our Spaghetti Dinner will be on Sunday the 9th. I hope I can count on members for support. I have not talked with Jerry lately. I trust all is well. Dues were due by the end of January. If you have not paid them your membership may be in jeopardy, and this could be your last news letter. This is your last reminder. Have not received many articles from members, except for the same two or three members, and you know who you are. I am forced to repeat some articles from previous years or raid other newsletters and pirate their writings.

*Trivia Question*  
*Who is this man?*



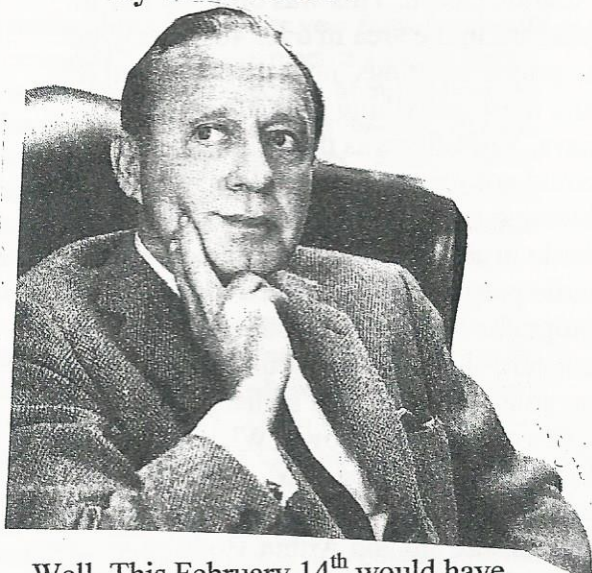
Can you identify this popular radio star?  
Clues: He had an unusual first name and was often spending much time at a bar.

Our January meeting was cancelled due to a large storm that blanked most of the country from the mid-west to the Atlantic Ocean. This was only the fourth blizzard in the area in over 40 years. Due to proper warnings, nobody was killed & and most everything shut down for two days. Visibility was the culprit; you could not see more than a few feet due to blowing snow. This was a good time to settle in and enjoy some of the old time radio programs. If you need more programs to replenish your store of unheard shows, pop up our new catalog on your computer. We added several CD's of Philip Marlowe, What's My Line, Fibber McGee & Molly (many 15 minute shows) and rare shows of Breakfast Club and Arthur Godfrey Time. In our cassette library we added hundreds of new shows (yes they can be converted to CD but no more than 10 at a time). Long runs of the following were added: The Great Gildersleeve, Mary Noble, Backstage Wife, (complete story), Ed & Zeb (similar to Lum & Abner), Lum & Abner, Amos & Andy, The Couple Next Door, College Quiz Bowl, Walk Softly, Peter Troy, Guest Star, Railroad Hour, Hop Harrigan, Here's to Veterans, Superman, Bing Crosby & Rosemary Clooney, and CBS Mystery Theater. In addition to these shows, many other shows were added in smaller amounts. There is something for everyone. Don't wait, send in your orders now and you will enjoy many hours of enjoyment listening to old time radio.

Dick Olday



## Jack Benny One of the Greatest By Tom Cherre



Well. This February 14<sup>th</sup> would have been Jack Benny's 119<sup>th</sup> birthday. I haven't mentioned his name in a while, so here we go. I've always enjoyed listening to *The Jack Benny Show*. His classic portrayal of the miserly Silas Marner skinflint was unblemished. Can you actually imagine a top Hollywood star doing laundry for his movie star friends to earn a little extra pin money? To save money Jack would have Rochester buy cans of food missing their labels because they were half price. Many is the time when their dessert wound up being dog food. His Christmas shows were always excellent, especially when Jack was in a quandary about whether to pay ten cents for a pair of shoelaces for announcer Don Wilson. The question was, to purchase the pair with metal tips or plastic. He usually gave the store clerks reason to go crazy. His old Maxwell was always breaking down, but Jack was too cheap to get another car. When he finally went looking for a new one he couldn't accept the prices he saw and almost went into mass hysteria. The many trips to the money vaults were always amusing.

Listening to radio you could vividly capture the alligators that inhabited the moat he had surrounding his treasures. Joe Karns played the keeper of the vault splendidly. He was there for so long he had no idea that cars had taken the place of horses. When Jack remarked to him about President Roosevelt, he thought Jack was referring to Teddy and never heard of Franklin. The alarms and sirens that went off when you approached the was stupendous. The episode of "Your money or your life" was the ultimate classic. Jack had to think what was worth more. The episodes with Ronald and wife Bonita Coleman always gave me a chuckle. Jack the ultimate cheapskate always had Rochester or as Bonita, called him Manchester, borrowing some trivial tidbit such as flour, some eggs, or some staple that everyone should have. Ronny was annoyed to the point of ignoring him or insulting Jack. Jack never caught on or didn't seem to care and just wanted to be chummy with an Academy Award winning actor. Lawn mowers, rakes and other tools were often borrowed but never returned. Benny even had Rochester turn the pool into a rice paddy to make some extra money and use the pool for profit. If there was an easy way to earn a few more dollars Jack was all for it. Along with Jack, he was gifted



a wonderful talented cast of characters that no other show could rival. In addition to Rochester, Dennis Day, Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris, and Don Wilson, he had many semi-regulars who had exceptional talent. Frank Nelson, the man who usually played a sales clerk had his back turned to Jack and then turn around and say "Yessssssssss". Mel Blanc was the master of sounds. He did all the sounds of his famous Maxwell. Sheldon Leonard played the voice who occasionally lured Jack into making certain decisions. And most popular for me was Mr. Kitzel, played by Artie



Mel Blanc

Auerbach. He had great lines-always funny. One familiar one is: Jack: "Oh you're going all the way to Chicago"? Mr. Kitzel: Yes, and I can see my wife's face now, whoo! Will she be surprised! Jack: Oh she doesn't know you're coming? Mr. Kitzel: She doesn't know I'm going. There are many more, and Mr. K was my favorite of the semi-regulars. Andy Devine had a good run for awhile too. The writers were good and Jack paid them well to stay happy

and keep writing. Of all the myths in the show about Jack Benny being cheap and vain, this was the furthest from the truth. Jack was kind and generous. He enjoyed the friendship of all in Hollywood. He had many friends and few, if any enemies. We go back to Jack grew up in Waukegan Illinois. He started taking violin lessons at the age of six, with expectations of being a professional violinist. Jack loved the instrument, but he hated practice. His teacher was Otto Graham Sr. He was the proud father of the great Cleveland Brown quarterback Otto Graham Jr. At 14 Benny was playing in dance bands and his high school orchestra. He was a dreamer and suffered in his studies at school. As a result of his poor grades and lack of enthusiasm he was asked to leave school. He did just as bad in business school and did just as well in his father's business, so he started playing the local vaudeville theaters for \$7.50 a week. In 1911 he played the same theater that The Marx Brothers were appearing. The brothers' mother Minnie liked Jack and invited young Jack to join up with their group.



Jack was only 17 and his parents refused to let him go on the road, but it was the beginning of a long friendship with the Marx Brothers. I won't bore you with Jack's one night stands and vaudeville days. His radio career started in 1932 and lasted till 1955. His greatest gag was the Allen-Benny Feud which lasted for years. They were always the best of friends. Jack continued on to a successful run on TV after his radio days, but never enjoyed that medium quite as well as radio. When his show was cancelled in 1965 he got to watch "Bonanza", which was opposite his show. He remarked "Gee, that's not a bad show". Benny continued to do guests spots on other shows and specials up to the very end. When Jack Benny passed away his best friend, George Burns attempted to do his eulogy, but after a few moments he broke down in tears. Bob Hope finished it up with saying "Jack was stingy, he only gave us 80 years of his life". It seems to me, and this is only my opinion, but all the good singers and comedians have all passed away.

George Burns was indeed Jack Benny's best friend. I have an interesting article about George and Jack which may news to many of you. One of our fellow members told me about this a couple months ago. You will read about it on the following pages. The article is entitled: **The German Maid Who Almost Ruined the Careers of George Burns and Jack Benny.**

Hope you enjoy it.

### Part Three of long Running Shows

These shows all ran for 20 years or more. The highest rated of the "prestige dramas" was Lux Radio Theater. This show entertained us for 21 years. A radio show calculated to keep you in suspense was Suspense. Suspense, one of my personal favorite's was on the air for 20 years. While Suspense was exciting, One Man's Family lasted 21 years. It highlighted the story of the Barbour family in San Francisco. Listeners knew the family like their own. Amos 'n Andy another favorite of mind went on for 20 years. It was when the "Kingfish" appeared that the show really took off. Jack Benny, I don't really have to tell you about that show. It was also one of the greatest. Fibber McGee and Molly ran 23 years. They had a great run with terrific characterizations. Bing Crosby, I can't say enough about him ranks with the immortals. He crooned his way into your living room or kitchen for 25 years. The Voice of Firestone, not one of my favorites, ranked among the longest at almost 30 years. Gangbusters, on every Saturday Night with the sirens blasting with machine guns in the background was on for 23 years. The longest running radio show, and it was a trivia question that I knew the answer to a couple months ago. It lasted 35 years and developed a style that continues to exist today. Breakfast Club with Don McNeil. Don combined songs and interviews with letters from listeners every week day for almost 3three dozen years. I'm sure if Frank Bork had a radio show, he would have surpassed this record.

Please welcome newest member from Lafayette Colorado, my good friend, Paul Beauregard.

**The German Maid Who Nearly Ruined The Careers of George Burns And Jack Benny:**



It was almost like a scene from a Paramount movie called "The Big Trial of 1938". A lavish dinner party was underway in the Park Avenue apartment given by a Supreme Court justice and his wife. The waves of intrigue started innocently enough but would flow all the way to the sun-kissed mansions of Hollywood and would hit comedians George Burns and Jack Benny like a

tsunami. Indictments for smuggling would result in guilty pleas for George Burns and also face a \$45,000 fine and 18 years in jail.

In the news that year was Hitler's brutal occupation of Czechoslovakia and disturbing reports from German exiles of men and woman shot on the spot, or plucked off the street and tortured than

murdered. As the beautiful and powerful took their seats around Judge Lauer's dinner table the talk turned to Hitler. Words spoken were, "What is this evil fellow doing? Mark my words, an ill wind is blowing and this 'Fuhrer' can not be trusted! Other guests, actors, directors, and studio executives all began criticizing Hitler. At that moment Rosa Weber, the immigrant German maid who was serving them, unable to contain herself cut dramatically into the conversation and said "Ladies and gentlemen, I am a true German. I love Adolf Hitler. He is a good man and a great leader. If you don't stop talking against Hitler I will stop serving the dinner right now. It is up to you." Supreme Court Judge Lauer fired her on the spot. As she left she vowed revenge on all of them. While Justice Lauer and his wife were munching on their morning toast the morning after Rosa Weber was spilling the news to US Customs officers about Lauer's purchase of smuggled jewels. Burns and Benny, who were friends of Lauer had dealt with the buying of some expensive jewelry through friend and con-man Albert M. Chaperau. Federal agents searched the house for suspected jewels that were smuggled in by close friend Albert M. Chaperau. Stars like Sophie



Tucker, Katherine Hepburn and Kenny Baker were questioned. Judge Lauer was arrested and hoping to ease his pressure revealed the names of George Burns and Jack Benny to the agents. Both men had given their wives expensive jewelry custom-free. For two men accustomed to making America laugh till they cried, and sometimes themselves to keep a straight face during their routines, were not laughing now. Both Burns and Benny pleaded guilty. It appeared an outraged maid had doomed their careers. George Burns had to travel by train regularly cross-country to provide testimony was described as being pale, glum, and drawn. Gracie Allen also had to testify. Several months after charges were made everyone learned their fate. In January 1939 George Burns was fined \$8,000 and given a suspended sentence of one year and one day. In February 1939 Jack Benny received a \$10,000 fine but no jail sentence. Elma Lauer, wife of Judge Lauer received 3 months in jail. Despite pleas from her lawyer she was to begin her sentence immediately. She was close to collapse. Lauer resigned as Justice. Rosa Weber's



Jack Benny, radio star, after smuggling indictment.



snitching garnered her, a sum of \$6,714, her share of the reward. Burns according



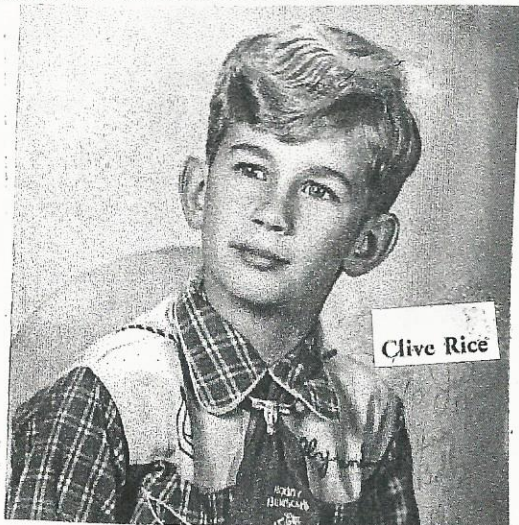
to an article in the Telegraph Herald, he was willing to fall on his sword. George Burns survived this humiliating experience said he had learned a terrible lesson. Burns and Allen put this behind them and rose to higher success in the future. Benny who was tired and worn went to New York after the affair and offered his sponsors to resign, but they would hear nothing of that. Two hundred of Benny's fans jammed the courtroom. Judge Leiball who presided over the case chastised Benny for buying \$2,131 worth of jewelry. The custom charge was \$700 and was a paltry sum for a man of his means. Jack Benny could only relent and took his punishment. To add insult to injury Gracie Allen was accused of being a drug addict often shooting up. This accusation was made by a jailed drug dealer who claimed to have sold drugs to both George Burns and Gracie Allen. It was common knowledge among those who knew Gracie that she had been severely injured in a kerosene fire when she was a young girl, and that mishap led her to a badly scarred arm. She was always aware of that and that was why she wore the long

sleeves. She was self-conscious and hence, the long sleeves. George Burns and Jack Benny were not the only stars convicted, but they were perhaps, the biggest. The cases had absolutely no effect on their careers. The public loved them and thought they had been duped. Their careers were not affected, but when they would appear at the White House, they would be subjected to more security checks and the subject of their smuggling would often be brought up. George Burns and Gracie Allen had a successful radio career and later continued into TV where they enjoyed equal acclaim. After a stellar fifty years in show business Gracie Allen retired in 1958. Sadly she died six years later in 1964 of a heart attack. She was 58. George was heart-broken. As he said, "I'm going to stay in this business until I'm the last one left." Indeed he did. George Burns died in 1996 at the age of 100. AMEN.....



## Part 2 of *Bal-B Riders*;

during the summer. The show logged over 700 episodes before it went off the air in 1936. Halop left the show to join the Broadway cast of "The Dead End Kids in 1935. It would be 13 years before Rice put the show back to life again in 1949. He re-named the ranch the B-Bar-Ranch and had the cast down to five. This included Bobby, Tex, Windy, Harka, and a new character called Irish. Don Knotts, who we all remember as *Deputy Barney Fife*, who was in his mid 20s would play the part of old geezer Windy Wales. Ivan Cury would play the "Cowboy Kid". The show was successful and Mutual alternated it with a west coast show *Straight Arrow*, in the same time every other weekday. Not having a sponsor for the show Rice sent Cury out to several personal appearances, including many of the large department stores who were selling B-Bar-B merchandise. He went to various festivals, fairs, and even The Macy's Day Parade. Rice even wanted to send him overseas, where the show was very popular, but his mother refused. When Cury left to a better job Rice hired his 10 year old nephew Clive Rice for the Benson role. Kraft Foods



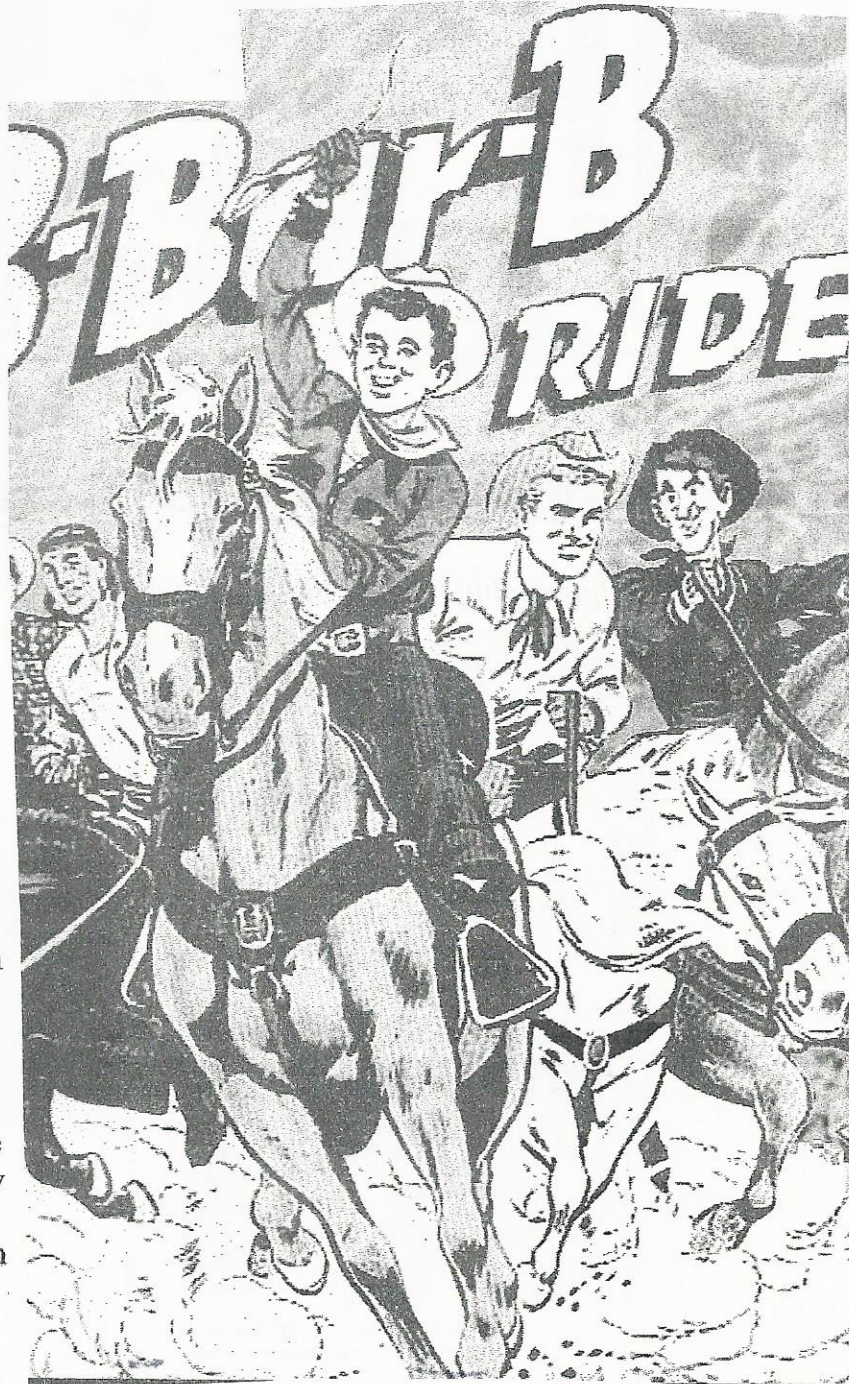
went on to sponsor the show promoting most of their candy products on the



Don Knotts, who went onto great fame in television and film, played the old geezer Windy Wales in the early 1950s.

show. Whenever Rice went on promotional tours Don Knotts would usually accompany him. Don Knotts makes it clear in his biography that he resented being sent on these trips, since they were never paid for their time. He did cover expenses however. In a typical event Clive would sing a couple of songs and Don would tell a few funny tall-tales. The cast and crew liked to tease Knotts about trying to make "Windy Wales" sound like Gabby Hayes. Knotts was only in his mid-twenties trying to sound like an old codger. Knotts recalled in his book, when he was at the microphone rehearsing when Gabby Hayes suddenly burst into the recording studio. He said "Goldern it, you've been doing me on the radio everyday and I'm getting tired of it." Don was sulking and Gabby kept the rampage up and then broke into complete laughter. The whole thing was a set up and completely fooled him. Knotts was relieved. On one occasion when young Rice visited a young boy at Midwestern Hospital, the boy asked if he could hold his revolver. Clive handed him the toy pistol and he gripped it tightly. When Rice left the room a nurse told him that was the first movement the boy showed in several months. In addition to the various

merchandising items of B-Bar-B Ranch there were 20 issues of a Bobby Benson comic book published from 1951 to 1953. Bobby Benson also appeared several times in the hobby magazines of that era. The show finally ended in mid 1955 having broadcast over 350 episodes. When the series ended most of the cast and crew remained in the performing arts. Clive Rice decided to join the U.S. NAVY. Don Knotts was by far the most successful star to come out of the show, not only doing movies, but having a spectacular run on *The Andy Griffith Show*. Bobby Benson provided thousands of fans with adventure and wholesome entertainment. Chief writer for the show, Jim Shean worked on a number of shows including *Grand Central Station*, *Curtain Time*, *Superman*, and *Counterspy* among others, but always ranked *Bobby Benson* as his personal favorite. Shean explained "The B-Bar-B was very special to me, for two reasons. First, was the camaraderie and the professionalism of the cast and crew. The second was family. We all socialized together, playing practical jokes on everyone (most of them on Don Knotts). There was total unity, and if there were ever problems, they were resolved quickly and peacefully. Years later in 1993 Shean spoke with Don Knotts on the phone asking him why he left radio. Don replied "Heck I didn't leave radio: radio left me". This is the only show I believe to have ended and 13 years later have another successful revival. Sad to say I have never listened to one episode of the show. I think I'll consult our library very soon to resolve that situation. Much of the research from this article comes from Jack French's book and Sperdvac's Publication.



**FIRST TIMES  
TONIGHT**



**GANG BUSTERS**

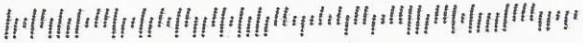
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**WBBM --- 9 P.M.**

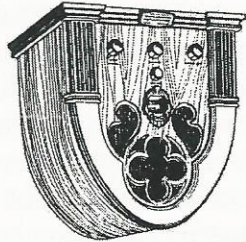
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