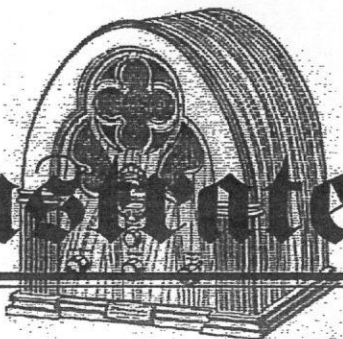


The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

The Illustrated Press



Number 408

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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.

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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!

Happy St. Patrick's, Happy St. Joseph's Day, Happy Spring, And Happy Easter. I'd also like to thank all of our members who attended our spaghetti dinner on the 10th. Although you might not have seen me, I was working in the kitchen keeping busy, and I did manage to see everyone who came in. Thanks again for making the dinner a success. Thanks are in order to Dom Parisi for his Kate Smith article. Thanks to Martin Grams for an interesting and informative article on cowboy singing star Tex Fletcher. Next month Peter Bellanca's article on comic strip character "The Nebbs" will entertain us. Media librarian Peter Bellanca handed out a catalog for radio scripts, if anyone is interested. We will also feature a catalog for books in our library. We have some outstanding reading material available for local members only. It would behoove members to take advantage of our great collection. I, like many people, this year received a kindle "wildfire" for Christmas. I've spent a lot of time watching and listening to the old radio and TV shows. It's amazing how many radio shows made the transition to TV. I am enjoying Amos N Andy, Jack Benny, Our Miss Brooks, The Life of Riley, and many more. Maybe in another month or so I can take my long walks outside. Happy listening to all.

Patty Andrews, Singer With Her Sisters, Is Dead at 94



Patty Andrews 1918-2013

And then there were none. Patty Andrews, last of the Andrew Sisters passed away on January 31st, a couple weeks short of her 95th birthday. I always liked Patty. She was the spunky one and probably the most attractive. I always felt sorry for her when they often matched her up with Lou Costello in the three movies they appeared with them in. I thought she could have done better. Patty, Maxene, and LaVerne were children of immigrant parents, Greek father Peter and Norwegian mother Olga. They were raised in Minnesota, and got their career going young. Patty was 14 when they started performing in public. They were graciously accepted as the girls back home during World War 2. They had an unforgettable blend of harmony. One I haven't heard in many years. I still listen to their songs, and thank them for keeping the spirit alive during the war years. God Bless You Patty. You were the best.

That Chubby Southern Girl
By Dom Parisi



Hello Everybody! Kathryn Elizabeth Smith was born May 1st 1907 in Greenville, Virginia. I'm speaking about "America's Songbird", Kate Smith. As a child Kate loved to sing, and even dance locally in small nightclubs and theaters. She came from a musical family and their talent rubbed off on her. Smith

more or less grew up in front of a spotlight. As a child of eight, World War 1 General Pershing honored Kate with a medal for her work in entertaining troops stationed near Washington D.C. At fifteen she won local talent awards. But, her big dream was to become a Broadway singer. Shortly after finishing school Kate headed for New York. She found work in a Broadway musical, "Honeymoon Lane." It wasn't a great part, but it was a start. "Honeymoon Lane" ran from 1926-1929. Still, Kate felt her role to be less a singer than a buffoon. After the "Honeymoon" run Kate got other parts, in "Hit the Deck," "Hallelujah", and "Flying High." In four years she established herself as a stage comedienne. But, still she was not happy in where her career was going. She was being cast as a goon rather than as a singer. Kate was upset with her producer George White when he would not release her from her role when she wanted to visit her ill father who shortly passed away. Heartbroken Kate told White that she was quitting after her New York run ended. With nowhere else to go she became miserable. And then fate stepped in! Ted Collins, a recording manager for the new Columbia Phonograph Company, visited Smith backstage after seeing her performing in





"Flying High." Collins (who was to become her lifetime manager) talked Kate into making a phonograph record. Collins had a feeling about Kate. He knew talent when he heard her sing. Ted got Smith a gig singing at the Apollo Theater. She soon broke attendance records. He picked up a part for her to sing on a fifteen minute *Amos 'N Andy Show* on NBC. Kate's salary was \$5.00 per program. Ted Collins made the same. In 1931, during the Great Depression, Kate broke into radio. *The Kate Smith Show* with its theme song "When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain" opened in 1931. By October Kate and Ted were receiving monthly paychecks in the four figures (a huge amount during the country's bad times). In the years that followed, Kate Smith became the top radio performer in the country. Kate Smith was indeed a big girl. She was 5'10' tall and weighed 235 pounds. At the age of 30. In her 1938 biography "Living in a Great Big Way" she writes: Ted Collins was the first man who regarded me as a singer, and didn't seem to te noted, notice that I was a big girl. Kate noted ;"I'm big and I sing, and boy when I sing, I sing all over" Kate Smith was a big star of radio. She began with a twice a week NBC show *Kate Smith Sings*. The show quickly went to six broadcasts a week. On CBS there

was *Kate Smith and her Swanee Music* (1931-33), *Kate Smith Matinee* (1934-35) *Kate Smith New Star Revue* (1934-35) *Kate Smith Coffee Time* (1935-36), and *Kate Smith A&P Bandwagon* (1936-37). Some of these shows are strange to me. I don't know if any are in circulation. Kate's *Kate Smith Hour* was a popular radio variety show. It offered comedy, drama, and music with top guests of film, and theater. The show lasted eight years (1937-45). Abbott and Costello and Henny Youngman introduced their comedy to a nation wide audience. Miss Smith never married. She rented apartments in New York City during her long career. She had a home in Arlington Virginia and a summer home in Lake Placid New York. Kate led an active social life and enjoyed having guests. In later years, her conservative dark gowns were replaced by bright sequined dress ware worthy of the supremes (and, slimmed down, she wore them just as well). Kate was one of the few long careered singers to try rock music. She appeared on TV variety shows including *Sonny & Cher*, *Donny and Marie Osmond*, and *Tony Orlando & Dawn*. Miss Smith enjoyed some of her recording success in her later years with a collection of outstanding albums on the RCA Victor label. She was a



loving legend in her time. Kate loved to cook and even wrote best selling cookbooks (I didn't know that). Suffering from diabetes and weight problems in her later years she had to use a wheel chair to get around. She died in Raleigh, North Carolina on June 17th 1986. She was 79, but it doesn't end here. For over a year after her death her body was stored in a vault at Saint Agnes Cemetery in Lake Placid while Saint Agnes officials and her executors disputed the meaning of a clause in her will. To quote: The clause expressed Miss Smith's desire to be interred in the Saint Agnes graveyard in a mausoleum sufficient to contain my remains alone. This request was made because Kate Smith feared being buried in the ground. The church despite earlier requests by other parishioners, had previously forbidden any above ground crypts and large headstones in the small 11 acre cemetery. A special committee convened to resolve the dispute made an exception for the singer, with an above ground sarcophagus-style tomb. Of course Smith left \$25,000 to the church and half of the residuals of her estate. What say you? -Money talks? Kate Smith was posthumously inducted into the Radio Hall of fame in 1999. On July 21st 2011, Smith's version of "God Bless America" was played as NASA's final wake up call for the space shuttle Atlantis, capping the 30 year program. We can all sit down now. It's all over. The "fat lady" has sung her song. This then is a short tribute to Miss Kate Smith, a true Southern Belle, and a lovely lady. Thanks for listening, "God Bless America....."

Info credit: The internet.

Tid-bits - Kate Smith

1. Made more than 15,000 radio broadcasts.
1. Received more than 25 million fan letters.
2. World War II war bond drive - sold 107 million dollars worth during an 18 hr CBS stint. Her total for a series of marathon broadcasts - over 600 million dollars.
3. FDR introduced her to King George VI of England, saying, "This is Kate Smith. Miss Smith is America."
4. On November 11, 1938 radio program-God Bless America was introduced.
5. Kate Smith has exclusive rights to perform "God Bless America" in public. She relinquished that right when it became apparent that the song had achieved significance beyond that of just another new pop tune.
6. Mr. Berlin and Kate Smith waived all royalties from performances of "God Bless America." Royalties continue to be turned over to Boy/Girl Scouts of America.
7. Kate Smith's right leg was amputated in January 1967 due to circulatory problems associated with her diabetes.
8. Made over 2,000 recordings - 19 sold over a million copies.
9. Her final radio program -Mutual in 1958.
10. October 26th 1982, President Ronald Reagan presented her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom-America's highest civilian honor.
11. Origin/History of "God Bless America"- It was written during

12. World War 1 for an army camp show where Berlin was stationed, on Camp Yaphank on Long Island, New York. The show's producers' rejected it as too "jingoistic". Berlin placed the song in a trunk of rejected manuscripts. 20 years later, Kate Smith's manager Ted Collins asked Berlin to write a patriotic song for her to mark the 20th anniversary of the Armistice that ended with World War 1. After several attempts to write a new song, Berlin remembered the one he put away in the trunk-The rest is history.



Tex Fletcher, The Singing Cowboy by Martin Grams Jr.



WOR Publicity Photo

While he may not have received the honor of gracing a U.S. postage stamp like Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, William S. Hart and Tom Mix, Tex Fletcher deserves recognition for his efforts to entertain theater and radio audiences. There are hundreds of screen cowboy stars that never became iconic simply because the movie studios never gave them the opportunity. For Fletcher, that opportunity came in late 1938 when the Arcadia Pictures Corporation approached the singing cowboy about the potential of doing his own series of cowboy movies – six to be exact. Released through Grand National Pictures, the advertisements hailed “Radio’s Number One Singer of Western Songs is Now The Screen’s Latest Gun-Throwin, Fist-Slingin’ Star!” The movie was *Six-Gun Rhythm* and was designed to capitalize on the growing popularity of the WOR radio personality. *Six-Gun Rhythm* was released theatrically in the summer of 1939

(some theaters offered the movie as early as May) and was often paired up with Republic Pictures’ cliffhanger serial chapter plays such as *Dick Tracy Returns*, which is a bit of a rarity at that time because it wasn’t often that studios were offering two films in one showing, from separate studios. In the movie, Fletcher plays the role of a professional football player who deserts his post and returns to his Texas home, after learning that his father was murdered. After a few encounters with outlaws whom the law can not seem to control, Fletcher temporarily substitutes his guitar for a six-shooter and rounds the baddies up. Fletcher’s opportunity was short-lived. Weeks after the movie’s release, Grand National filed bankruptcy and Fletcher’s screen career was pre-maturely cut. The singing cowboy did what any enterprising young man would do: he snatched up a couple prints of the movie and went on a personal tour across the country in his car. Screening the movie, performing on stage and signing autographs for fans, he made nice living during his brief tour, before making a comeback to the radio. I guess this is a great time to point out that there are generally two kinds of cowboy westerns. Those like *Six-Gun Rhythm* feature contemporary American settings, utilizing Old West themes and motifs. For the most part, they still take place in the American West and reveal the progression of the Old West into the 20th Century. The other type of western is



that which takes place during the latter part of the 19th Century, often revealing ranchers and farmers trying to settle down in a desolate and hard life, also set in American Old West. Depending on which press release you read (and many of them were pure hokum) Fletcher was born Geremino "Jerry" Bisceglia in Harrison, New York, who worked as a ranch hand and devoted much of his time playing the guitar. Known as a left-handed cowboy, his singing career did not go unnoticed. Fletcher made the transition from stage to radio in the summer of 1930, as a member of the Rex Cole Mountaineers who performed over WMCA in New York City in 1932. After checking this venue for a brief spell, it was discovered that Fletcher was not only in the band, but additional (and exact) dates for other radio broadcasts, pin-pointing his possible appearance as early as 1930. The following are confirmed radio broadcasts of the Rex Cole Mountaineers.



July 29th, 1930 to December 4, 1931, NBC, Monday through Friday, 5:45 to 6:05 pm. (occasionally broadcasts on Saturday).

December 7, 1931 to June 17, 1932, NBC Monday through Friday, 6:30 to 6:45pm (occasionally broadcast on Saturday)

It should also be noted, according to Tex Fletcher's son George, that Tex Fletcher may have been a member of Tom Emerson's Mountaineers, based on photos in his private collection. So if the above is incorrect, referring to the Rex Cole Mountaineers, then the info above is subject to correction. Sometime around 1932, hired by station WFAS in White Plains, New York, singing cowboy songs before the microphone. This comes as no surprise when you consider that young children flocked to the screen every weekend to watch Bob Steele, Buck Jones, Hoot Gibson and



stations across the country knew that cowboy songs were popular. Often used as fillers for time slots that could not be sold to local advertisers, Fletcher's time slot bounced back and forth throughout the months he worked at WFAS. One of a few Tex Fletcher Song Books, *The B Western Actors Encyclopedia* by Ted Holland claims Fletcher's singing landed him his own radio program in Yankton, South Dakota, but no date is cited and nothing has been found to verify this statement. This is not to say that Holland is incorrect, just that at present, we're still digging into more information about this at present. In late 1932 or early 1933, Fletcher went solo and made the move to New Jersey and became the "Cowboy Answer Man" over WWOR for a short period. Executives at the Mutual Broadcasting Company, offered Fletcher better prospects, and shortly before the Christmas holiday in 1933, the cowboy began what would become a lucrative and profitable career at WOR, the New York City flagship station for Mutual. In the same manner as White Plains, Fletcher's time slot jumped around and recent findings have unearthed a number of weekly time slots for which Fletcher performed behind the microphone. Tex Fletcher's radio career was abruptly put on hold during World War 2. He was drafted in the U.S. Army and served a number of years before he returned to the radio microphone. It should also be mentioned, courtesy, of my good friend (and baseball aficionado), Ken Stockinger, that there is a strong possibility Tex Fletcher also supplied unscheduled filler for WOR when Brooklyn Dodgers games were temporarily pre-empted due to rain and other factors. All radio broadcasts listed below were broadcast over the Mutual Broadcasting System except for the "Air

Brakes" special, which aired on the National Broadcasting Company. October 20, 1945, 2:00 to 2:45pm
Air-Brakes: Welcome Home Auditions Anniversary.

December 22, 1947, 3:45 to 4:05 pm
Special Christmas Fund Party
For the benefit of hospitalized children:
Broadcast via pre-recorded transcription this special featured such guests as New York Mayor, William O'Dwyer, Robin Morgan, Don Carney, Commissioner Edward Bernecker (Commissioner of Hospitals of New York) and Tex Fletcher.



Left: Private Tex Fletcher of West View-Brookwood, Brooklyn, shown receiving a letter from his thoughtful address in the Camp Creek service club, in a letter he wrote to the local hospital's white hospital citizens with simple very not being a "let" in address. Left to right are Corp. Dave Yelton, Private Don West, Mr. Ralston, Sgt. Glen Taylor, formerly in radio announce in civilian life, Private Tex Fletcher, known to radio, who across the country on the "Lawrence Cowley," Sgt. Carl Harris, and Private Clayton Mowbray, a full-blooded Sioux Indian. Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps.

Newspaper clipping of Private Tex Fletcher.

A series of five minute musical entertainment was broadcasts three or four times a week (Monday through Friday, as fillers between programming sponsored by Ciclets Gum. The format is Tex of Bobby Benson singing a song, then actor, Don Knotts (as Windy Wales) tells a funny tale, followed by Tex singing the last song and then "fade to commercial."

November 11, 1951 to August 1952 4:55 to 5:00pm Songs of the B-Bar-B.
Same as the above, this five-minute musical entertainment was broadcast

once a week on Sunday afternoon, as fillers between scheduled programming. Five episodes dated February 3, March 23, May 25, June 1, and June 22, 1952 exist in recorded form. Note about the two entries above: Herb Rice (owner of the Bobby Benson character and VP of Operations at Mutual at that time) sent Tex Fletcher on the road several times for personal appearances with actors Clive Rice and Don Knotts. Knotts mentioned these personal appearance tours in his autobiography, and it was apparent that he hated them. This included the 1953 and 1954 national championship rodeos in New York's Madison Square Garden.

Possible date: December 14, 1951

Bands for Bonds

Tex Fletcher made an appearance on more than one episode of this radio program syndicated by the treasury Department. The series was heard as late as 1956 over specific stations.

September 22, 1951

Heroes of the West

Documentary series produced by Mutual. This particular episode, the fourth and final episode of the series was titled "Old Timer" and Jim Boles was featured in the title role. Bobby Benson and Tex Fletcher were heard on the program. This series was also syndicated across the country on various stations affiliated with Mutual, so the broadcast dates vary depending on what part of the country you lived in. Six-Gun Rhythm, like hundreds of obscure motion pictures during that decade was the distinction of a strong radio connection. During the opening credits Fletcher sings "Lonesome Cowboy," the trademark song featured prominently on his radio broadcast. I'd also like to take the time to point out something that could later become a small miss-conception. There

was another singer who billed himself as the "Lonesome Cowboy John L. White on the NBC series Death Valley Days, from 1929 to 1936. White underwent a number of pseudonyms including "The Lone Star Cowboy," "The Old Sexton," "Whitey Johns," "Jimmie Price," and "Frank Ranger." If you come across information about "The Lonesome Cowboy," please make sure you clarify which singer is specifically being referenced.



Tex Fletcher serenades actress Joan Barclay.

In the late fifties or early sixties, a radio program of the same name was produced in South Africa. At 32 different episodes are circulating in collector hands.

Whether these were adaptations of the American scripts or new productions of a series that by coincidence has the same title, remains to be seen. But these recordings are not to be confused with the American broadcasts of the same name.

The Old Time Radio Club

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