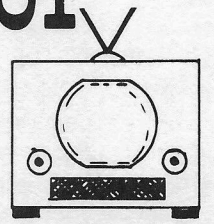
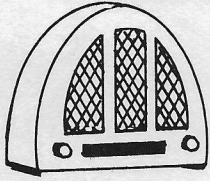


# The Golden Years of RADIO & TV



**IN THIS ISSUE:**

Ozzie and Harriet

Morton Downey & the Pickens Sisters

Ellery Queen on the Small Screen  
and more.



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**WELCOME TO The Golden Years of Radio and TV**, a magazine devoted to those great years of Radio & TV we all so fondly remember.

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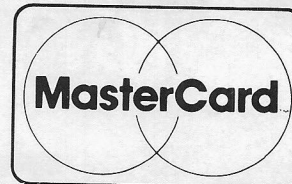
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## Collector's Comments from Joe Webb

Don't despair! You are reading the correct magazine! (And CC/NRT is not dead!)

We were offered the chance of a lifetime—to produce a magazine with one of nostalgia's best publishers and everything to gain from it for everyone.

GYRT/CC-NRT (ohmygosh) will continue to have the usual banter on OTR we've been popular for—and a lot more articles, photos, logs, etc. And to top it off, we'll be on time!!

As I am writing this, it's 7 weeks before the convention, 2 weeks before we close on our house, 3 weeks before we move in. I also start teaching again in two weeks. Then I go to Philadelphia for a trade show. What a mess!

I received an interesting letter from Bobb Lynes, president of SPERDVAC. Next issue we'll print it with my reply, and hopefully my response. In effect he says SPERDVAC is not anti-hobby. I disagree, as noted in my comments in CC/NRT 32 as well as SPERDVAC's history of attempting to use scare tactics against collectors who trade some shows in the archives library. Again, my feelings are to suggest the positive approach, not a negative one—if SPERDVAC wants to put dealers out of business, let them make themselves known to all prospective collectors and show them how easy it is to get good sounding programs at low cost. Instead, all the restrictions only serve to discourage fans and keep a fan's outlook grim. (Note: How many collectors know that about half of the archives holdings are not covered by any restriction agreements, though the catalog makes it sound as if they are?) More next issue.

My other comments have to do with what our hobby really is—the practice of trading and enjoying radio programs. I personally get greater pleasure from the act of trading them than the act of listening. Usually, when I am offered restricted programs, my first question is “when can I trade them?” If the answer is next year, I'll ask that the tapes not be sent until that time. If the answer is “never,” unless it's a SHADOW, CASEY, or another absolute favorite, I'll turn it down. After all, what's the use of having a show you can't enjoy by sharing it with a friend?

Now another opinion sure to raise some eyebrows. What's the big deal always made over ILAM? I've listened to many as well as the other Morse shows. It is obvious to me that Carleton wrote the scripts in one sitting at the typewriter as a kind of “stream of consciousness.” This characteristic reveals itself

when shows are heard in one or two sittings with openings and closing cut. I imagine when the shows were originally broadcast in 15 minute daily (or whatever) spurts this flaw was not as detectable. It seems that the fans who are so determined to acquire the ILAM run are the nostalgic ones who remember the original broadcasts. But for one who wasn't around at that time, I have to say to new collectors to “skip it.” Obtain these shows only for trading to nostalgic fans.

One thing we could use here is an article on radio's silver age: 1940 to 1958 or so. This is the era where radio technology had reached its peak, scripts were generally very good to excellent, and radio acting reached its highest point as an art. The only problem was that no one was really listening—they were starting to watch the tube. Take note of the outstanding shows of this time: JOHNNY DOLLAR, GUNSMOKE, FORT LARAMIE, NIGHTBEAT, TALES OF TOMORROW, DIMENSION X, X MINUS ONE, RICHARD DIAMOND, ESCAPE, DRAGNET, PHILIP MARLOWE, CRIME CLASSICS, FRONTIER GENTLEMAN, SCREEN DIRECTOR'S PLAYHOUSE, TARZAN (½ hour), CBS RADIO WORKSHOP, and lots more. It was truly an outstanding time for radio, but no one really remembers it. The Golden Age (1938-1948) is the time held more dear—since it was during that period radio had only the movies with which to contend.

Another examination I'd like to see (as I hope to inspire another writer) is the effects on SUSPENSE of each director/producer. My favorite shows are the ones done by Anton M. Leader (who also directed MURDER AT MIDNIGHT among others).

Although many “purists” may criticize this, I have a suggestion for reducing cassette clutter in your car (where many of us do our listening). Record double-track onto cassette and turn off one speaker on the first pass, and other the second time around. A C120 holds an entire 1200' reel. A C90 holds a side of an 1800' reel requiring turning over the cassette. Crosstalk is very minimal with proper patch cord shielding.

We've received permission to reprint articles from **Stand By...On the Air** originally published in 1968 by Bob Vito, making it OTR's oldest publication (as far as I know). Articles will be appearing at various times. We're attempting to get permission to do the same for other now “extinct” publications.

That's it for now. See you at the convention. And be sure to write:

Joe Webb  
P.O. Box 268  
Glen Cove, NY 11542



The Nelsons are very excited at the prospect of taking a trip to Europe, which they did in the summer of 1954. (Courtesy of Rob Word.)

# The Adventures of OZZIE AND HARRIET

by Richard B. Smith III

Millions of Americans from 1944 through 1966--first by listening to radio and later watching television--had the special privilege of tuning in weekly to THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET, starring ex-bandleader Ozzie Nelson and his wife, actress-vocalist Harriet Hilliard. Their sons David and Ricky joined the radio series in 1949 replacing young juveniles who portrayed the two boys for the first four-and-a-half years whereupon the Nelsons provided some of the most enjoyable and light-hearted entertainment ever contained for a situation comedy.

Such natural and easy-going style as presented by Ozzie, Harriet, David, and Ricky over this long period, in addition to fine support from an endless number of talented character players, became a consistent guarantee because of the unyielding, dedicated professionalism of Ozzie Nelson. He insisted from the outset of the Nelson broadcasts that scripts for each episode be of the highest quality. That meant bringing together a team of experienced writers whose ideas on paper were molded into one master script for final editing and rewriting by Nelson himself. The end results were numerous episodes for over 10 years on radio (the last couple broadcast seasons done simultaneously with television) and 435 TV shows in 14 years. An unbeatable record in itself!

Actually, the true-life adventures of Ozzie and Harriet started almost 13 years before their own radio show on New Year's Eve 1931. On this last night with 1932 only hours away, Ozzie Nelson and his orchestra were engaged to play for dancing and also to accompany the floor show in the Edison Hotel's Grand Ballroom die the Hollywood Restaurant, an elegant nightclub. Young Nelson, a native of Jersey City, New Jersey, had been an experienced musician since 1921, when, at 14 years of age, he and a friend were paid \$5 each to play for the local Woman's Club dance in Ridgefield Park, their first professional engagement.

Interspersed within that decade of the 1920s for Ozzie while finely honing those musical talents, no doubt inspired by the fact that George and Ethel Nelson, his parents, were minstrel entertainers whom he accompanied on various stints throughout New Jersey, was the

excitement of becoming an Eagle Scout just before his 14th birthday, being selected as one of 300 Boy Scouts to represent its International Convention in Europe, and playing varsity football at Ridgefield Park High School. Then, Nelson's fondness for sports was broadened even more at Rutgers between 1923 and 1927 where he not only engaged in football but boxing and diving as well, the latter being of short duration when glaring lights indoors at an initial meet against Syracuse University caused personal injury during Ozzie's performance of a half-gainer.

Following graduation from Rutgers in 1927, Ozzie entered New York Law School. Still not knowing whether he would enthusiastically pursue the legal profession even by his senior year, Ozzie's love of music, meanwhile, was growing more stronger as he supplemented earnings playing and singing nightly with a small dance orchestra at a tavern in City Island, New York. He postponed a law career in 1930, and opted to continue his firm foothold as an orchestra leader.

More and more, Nelson patterned his banjo-saxophone playing and vocal abilities after crooner Rudy Vallee, and, in 1930, became associated at New York City's radio station WMCA with "Roemer's Homers", featuring a dance band and orchestra leader, both of whom he replaced. Milton Roemer, president of Roemer's Furniture Company, was a promotional gambler whose publicity tactics paid big dividends for Ozzie and his musical group, the first name band ever to play at the famous Glen Island Casino, broadcasting over WMCA from coast to coast on the CBS network.

During the December 31, 1931, engagement, master of ceremonies Nils T. Granlund was replaced by a beautiful young girl who did a specialty dance and introduced the various numbers. Ozzie was immediately struck by this vivacious lady from the Midwest. Little did Nelson know that within a few months Harriet Hilliard would become a permanent singer with his musical group and marry him less than four years later.

Harriet, a native of Des Moines, Iowa, was also, like Ozzie, born to theatrical parents. Her father was Roy E. Hilliard, a well-known dramatic stock actor and director who guided the stage careers of Clark Gable, Warner Baxter, Ralph Bellamy, Lyle Talbot, Milburn



Fourteen-year old David Nelson and brother Ricky, 11, pose in this publicity shot for **HERE COME THE NELSONS** (1952, Universal). (Courtesy of Jerry Ohlinger's Movie Material Store.)

Stone, Jack Bailey, and many others. Harriet's mother Hazel McNutt had begun a show-business career at age 14, and starred in musical and dramatic stock companies for over 30 years.

The future Mrs. Ozzie Nelson made her first stage appearance at the tender age of six weeks. Later, Harriet attended St. Agnes Academy in Kansas City and at 15, she studied ballet in New York. Her first Broadway role was the title role in **The Blonde Sinner**. Then came a series of tours with RKO units which played the top "two-a-day" vaudeville theaters coast to coast.

Originally booked into the Hollywood Restaurant for a limited engagement as a specialty dancer, Harriet soon found herself singing, working in sketches, acting as "mistress of ceremonies", and according to her "doing everything but sweeping out the joint."

Ozzie wanted to add a girl vocalist in early 1932 to the band not only to sing solos but to work with him singing boy-girl duets in musical comedy style. One night after Nelson and the musicians returned to New York from playing in Miami, he watched Harriet dancing a **Tea for Two** routine at the Hollywood Restaurant. It took Ozzie about 30 seconds to decide Harriet Hilliard was going to be his songbird.

While as the glamour associated with having a popular, big-name band from 1933 through 1940 was definitely a plus for him, Ozzie remembers the routine, exasperating difficulties of collecting money due them various engagements during one-night stands while on tour.

Even big establishments reneged in paying on time. One example occurred for the Nelsons while performing a long engagement from fall 1932 through December 31 at the Hotel Paramount Grill near Broadway where they backed up Sophie Tucker who headlined a floor show featuring chorus girls and show girls. While Nelson emceed, his band played for the dancing, and did two radio broadcasts per night as Harriet sang and danced. Yes, they finally obtained what was owed them when Ozzie's brother Al stood by the cash register and grabbed the money when it came in.

Sometimes Ozzie, Harriet, and the boys in the band would have too much money on them. Their routine in the 1930s was to play an engagement from 8:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. the next morning, then drive to the next town for a bite to eat and check into a hotel at daylight. By the time they'd awaken in the middle of the day, the banks would be closed to prevent such cash deposits; however, Ozzie stayed wide-eyed one night for a bank to open after he had almost lost \$10,000 in cash carried in a

money bag, humorously dubbed "the Nanny-goat". This near financial disaster was prevented when one of the trumpet players retrieved the valuable purse at a little bean wagon in Indianapolis inadvertently left by Ozzie and Harriet who had stopped there earlier to eat.

Nelson's next radio series was **THE BAKER'S** broadcast in 1933 which starred comedian Joe Penner, replaced two seasons later by Robert "Believe It or Not" Ripley. Ozzie stayed with this radio program into 1937.

One nasty experience occurred after they had played a single-nighter in a small city in upstate New York. The promoters were two small-time hoodlums who refused to pay the band \$1200 in percentage money due them after Ozzie had argued for two hours. When Nelson threatened to put them on the blacklist with a phone call to New York, the gangsters thought the bandleader meant the Mafia not knowing he was actually referring to the Musician's Union.

After some mumbling between them, the hoods reluctantly paid Ozzie in cash over the bar while more sinister characters were watching. From here on, it became like a scene straight from a B-melodrama. While Harriet and a booking agency representative had pulled his car around back of the building, Ozzie nonchalantly backed up to the door and jumped into the car, racing it out of town as fast as possible. Driving full speed for several miles, Nelson turned off the highway onto a dirt road, and parked in a cornfield waiting until daylight before traveling to Buffalo.

Ozzie and Harriet were married at his mother's apartment in Hackensack, New Jersey, on October 8, 1935, in a ceremony performed by the Rev. William Russell, rector of the First Episcopal Church in West Englewood. Around the time of their wedding, Harriet had signed a \$1500-a-week contract with RKO Radio Pictures only after being urged to do so by Ozzie. Harriet was reluctant at such an arrangement because it would mean being separated from her husband the first couple of months.

Harriet couldn't have made a more appropriate film debut at RKO. It was a blockbuster musical entitled **FOLLOW THE FLEET** (1936) starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers whose previous dancing-and-singing entries since 1933 were ringing up record box-office cash and profits for the studio. Hers was a warm and sympathetic role that included two fine torch songs--**Here I Am, But Where Are You?** and **Get Thee Behind Me, Satan**. The performance brought rave reviews from the New York press.

The years 1935 through 1940 were transitional ones for the Nelson band which was



Ozzie Nelson and Kris Harmon, who married Rick in 1963. (Courtesy of Rob Word.)



considered more established by playing good music for numerous ballroom dates and proms up and down the East Coast. Yet, it was being challenged by outstanding groups under the leadership of Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Artie Shaw, Count Basie, and Glenn Miller who had their own unique styles. Ozzie considered his music more of a commercial variety.

In spite of much traveling, Harriet was a real trouper in 1936 when she and Ozzie were expecting their first child. On October 24 of that year, she gave birth to David Ozzie Nelson. Then, Harriet returned in early 1937 to RKO for two more films--**NEW FACES OF 1937** and **LIFE OF THE PARTY**.

Because of their constant separation, John Reber, who was in charge of radio for the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency, arranged for Ozzie and Harriet to broadcast the 1937-38 season in Hollywood with the show's new star being syndicated cartoonist Feg Murray. The format evolved around the artist's popular newspaper feature, "Seeing Stars". Meanwhile, Ozzie's band was limited to performing for three big hotels in Los Angeles, but he, Harriet, and little David were comfortably settled in the rented Toluca Lake home of actor Charles Farrell.

Such a good life ended in 1938 when the radio show was cancelled, compelling the now well-established Nelsons to hit the road again playing vaudeville theaters, ballrooms, hotels, and nightclubs. Ozzie and Harriet had begun selecting their own vaudeville acts in conjunction with the band's musical arrangements when playing across the country.

1941 found the Nelsons moving west for good this time. There was a new addition to the family--Eric Hilliard "Ricky" Nelson, born May 8, 1940. After completing two hotel engagements in San Francisco, one of which included a ballroom comedy act provided by dancers Paul and Grace Hartman, Ozzie and Harriet signed to do a new radio show with film comedian Red Skelton. This would begin a whole new phase in their careers. The first NBC broadcast aired October 7, 1941, and it proved to be an instant hit enabling the Nelsons to move into what would be their permanent Los Angeles residence.

Ozzie and Harriet's format on Red's weekly shows for the next few years including a bantering of jokes with the comedic genius plus playing numerous parts. Harriet originated many of the female characters like Daisy June, Calamity Jane, and Junior's mother, all of which would play a big part in Skelton's future television shows (1951-1971). A few more movie appearances for both Nelsons in 1941-43 came

in addition to their vaudeville stints, which they ended by permanently leaving the band in 1944. That spring, Red Skelton was drafted into the Army so Ozzie decided this very well should be the time for him and Harriet to launch their own broadcast show.

With encouragement from John Guedel, producer of Red's show, who would later create **YOU BET YOUR LIFE** with Groucho Marx and Art Linkletter's **HOUSE PARTY** and **PEOPLE ARE FUNNY**, Ozzie decided the theme should focus on the two Nelsons inheriting a drugstore from one of their distant relatives. But after the audition record was made at NBC studios and sold to future sponsor International Silver, Nelson abandoned the original idea in favor of having the show focus on at-home family situations.

The Nelsons probably wouldn't have wanted a better wedding anniversary gift on October 8, 1944, which marked the official debut of their very own weekly radio network show on CBS. No doubt they were thrilled when announcer Jack Bailey uttered those first words: "From Hollywood--International Silver Company presents **THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET**. Starring young America's favorite couple--Ozzie Nelson and Harriet Hilliard!"

Singing was avoided on the opening program to establish the fact that they weren't doing a musical variety show but rather a situation comedy. One or two songs, however, were rendered on succeeding broadcasts when Ozzie and Harriet felt they could be integrated smoothly into the framework of the show.

Good support on the initial shows from character actress Bea Benadaret, who portrayed housemaid Gloria and domineering Mrs. Waddington, and Dink Trout (Roger Waddington) became too exaggerated, and both had to be replaced by more believable players. Often, Ozzie and Harriet's neighbors' names in real life became same-name characters on the radio show. In October 1945, the King Sisters were added to provide a musical interlude between acts while young actor Tommy Bernard replaced Joel Davis as David, and juvenile Henry Blair was introduced as Ricky.

The task of completing those demanding radio scripts each week occurred at the Nelson home on Monday evenings which usually involved Ozzie and five other writers. The meetings started at 8:30 p.m. and ended by 2 or 3 a.m. with an ice cream break in between. Even though there were spirited discussions among the group, the best parts of each script submitted the following week were then blended by Ozzie into a master which was previewed before a live audience and put on discs. Next, he would take them home for use



Ozzie Nelson doesn't seem to be responding to the pep talk given him by Lillian Bronson in this amusing scene from **HERE COME THE NELSONS** (1952, Universal). (Courtesy of Jerry Ohlinger's Movie Material Store.)

as a guide for final editing and rewriting.

Countering the notion possibly that on-air sitcoms like **THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET** in the 1940s projected an image of very little substance, J. Fred MacDonald, professor of history at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, authored a 1979 book **Don't Touch That Dial**, which provides some excellent insight on their actual achievements. MacDonald states: "Radio situation comedies were middle-class morality tales. The American family was portrayed as a vital institution in which love, trust, and self-confidence were best developed. Altercations resulted from misunderstanding or lack of trust; disruptions in social harmony were short-lived and trivial; personal weaknesses were the signs of tolerant characters; and love and respect permeated the narrative..."

"...When Ozzie Nelson was not on speaking terms with his next door neighbor, it was because of an insignificant misunderstanding that would be happily resolved before the

program ended.

"In this manner, sitcoms provided social lessons. They instructed audiences in the value of friendliness, honesty, respect, tolerance, and other salient attitudes of a middle-class society. These secular parables proffered models which cleverly combined comedy and social message, an act of camouflage that made the sermonizing more palatable. In the process, they became powerful communicators of the values necessary for the well-being of a civilization of competitive, success-oriented citizens seeking still to maximize harmony and eliminate dissension," concludes MacDonald.

While **THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET** was in full gear, Nelson made guest appearances himself between 1945 and 1948 on radio shows with Harriet of other celebrities like Jack Benny, Eddie Cantor, Fred Allen, Frank Sinatra, Ken Murray, Al Jolson, Art Linkletter, Charles Laughton, and Bing Crosby.

By the end of 1948, David was 12 and Ricky eight years old. Both boys had heard that



Policeman Paul Brinegar hurriedly jots down details from David, Harriet, and Ozzie Nelson who report Ricky's abduction by rodeo stickup artists in **HERE COME THE NELSONS** (1952, Universal). (Courtesy of Jerry Ohlinger's Movie Material Store.)

young Lindsay Crosby, Bing's son, was to make a guest appearance, too, with his father on one of Ozzie's future broadcasts. Arrangements had been finalized according to Crosby's requests concerning Lindsay's role, but Ozzie and Harriet were reluctant about including David and Ricky who were urging their parents for the chance to appear on the same show. The Nelsons compromised by allowing them to do the preview presentation but not the actual broadcast. Within two or three minutes, the boys were saying their dialogue like seasoned veterans. That happened in December 1948 by which time the show had shifted to NBC.

After final discussion with David and Ricky over the hard work and responsibilities involved, the Nelsons enabled the sons to make their formal on-air debut February 20, 1949. Now, the billboard read "THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET, starring the entire Nelson family: Ozzie, Harriet, David, and Ricky." The addition of their own sons to the

weekly broadcasts was a decision the Nelsons would never regret. Both David and Ricky had instinctive comedy timing, and were being asked more and more for advice on scripts when it involved their dialogue at that age level.

Ozzie had an amicable departure with their sponsor International Silver at conclusion of the 1948-49 season, then signed a 10-year, non-cancellable contract with ABC on July 14, 1949, which gave him complete artistic control on the radio show, and an option of putting the Nelsons on television after the second year.

In 1951, Universal producer Aaron Rosenberg had expressed interest in doing a feature film based on the Nelson broadcasts, so a deal was arranged which resulted in a screenplay written by Ozzie, brother Don Nelson, and Bill Davenport entitled **HERE COME THE NELSONS**. It was filmed in August 1951, and released in February 1952. The movie marked the only time Ozzie had an identifiable working position as an advertising executive who labors feverishly



This is the Nelson home as it looks today which was sold by Harriet to a doctor who refers to "Ozzie's den" and "the boys' room". (Courtesy of Rob Word.)

to originate a sales pitch for his boss' new client, a manufacturer of corsets and girdles. (Ozzie never designated specifically what job he did in either the radio or television series because he said people were able to identify with him more readily.) From the standpoint of the Nelsons, this feature demonstrated to them that their type of comedy projected just as well on the screen as it did on radio. The transition to television would not be that difficult.

October 3, 1952, marked the first telecast of **THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET** which began filming the previous August at General Service Studios, located at Las Palmas near Santa Monica Boulevard in Hollywood. It was, indeed, a busy first season since the radio series was still in progress, too. On the TV show to minimize production costs, Ozzie functioned as producer, director, story editor, and head writer, while Harriet supervised David and Ricky's wardrobe, and was responsible for most of the original set decorating.

The set built on Stage 5 at General Service was an exact replica of the front of the Nelson

home, sometimes actually photographed in the longer shot, but the interior, although similar in general layout and furnishings, was quite different from theirs. ABC had engaged Volcano Productions to produce the show. (Their television address was 822 Sycamore Road, Hillside.)

While happy that the television broadcasts were underway, Ozzie decided to make a drastic change in lensing of the show when their original cameraman left. In the early 1950s, shows similar to **THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET** were lensed via "flat" photography which required filming with the backgrounds brightly lighted to afford little contrast and to minimize any shadows or dark areas. He decided to go with the talents of Academy Award-winning cinematographer William Mellor who was lured away from MGM with a substantial raise in salary. Nelson wanted to go ahead with normal-contrast lighting, and reasoned along with Mellor that sooner or later equipment would be developed to handle it. But that was not to be--at least



A smiling Buddy Ebsen joins Harriet and David Nelson during a break in filming of the television drama, SMASH UP ON INTERSTATE 5 (Filmways, 1981). (Courtesy of Rob Word.)

for a while.

Ozzie was frustrated that each filmed show, which looked like a beautiful motion picture, appeared so different on the telecast. At the television studio and at the transmitter, there would be an individual following instructions to keep the contrast within a certain range, so it was not unusual for either person to maneuver the control knobs to bring up a dark area in the corner of the room--oblivious to the fact that players' faces had been wiped out. Nelson, with extra help, managed a scheme to keep technicians' hands away from both sets of knobs, at least for the Los Angeles viewers of *THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET*.

David graduated from Hollywood High School in 1954 and the following fall, he enrolled at the University of Southern California while Ricky was becoming quite adept at winning a number of tennis tournaments. Such changes in their sons' activities made it more difficult for the Nelsons to create a normal shooting schedule for the television show.

The telecasts were mellow, and contained no

frenetic sight gags, or clever humor. *THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET* was a precursor to successors like *MY THREE SONS* and *THE BRADY BUNCH*. Nothing serious ever went on. It followed the TV formula of confused situations. Family battles were never evident--just gentle misunderstandings. The Nelsons' problems always focused on the most trivial elements of family life: perhaps there was a mix-up in having a chair delivered; perhaps the kids were trying to raise money for the fraternity house swimming pool.

Gradually in the mid-1950s, Ozzie began focusing a number of the TV shows around David and Rick's activities. In order to maintain a natural quality to these particular telecasts, Nelson used young people instead of professional actors to portray the boys' friends, one of them being Skip Young who had appeared in a play staged at Knott's Berry Farm. Young, if you remember, had the role of jovial Wally Plumstead for 10 years and loved to eat.

One episode involved David taking up



David Nelson walks to the front to admit Don DeFore during taping of AN OZZIE AND HARRIET CHRISTMAS special. (Courtesy of Rob Word.)

motorcycle racing. He did much of the stunting, even replacing his inept double for an uphill race and being thrown off the vehicle.

Ozzie did his share of pratfalls, too. A couple of them turned into unintentional hair-raisers. One scene in the yard called for him to be playing baseball with the boys. He was to jump up and catch the ball, then land on a chaise lounge being bounced up in the air to fly out of camera range. Having the necessary harness with wire attached to his clothing, Ozzie's stunt literally went haywire when some prop men, pulling the rope for the first time, made him soar not 10 feet but 40 feet high into the studio rafters. Needless to say, Nelson's heart really did a few extra beats that time.

By 1956, Don DeFore, who was next-door neighbor Thorny since 1952, left the series to devote full-time to motion pictures. Then, acting veterans Lyle Talbot and Mary Jane Croft came aboard as Joe and Clara Randolph.

Some sponsors who came after Hotpoint and Listerine were creating mild-mannered problems

starting in 1956. When Eastman Kodak came on as a sponsor, Ozzie reported that a representative of its advertising agency would hang around the set with a bunch of cameras to place on the necks of cast members at picnics and parties; however, Nelson was adamant against wearing a Kodak while mowing the lawn. Several seasons later, Ozzie had to convince the Aunt Jemima people that the family didn't eat pancakes for dinner, and the Coca-Cola people that their soft drink wasn't consumed at breakfast.

The evening of April 10, 1957, was a very special evening for all the Nelsons--especially for Ricky since that particular show was titled "Ricky the Drummer". The youngest Nelson had always been interested in music since he was a small boy starting with symphony music, Dixieland, progressive jazz, rhythm and blues, country and western, and finally rock 'n' roll. First having a closed mind about all the twanging guitars, thumping drums, and undistinguishable grunts emanating from Ricky's room via Carl Perkins, Bill Haley and



Having a general discussion about past memories of being featured on THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET during its 1952-66 run on ABC-TV are Lyle Talbot, Don DeFore, Parley Baer, David and Harriet Nelson, Jim Stacy, Mary Jane Croft and Kent McCord. (Courtesy of Rob Word.)

His Comets, and Elvis Presley, Ozzie reversed such a decision and listened to the music--and liked it.

Soon, Ricky asked his father to render a song on one of the shows, because of a "special reason". The special reason, unrevealed for several years afterwards to the Nelsons, had to do with a girl he occasionally dated at the time. When Ozzie consented, the Music Corporation of America, who represented the Nelsons, contacted all the leading record companies to let them hear Rick's soundtrack of Fats Domino's popular hit *I'm Walkin'* a few weeks before "Ricky the Drummer" aired. The song was released on the Verve label, and soared to the top of the charts within a few weeks. Rick then signed a no-option contract for five years with Imperial Records. His new career was on its way. (After a quarter century of cutting records--a number of which have earned him Gold Records--and making untold numbers of personal appearances, Rick Nelson

is still going very strong today as a popular music singer.)

On June 5, 1957, Ozzie returned to his alma Rutgers where he was conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. The closing paragraph of the citation read: "One of the most famous families in America, you and Harriet--and David and Ricky--have won the affection of millions and have brought to television entertainment rare standards of good taste and high quality. Neither time nor custom have staled your infinite variety."

Not to be outdone by Rick when it came to story ideas for the telecasts, David approached Ozzie who agreed to film such episodes as "David Has a Date With Miss Universe" and "David and the Stewardess". Other episodes that centered on the boys were "Fixing Up the Fraternity House", "The Boys Land in Jail", "A Picture in "Rick's Notebook", and "Ricky's Big Night".

Of course, Ozzie and Harriet still managed to



Kent McCord (far right) talks to Harriet Nelson (back to camera) as Jim Stacy and Mary Jane Croft listen on AN OZZIE AND HARRIET CHRISTMAS. (Courtesy of Rob Word.)

have a few shows devoted to them. One big hit was "Tutti-Frutti Ice Cream". Both are reminiscing about ice cream parlors of the past in American communities when they suddenly get an urge for tutti-frutti, and frantically try to find some. Immediately following the telecast, ice cream stores across the country were besieged with calls for this particular flavor and, on top of that, several local companies in the Los Angeles area began sending the Nelsons gallons of exotic flavors every week to which Ozzie ultimately called a halt.

Many shows were shot on location at Griffith Park in the spring of 1958 to relieve the tedium of constantly filming inside the studio. Some of the more memorable telecasts were "The Road Race", where Ozzie and Harriet drive a Model T Ford, and participate in a race against Rick and a young friend in their hot rod; "The Trophy", when Ozzie runs a cross-country obstacle race; and "The Fourteen-Mile Hike" finds Nelson taking Cub Scouts on a hike only to get them lost in the woods.

In 1959, the Nelsons entered into a new

non-cancellable, five-year agreement with ABC containing the same artistic controls and no budgetary restrictions; however, Ozzie still felt he had a moral obligation to do the shows at a reasonable cost as a matter of personal pride, and simultaneously maintain the highest production value.

David Nelson landed more outside film roles during 1958, one of which was to greatly influence his life for the next five or six years. The special part dealt with being a catcher for a trapeze act in **THE BIG CIRCUS** (1959, Allied Artists). He even learned to swing back and forth, safely drop into the net, and go into the "lock" swinging upside down in an even cadence.

David received much practice later on a trapeze rigging set up by Del and Babs Graham, both of whom were professional flyers. The Nelson's oldest son decided very soon he was going to become a catcher in a circus. He concluded, too, that Rick was going to be a flying partner, even before the brother returned from location shooting in Tucson,





Lyle Talbot and Mary Jane Croft, who had the roles of next-door neighbors Joe and Clara Randolph for ten television seasons of *THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET* are warmly greeted by Don Nelson and Harriet Nelson. (Courtesy of Rob Word.)

Arizona, on John Wayne's **RIO BRAVO** (1959, Warner Bros.). But Rick was willing to try anything if it meant he could team up with David. However, his participation in the act was limited due to extensive personal appearance tours and recordings.

Naturally, it would only follow that *THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET* have a show around the trapeze act called "The Circus", being one of the more ambitious episodes containing a full-size tent with much additional paraphernalia and dozens of specialty acts and hundreds of extras.

There were changes in script-writing procedures in 1960 with Ozzie only receiving one master version from his scribes. A projection room on the shooting stage enabled Nelson to work with cutters or view the previous day's filming without any loss of time. David's status was changed from being a college graduate to law student having a position as clerk in a law office. Able comedian Joe Flynn was Dave's boss Donald Kelley (the actual name of the

Nelsons' attorney in real life) who stayed a couple seasons until he left in 1962 to join Ernest Borgnine in the successful four-year *MC HALE'S NAVY* series for ABC-TV as Captain Wallace Binghamton.

Many of the beautiful young girls on the episodes who appeared regularly like Tuesday Weld, Joi Lansing, Linda Evans, Susan Oliver, and Pam Austin were discovered by David and Rick who also brought in young thespians like Jim Stacy, Jimmy Hawkins, and Kent McCord.

David married actress June Blair on May 20, 1961, and she became part of the show that next season. One of the initial telecasts was "The Newlyweds Get Settled". As a result, *THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET* continued to expand its stand-in sets now consisting of the Nelson home and yard, the law offices, the college campus, the fraternity house, and Dave and June's apartment. Their first child, Daniel Blair Nelson, was born August 20, 1962, making Ozzie and Harriet proud grandparents for the first time.



Harriet Nelson emphasizes a point to brother-in-law Don Nelosn and son David during production of AN OZZIE AND HARRIET CHRISTMAS. Conferring behind the wall are Lyle Talbot and Don DeFore. (Courtesy of Rob Word.)

Not too much later, Rick married Kris Harmon, daughter of noted sports commentator Tom Harmon and former film actress Elyse Knox. Tracy Kristine Nelson, a baby girl, made them parents on October 25, 1963. Kris joined THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET with one show, "The Ballerina", focused on her talents as a ballet dancer. She performs an original routine and, in a dream sequence, Rick joins her to perform an excerpt from **Swan Lake**. The highlight of this telecast was a burlesque version of **Nutcracker Suite** in ballet by Rick and several other young male actors. (In the meantime, Rick had signed a new 20-year recording contract with Decca Records.)

While Dave and June toured in 1965 with the summer stock production of **The Happiest Years**, Ozzie bought the screen rights to a stage play called **Love and Kisses**, and made a deal to write, produce, and direct it as a feature movie at Universal, starring Rick and Kris. One part of the film has a sequence with Rick dreaming Kris has walked out on him

threatening to get a job performing as a stripper in a burlesque house. Rick has a fight with the owner, and the establishment is wrecked in a free-for-all.

A major change for what was to be the last season for THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET came in 1965 when a shortage of stage space compelled that the show be moved from General Service to the Desilu Culver studios on Washington Boulevard. The last show wound up filming January 1, 1966, entitled "The Game Room."

During 1966 with no longer having to meet the hectic requirements of a weekly teleseries, Ozzie and Harriet relaxed as Rick, after a most successful tour of the Orient, did a role in the play **How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying** at Melodyland, which was sandwiched in between Kris' roles there, too, in **Carousel** and **Sound of Music**. In October, Ozzie and Harriet appeared on THE MIKE DOUGLAS SHOW, televised from Philadelphia, as co-hosts and were surprised on their 31st

wedding anniversary with a visit from David and Rick. On September 20, 1967, Kris presented Rick with twin boys named Matthew Gray and Gunnar Eric.

In March 1968, the Nelsons reappeared on the Douglas show, and returned to Los Angeles to begin rehearsals for **The Impossible Years**, a play concerning the trials and tribulations of a psychiatrist unable to bridge the "generation gap" with his two teenage daughters. Ozzie and Harriet acted the main roles of Jonathan and Alice Kingsley for six weeks on the West Coast and eight weeks at the Drury Lane Theater in Chicago. The same parts were to be portrayed later by David Niven and Lola Albright in MGM's film version of **THE IMPOSSIBLE YEARS** released in December 1968. Ozzie was tapped in the same feature to be Dr. Herbert Fleischer. He turned in an exceptional performance as a father frustrated over the amorous antics of hippie son Freddie (Rich Chalet) towards the psychiatrist's eldest daughter Linda (Cristina Ferrare).

The Rodgers and Hammerstein musical **State Fair** afforded the Nelsons more stage exposure in 1969 at St. Louis and Kansas City. The latter location was an outdoor theatre where drenching rain on opening night cancelled the remainder of their performance just before intermission. David, at this time, was becoming a talented director behind the camera while Rick did infrequent acting on a number of TV shows, in addition to his recordings.

Then, in December 1971, with help from David as associate producer, who assisted with the casting and general production as well as photographing exteriors for the main title, the Nelsons filmed at General Service a teleplay pilot written by Ozzie titled **OZZIE'S GIRLS**. The theme concerned two co-eds, one black and the other white, who apply to rent the boys' old room. There is a misunderstanding about which girl has the room, so both wind up sharing it. The co-eds were played by Brenda Sykes and Susan Sennett.

At the time of **OZZIE'S GIRLS'** pilot, the FCC ruled to cut back by a half hour per night the amount of prime-time programming networks could provide; and NBC shelved the show. Once it aired to good ratings, the syndicator Viacom offered Ozzie the chance to make the series for them. Nelson accepted, and at least 26 episodes were lensed and syndicated. Stories depicted the trials and tribulations of the four members in the household. One ornament removed from the household decor of the new show which Harriet had despised after 14 years was that eagle stationed over the fireplace.

The Nelsons also appeared during this period



An early photo of Ozzie and Harriet, date unknown. (Courtesy of Charles K. Stumpf.)

on other telecasts like **LOVE AMERICAN STYLE**, Rod Serling's **NIGHT GALLERY**, and **THE TONIGHT SHOW** where they joined Johnny Carson in spoofing their long-running series. Ozzie also directed some TV films for Jack Webb's Mark VII Productions, including an episode of **ADAM-12** in which he appeared.

Then, tragedy struck Ozzie Nelson in the fall of 1974. He was operated on for lung cancer, but was never to fully recover. Ozzie visited the office, and was working on a second book until eight weeks before his death on June 3, 1975. (His first book, **Ozzie**, an autobiography, was published in 1973.)

Since Ozzie's passing, Harriet has made more appearances on television, including a telefeature titled **SMASH-UP ON INTERSTATE 5** (1981) with an all-star cast, and a **LOVE BOAT** show with Ray Bolger. She has also been on radio in **SEARS RADIO THEATRE's** comedy **Here Comes the Bride...Again!** Of course, television stations continue to rerun **THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET**.

On December 24, 1981, TV viewers in Los Angeles had a special treat in store for them--sort of a celluloid Christmas gift, you might say--when local station KTLA, which had been airing the old Nelson series, packaged its own two-hour special called **AN OZZIE AND HARRIET CHRISTMAS**. The originator for this



A newspaper photo of Ozzie, date unknown. (Courtesy of Charles K. Stumpf.)

project was Filmways Television promotion expert Rob Word, who was nominated for a Los Angeles area Emmy Award.

Comprised mainly of old material, the show reunited Harriet and David Nelson with former series regulars Don DeFore, Lyle Talbot, Mary Jane Croft, Parley Baer, and Kent McCord who reminisced of past times, about Ozzie himself, and Christmas shows of the series bygone years (via extensive film clips). Recreating the Nelson household for the new videotaped material was a KTLA set designer.

Included on the special also were playing of old records of the Ozzie Nelson band, and family-album photos. Reportedly, a labor of love for those involved, everyone worked for scale. And the show beat all network competition in that 6 p.m.-8 p.m. time frame except for CBS' 60 MINUTES that same evening. (It proved that the nostalgia for old shows like THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET remains strong.)

Fans of ABC-TV's popular HAPPY DAYS were fortunate to see Harriet Nelson on its October 19, 1982, segment when she appeared with Jane Wyatt, another former television mother from NBC's long-running FATHER KNOWS

BEST series of the 1950s. Both women, as beauty-salon patrons, console Marion Cunningham (Marion Ross) who is suffering from the "empty nest" syndrome with the permanent absence from home of son Richie (Ron Howard) and daughter Joanie (Erin Moran). Harriet and Jane related a few experiences with their offspring having departed, but what tales these

THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET, except for reruns, has been off the ABC-TV network for over 16 years. It's hard to imagine not having the Nelson family with us today week after week whose television routine in many respects paralleled our home life and other activities. Let's hope a refreshing situation comedy equivalent to the excellent production values of THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET will make its debut on network television sometime in the near future. Such a show is long overdue to be in competition with the mediocrity and sleazy immorality that seem to pervade most sitcoms today.

**THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET**  
(Radio Cast)

Ozzie Nelson.....Ozzie Nelson  
 Harriet Hilliard Nelson.....Harriet Nelson  
 Tommy Bernard.....David Nelson  
 Joel Davis  
 David Ozzie Nelson  
 Henry Blair.....Ricky Nelson  
 Eric Hilliard "Ricky" Nelson  
 John Brown.....Thorny  
 Lurene Tuttle.....Harriet's mother  
 Janet Waldo.....Emmy Lou  
 Bea Benadaret.....Gloria  
 Mrs. Waddington  
 Dink Trout.....Roger Waddington  
 Billy May.....Orchestra  
 King Sisters.....Vocalists  
 Ozzie Nelson  
 Harriet Hilliard Nelson  
 Verne Smith.....Announcer

**BROADCAST:** October 8, 1944 through March or April 1954.

**THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET**  
(Television Cast)

Ozzie Nelson.....Ozzie Nelson  
 Harriet Hilliard Nelson.....Harriet Nelson  
 David Nelson.....David Nelson  
 Ricky Nelson.....Ricky Nelson  
 June Blair.....Mrs. David Nelson  
 Kris Harmon.....Mrs. Rick Nelson  
 Don DeFore....."Thorny" Thornberry

Lyle Talbot.....Joe Randolph  
 Mary Jane Croft.....Clara Randolph  
 Parley Baer.....Darby  
 Frank Cady.....Doc Williams  
 Skip Young.....Wally Plumstead  
 Joe Flynn.....Donald Kelley  
 Connie Harper.....Miss Edwards  
 Ivan Bonar.....Dean Hopkins  
 Verne Smith.....Announcer  
 James Stacy.....Friends  
 Kent Smith  
 Barry Livingston

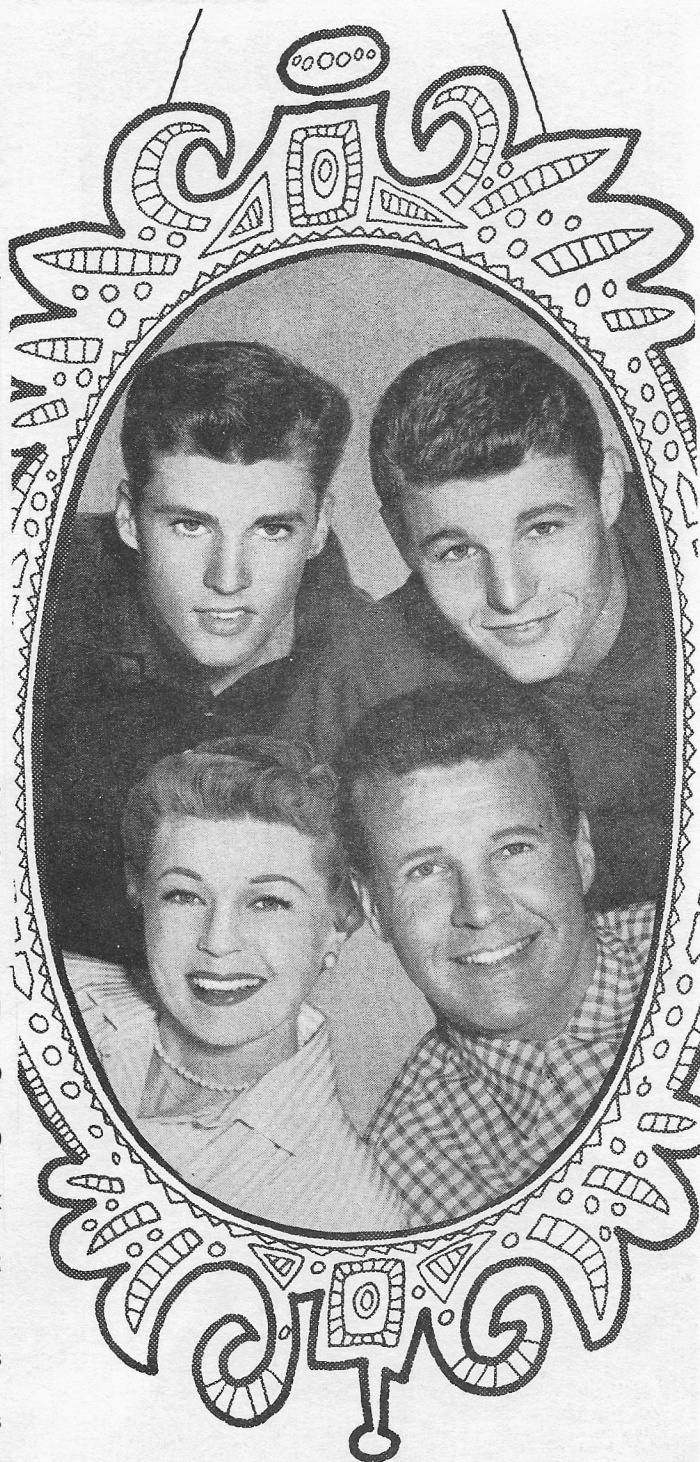
**TELEVISED:** October 3, 1952 through September 3, 1966.

### THE NELSONS FILMOGRAPHY

1. **FOLLOW THE FLEET** (1936) RKO (Harriet).
2. **NEW FACES OF 1937** (1937) RKO (Harriet).
3. **THE LIFE OF THE PARTY** (1937) RKO (Harriet).
4. **COCOANUT GROVE** (1938) Paramount (Harriet).
5. **SWEETHEART OF THE CAMPUS** (1941) Columbia (Ozzie and Harriet).
6. **CONFESSIONS OF BOSTON BLACKIE** (1942) Columbia (Harriet).
7. **CANAL ZONE** (1942) Columbia (Harriet).
8. **JUKE BOX JENNY** (1942) Universal (Harriet).
9. **THE BIG STREET** (1942) RKO (Ozzie).
10. **STRICTLY IN THE GROVE** (1942) Universal (Ozzie).
11. **THE FALCON STRIKES BACK** (1943) RKO (Harriet).
12. **HERE COME THE NELSONS** (1952) Universal (Ozzie, Harriet, David and Ricky).
13. **PEYTON PLACE** (1957) 20th Century-Fox (David).
14. **THE REMARKABLE MR. PENNYPACKER** (1959) 20th Century-Fox (David).
15. **RIO BRAVO** (1959) Warner Bros. (Rick).
16. **DAY OF THE OUTLAW** (1959) United Artists (David).
17. **THE BIG CIRCUS** (1959) Allied Artists (David).
18. **-30-** (1959) Warner Bros. (David).
19. **THE WACKIEST SHIP IN THE ARMY** (1960) Columbia (Rick).
20. **LOVE AND KISSES** (1965) Universal (Rick).
21. **THE IMPOSSIBLE YEARS** (1968) MGM (Ozzie).
22. **UP IN SMOKE** (1978) Paramount (David).

### HERE COME THE NELSONS

**Released**.....February 1952  
**Distributor**.....Universal  
**Copyrighted**.....November 26, 1951  
**Length**.....76 Minutes - B&W  
**Genre**.....Comedy



**OZZIE AND HARRIET'S FAMILY.** The faces are familiar—but you've never heard of some of the scrapes they get into! Happy bonus: Ricky Nelson sings.

A newspaper clipping, date unknown. (Courtesy of Charles K. Stumpf.)

**Director**.....Frederick de Cordova  
**Producer**.....Aaron Rosenberg  
**Screenplay**.....Ozzie Nelson, Don Nelson and William Davenport  
**Based on the radio show**....."The Adventures



As producer, director, chief writer and star of "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet," seen Wednesdays on ABC-TV, Ozzie Nelson already had his hands full. But this year he has a new job—and an even broader grin: In addition to the family series, he's chief adviser to David and Rick, both with zooming careers going.

of Ozzie and Harriet" radio show

### CAST

Ozzie Nelson.....Ozzie Nelson  
Harriet Nelson.....Harriet Nelson  
David Nelson.....David Nelson  
Ricky Nelson.....Ricky Nelson  
Rock Hudson.....Charlie E. Jones  
Barbara Lawrence.....Barbara Schusendorf  
Ann Doran.....Clara Randolph  
Jim Backus.....Joe Randolph  
Sheldon Leonard.....Duke  
Gale Gordon.....H.J. Bellows  
Chubby Johnson.....Man at Fair  
Paul Harvey.....Samuel T. Jones  
Lillian Bronson.....Miss Tompkins  
Ed Max.....Duke's pal  
Harry V. Cheshire.....Rodeo announcer  
Milton Kibbee.....Office Manager  
Paul Brinegar.....Policeman  
Edward Clark.....Newsstand Vendor  
Frank Nelson.....Clifford Hastings

**SYN:** In Hillsdale, there is much excitement over the town's forthcoming centennial rodeo celebration as advertising executive Ozzie Nelson hears his employer H.J. Bellows relate a promising new account to be awarded to their firm by corset and girdle manufacturer Samuel T. Jones once the right promotion campaign is developed. Ozzie is assigned this formidable task by Bellows in addition to receiving a pep talk from him.

At that moment, beautiful Barbara Schusendorf, a rodeo rider, who has arrived to participate in the festivities, walks in the office. The sister of one of Ozzie's old college chums, she is invited by him to stay at the Nelson home. As a young man watches Ozzie escorts Barbara to her car, shady character Duke and his pal case the fairgrounds for a possible heist. Having returned with neighbor Clara Randolph after seeing an astrologer, Ozzie's wife Harriet takes a phone call from an Al Brown, inadvertently extending an invitation for him to occupy the guest room during the celebration. Dismissing next-door friend Joe Randolph's dubious thoughts about Barbara, Ozzie sidesteps the girl's identity to Harriet when both discuss the impending visitors.

After Barbara comes to the Nelson residence, she is helping a nervous and giggling Ozzie with this bow tie when Harriet walks in somewhat perturbed. Ozzie listens to sons David and Ricky request that he ride wild bucking bronco Dynamite as the young man, supposedly Al Brown but actually Charlie E. Jones, and secretly in love with Barbara, arrives at the front door. David and Ricky immediately surmise Charlie is a government agent when



A newspaper ad, date unknown. (Courtesy of Charles K. Stumpf.)

they see the initials F.B.I. on his luggage. Once dinner is concluded and while dancing with Barbara, Ozzie does a "slow burn" when Charlie performs some fast twirls with Harriet.

The next day, Ozzie signs up at the rodeo to ride Dynamite, and receives more pressure from Bellows to finalize the promotion for Jones.

As David and Ricky watch Charlie transport his luggage, Ozzie gingerly mounts Dynamite only to ride him for three-and-a-half seconds before being bucked to the ground. Shielding her eyes in horror, Harriet chews out Ozzie over Barbara with Bellows warning him that he has only one hour to develop a sensational idea for the campaign.

While Ricky sees Duke and his pal inside the rodeo office, David seeks help for Charlie but finds Ozzie instead. Then, the hoods intercept the guard carrying rodeo proceeds and tie up him up along with the office manager. Ozzie alerts a policeman as Ricky enters the premises only to be captured. Once the hoods take more loot hidden in a desk, they drive away from the grounds with Ricky as a hostage. After smashing in the door and finding the two gagged men, Ozzie relates details on current events.

Unwittingly having mounted Dynamite again, Ozzie pursues the car followed by other riders and Harriet in a buckboard. Going ahead of Duke and receiving assistance from Charlie, in reality a women's garment salesman and Jones' nephew, Ozzie has everybody string corsets from the young man's luggage together for a roadblock. Such a tactic stops the automobile, capturing its occupants and freeing Ricky.

With the news media on hand, both Bellows and Jones misinterpret the accidentally transpired events as the promotion scheme. Harriet coaxes Bellows into granting Ozzie a \$1,000 bonus plus two weeks' vacation. Then, a cowhand rushes up to Ozzie and presents him a trophy for being the first individual ever to successfully ride Dynamite.

-RBS



**THE NELSON FAMILY** has been getting laughs for 15 years via "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet," which has been one of the popular shows on ABC-TV since 1952. Theirs is a gentle sort of humor, based on the funny things that happen in their own family—exaggerated, they admit, for the show. Dave and Rick, who've literally grown up in the public eye, now have careers of their own going, Dave in movies and Rick, of course, as a hotshot singer and recording star. But all of them, as Harriet said recently, "pitch in to help Dad run the family store."



# America's favorite young couple: OZZIE and HARRIET

by Jeff Missinne

"And here they are...America's favorite family...The Nelsons!" Familiar words to millions, as *THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET* was the longest-running comedy series in television history, running 14 years and 435 episodes on ABC-TV; preceded by 8 years on the NBC Blue Network and ABC radio. But the Nelsons' story of laughter and love began years earlier.

Ozzie Nelson first met Harriet Hilliard on New Year's Eve, 1931, at the Grand Ballroom of the Edison Hotel in New York. His band was playing there, and she had been sent to replace the usual MC, Nils T. Granlund. Impressed with her looks and talent, it wasn't long before Ozzie hired her as "girl singer" for his band. An old-fashioned romance (remember them?) soon crystallized between them, and Ozzie and Harriet married on October 8, 1935. On October 24, 1936, their first child, David Ozzie Nelson, was born; their second, Eric Hilliard Nelson ("Ricky"), on May 8, 1940.

Ozzie's first brush with the movies was a disastrous screen test for what was probably the old Educational Pictures company, shot in New York in 1932. An over-enthusiastic make-up man made Oz look like (in his own words) "a big fag with a broken nose." The guy seated next to Ozzie in the projection room was just as disappointed with his own test...Bob Hope. Hope would be even more disappointed with his first (and only) Educational short, but that's another story.

Harriet made her first screen test for MGM in 1935, and hers apparently came out much better than Ozzie's. While Metro did not offer a contract, RKO did; and Harriet Hilliard Nelson made her movie debut in **FOLLOW THE FLEET** with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, released in 1936.

In the Spring of 1937, RKO summoned Harriet to Hollywood once more, and she, with understandable unhappiness, had to leave four-month-old David in New York with Ozzie and "Jonesie" Jones, the baby's nurse. Needing to communicate with Harriet as weeks went by, Ozzie shot reels and reels of home movies; one of which marked his first effort at comedy writing and directing. In the film, Ozzie and Jonesie send for a "rug doctor" (one of Ozzie's musicians) to outfit bald-headed little David with a wig.



**The Nelsons in the days of radio: Sons Ricky (left) and David joined in.**

A newspaper clipping, date unknown. (Courtesy of Charles K. Stumpf.)

The year after Ricky was born, Ozzie and Harriet made their first movie appearance together in Columbia's **SWEETHEARTS OF THE CAMPUS** (1941); and on October 7, 1941, they became regulars on the new Red Skelton radio series. On the Skelton show, Harriet in particular proved to be a woman of many voices, playing Daisy June, Calamity Jane, Mrs. Willie Lump Lump, and Mrs. Cavendish (the mean-middle-kid's mother), as well as singing; though both she and Ozzie sometimes played as many as seven roles in each program.

In 1944, the Army drafted Red Skelton; and Ozzie and Harriet, encouraged by **PEOPLE ARE FUNNY** producer John Guedel, recorded a pilot episode for their own radio series, from a script by Ozzie (his first professional comedy-writing effort). The pilot sold quickly to a sponsor, Ozzie made some adjustments in the show's format; and on October 8, 1944 (the Nelsons' ninth wedding anniversary), **THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET** premiered on the NBC-Blue network.

In their original format, Ozzie and Harriet played the bandleader and singer they were in real life; and the show included musical numbers by Ozzie's band. Later, the musical angle was gradually withdrawn in favor of straight situation comedy; and Ozzie's job was kept deliberately non-specific, as he felt more people could identify with him in this way. Most of the **OZZIE AND HARRIET** shows, usually being broadcast on weekends, depicted the Nelsons at leisure. In scenes set on

# YOU'RE A HEAVENLY THING

By  
JOE YOUNG  
and  
LITTLE JACK LITTLE



Introduced by  
Ozzie Nelson  
and  
Harriet Hilliard

1935

Parbelle

MADE  
U.S.A.

Shapiro,  
Bernstein  
& Co.

MUSIC PUBLISHERS  
CAPITOL THEATRE BUILDING  
COR. BROADWAY & 51st STREET  
New York

A cover from Sheet Music from 1935. (Courtesy of Charles K. Stumpf.)

weekdays, Ozzie simply "went down to the office" each day. (Maybe his job was producing TV shows?)

Ozzie paid great attention to production details. In radio, each of his writers (who then included Jack Douglas and Selma Diamond) submitted complete scripts, to be edited and re-written by Ozzie into a working master script; previewed off-the-air with an audience, then re-written again by Oz as needed into a final version. This system was later streamlined, but Ozzie always retained script control.

On Sunday, February 20, 1949, the real David and Ricky Nelson replaced the two child radio actors who had portrayed them, bringing "America's favorite family" together at last on the air. That same year, the Nelsons signed the first ten-year, non-cancellable contract in radio history with ABC; giving Ozzie complete creative control, and an option to go on TV after two years.

Before entering TV, the Nelsons took up an offer from Universal producer Aaron Rosenberg to star in a feature film. **HERE COME THE NELSONS** (1951) was written by Ozzie, his brother Don (also one of his radio-TV writers), and Bill Davenport, directed by Fred de Cordova; and co-starred Rock Hudson, Gale Gordon, Jim Backus, Sheldon Leonard and Frank Nelson. The modestly-budgeted feature was successful, and proved that Ozzie, Harriet and family could transfer their comedy to a visual medium.

The first **OZZIE AND HARRIET** TV show aired on October 3, 1952, and Ozzie immediately established himself as a producer with a difference. Dissatisfied with the quality of TV camerawork of the time, Ozzie hired away Oscar-winning cinematographer William Mellor from MGM (at a hefty boost in salary), and allowed him to assemble his personal "dream crew" of camera assistants and electricians. Ozzie also installed a projection room on the set for viewing and editing.

Did the extra effort pay off? Well, **TV Guide** reviewer Cleveland Amory, never an easy man to please, had this to say: "Familiarity might breed contempt..(but), we, however, not only have no contempt for this show, we have a good deal of respect for it. The wizardry of Ozzie, of course, deserves the lion's share of the credit... (He is)... wonderful."

In those days, the sponsor was king on TV. Ozzie kept his sponsors' influence under control, while showing great ability at inserting subtle plugs for them. (Some others were not so subtle. You can still see Desi Arnaz in **I LOVE LUCY** episodes awkwardly inquiring, "Have a mild Pheelip Morris ceegarette?") For example, a scene in **Tutti Frutti Ice Cream** (one of Ozzie's favorite episodes) takes place in a

drugstore. The episode was sponsored by Kodak, and there is a display of Kodak film on the druggist's counter. Have you ever been in a drugstore that didn't sell Kodak film? In another episode, sponsored by Coca-Cola, Ozzie, working in his yard on a hot day, casually offers neighbor Darby (Parley Baer) a cold Coke. Just what a nice guy like Ozzie would do.

Ozzie and Harriet's shows often reflected characters and places in their real lives. The Nelsons' TV home, while differently furnished than their actual one, was similar in layout and identical from the outside. Their original neighbor, "Thorny" Thornberry (played by Don De Fore) was named after one of their real-life neighbors; and David's lawyer boss, Donald Kelley (played by Joe Flynn) was named after the Nelsons' actual family lawyer. The TV Ozzie sometimes spoke of his childhood in Ridgefield Park, New Jersey, where he actually did grow up; and of Wrede and Koop's Ice Cream Parlor, a favorite hangout in those days for life-long ice cream fanatic Ozzie.

The Nelson TV family grew along with their real one when David married June Blair in 1963 and Rick married Kristin Harmon, daughter of football star Tom Harmon, in 1965. That year, Ozzie directed Rick and Kris in **LOVE AND KISSES**, a low-budget feature for Universal. 1965-66 was the last season for **THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET** on TV, and the only season to be filmed in color. The last episode, **The Game Room**, completed shooting on January 1, 1966; the network did not serve its cancellation notice until months later.

For five years after their series was cancelled, Ozzie and Harriet worked in live theatre, touring major cities in a revival of **State Fair**, **The Marriage-Go-Round**, and **The Impossible Years**; in which Ozzie also co-starred in the movie version, made in 1968 by MGM.

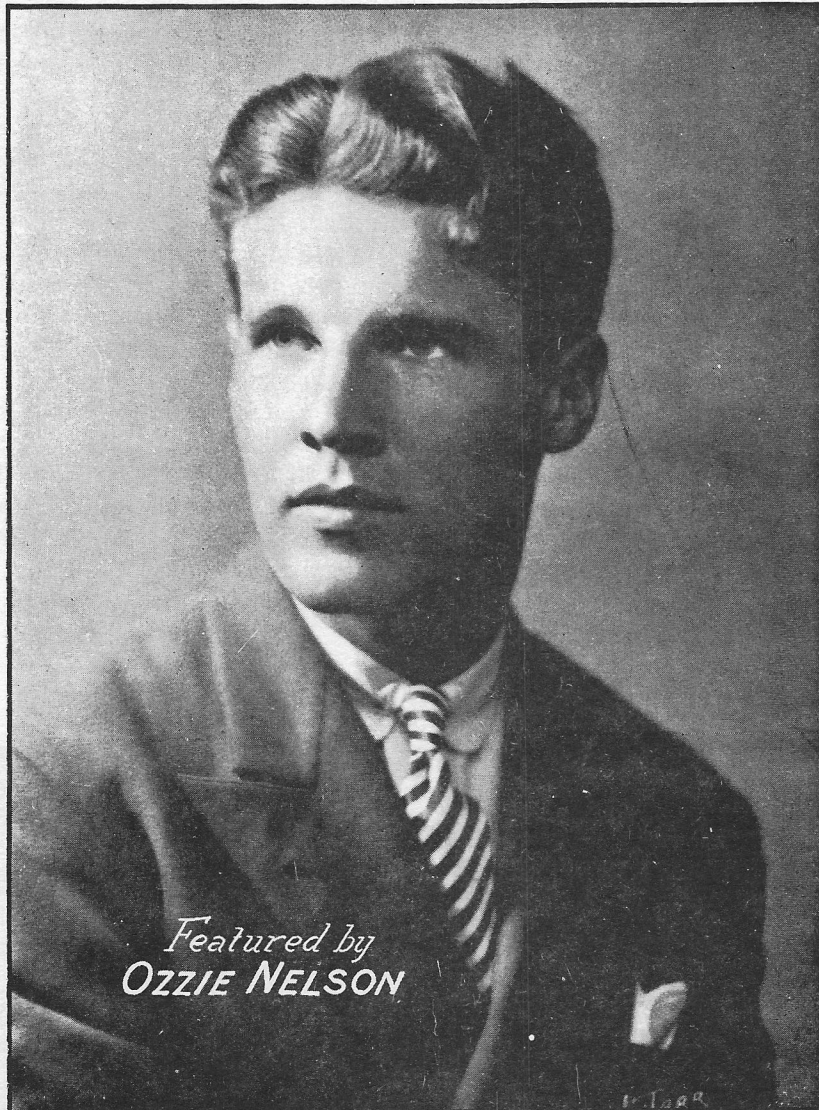
In December, 1971, Ozzie produced, wrote, and directed a pilot film for NBC called **OZZIE'S GIRLS**. The format was based on the Nelsons' renting out the boys' old rooms to a pair of college girls, played by Susan Sennett and Brenda Sykes. At this time, the FCC ruled to cut back by a half hour per night the amount of prime-time programming networks could provide; and NBC shelved **OZZIE'S GIRLS**. However, after the pilot aired to good ratings, Viacom, a syndicator, offered Ozzie the chance to make the series for them. The offer was accepted, and at least 26 episodes of **OZZIE'S GIRLS** were made and syndicated.

Around and after the time of **OZZIE'S GIRLS**, the Nelsons also appeared on **LOVE, AMERICAN STYLE**, **ROD SERLING'S NIGHT**

# 'TAINT NO USE

*Lyric by*  
**HERB MAGIDSON**

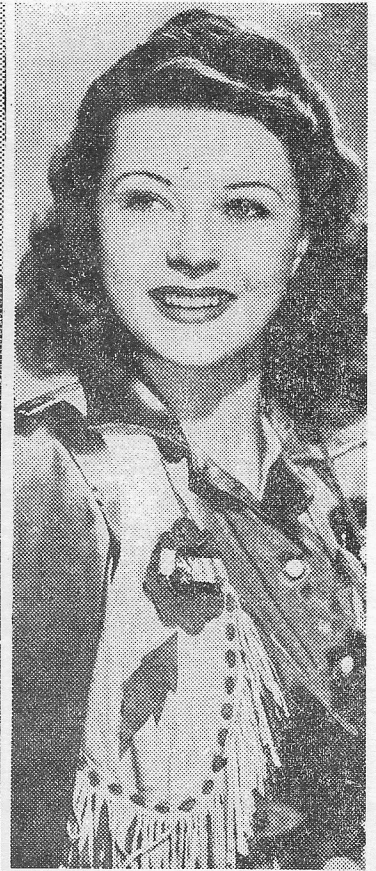
*Music by*  
**BURTON LANE**



1 9 3 6

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The cover from Sheet Music from 1936. (Courtesy of Charles K. Stumpf.)



**SINGING STAR**  
Harriet Hilliard in "Take It Big," 1943

## THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET

Every Wednesday Evening—ABC-TV  
Sponsored by EASTMAN KODAK and QUAKER OATS COMPANY

A newspaper ad, date unknown.  
(Courtesy of Charles K. Stumpf.)

A newspaper clipping, date unknown. (Courtesy of Charles K. Stumpf.)

GALLERY (in a very dark horror-comedy called **You Can Come Up Now, Mrs. Millican**), and THE TONIGHT SHOW, where they joined Johnny Carson in spoofing their long-running series. Ozzie also directed some TV films for Jack Webb's Mark VII Productions, and appeared in an episode of ADAM-12 which he directed.

Nelson's autobiography, **Ozzie**, was published in 1973, a book filled with the warm, easy-going style of its author. Then...on June 3, 1975, Ozzie Nelson died. He is survived now as then by Harriet, David (now a producer of industrial films), Rick (still a well-known recording artist), and several grandchildren.

In the years since Ozzie's death, Harriet has made occasional appearances on TV, including a telefeature, SMASH-UP ON INTERSTATE 5, with an all-star cast; and a LOVE BOAT episode with Ray Bolger. She has also been

heard on radio in SEARS RADIO THEATRE's comedy play **Here Comes the Bride...Again!** And, of course, Ozzie and Harriet's 16 years of "adventures" remain a daily fixture on many TV stations. They are warm reminders of an American family that grew up on television... and very special to all of us who were along for the trip.

-JM



# Questions About Yesterday

by Anthony Ross

**Q. Who was the Avenger on radio in the 40's? What network was it on? Phil McBee, Maryland.**

A. It was not a network show. It was syndicated. Jim Brandon was the Avenger.

**Q. Since Gerald Mohr played The Lone Wolf in the movies I was wondering if he played the part on radio? T. Bennett, South Carolina.**

A. He played The Lone Wolf on radio and was later replaced by Walter Coy.

**Q. Just how old is George Burns? It's hard to believe he is almost 90 years old. William Lawson, Maryland.**

A. He was born on January 20, 1896 in New York city. His real name is Nathan Bienbaum. He will have a new country album out by the time you read this.

**Q. Who played Jeep on the TV show "My Son Jeep"? Mack Morton, Pennsylvania.**

A. Martin Huston was Jeep.

**Q. Who was the girl that sang on "The Johnny Dugan Show"? Jack Lynn, Virginia.**

A. Barbara Logan.

**Q. Did Boris Karloff made a TV series as Sherlock Holmes? I think he did. My sister said he did not. S.D., Illinois.**

A. Not that I know of. He did star as Colonel March of Scotland Yard in a TV series. This might be what you are thinking about.

**Q. Who was the first person to play Flash Gordon in a TV series? Booker James, Louisiana.**

A. I think Steve Holland was the first one.



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"Baby Snooks"



"Charlie McCarthy"

## Morton Downey and the Pickens Sisters



Four of radio's smoothest voices--Morton Downey and the Pickens sisters--sing in 1936 for the EVENING IN PARIS nightclub of the air over an NBC-WJZ network on Monday nights at 8:30 p.m., E.S.T. Downey joined the program early that year after a winter of entertaining in an authentic nightclub. (Courtesy of Author's Collection.)

by Charles K. Stumpf

Among the most popular radio singers back in the Golden Radio Days of the 1930s were Morton Downey and the Pickens sisters.

Morton Downey was born in Wallingford, Connecticut, in 1902. His father was the local fire chief, but young Morton wanted nothing to do with fire engines. He began to sing just about as soon as he could talk. He gained early experience by singing at church socials and Elks Club meetings. When he was 15 years old, he went to work as a candy butcher on the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad lines. Later for the same company, he worked at the helm of a donkey engine, but was fired for speeding. Next, he tried to sell insurance but failed. Music was always his first

love, and his next job found him selling phonograph records.

In time, Morton moved to New York City where he went to work as a song plugger. By night, he sang in nightclubs and vaudeville theatres. In 1919, Paul Whiteman discovered the Irish tenor singing at the Sheridan Square Theatre. Whiteman hired him for his orchestra, but not as a vocalist. Morton was assigned to the brass section. With his Irish good looks, a warm, winning smile, and a shiney new saxophone, he added some glamour to the appearance of the orchestra but very little musical help to the brass section. Eventually, Whiteman let him sing, but was not particularly impressed with the tenor, and Morton then struck out on his own again.

After touring nightclubs and theatres around



Entertainer Morton Downey in a CBS radio publicity photo (circa 1938). (Courtesy of Author's Collection.)



the country, Morton went to Europe. His first radio appearance was on the BBC in 1928. Upon his return from singing engagements in Europe, Downey went to Hollywood, and appeared in one of the first "talkies" **SYNCOPATION** (1929, RKO). That same year, he was also seen in **MOTHER'S BOY** (1929, Pathe) and **LUCKY IN LOVE** (1929, RKO). In 1930, he appeared in **THE DEVIL'S HOLIDAY** (1930, Paramount), and in 1944 returned to the screen in **GHOST CATCHERS** (Universal).

Downey's greatest fame came by way of radio broadcasting. He thrilled the hearts of millions of female listeners, and was known as "The Irish Thrush" and "The Irish Troubadour". One of the songs with which he was closely associated was **Carolina Moon**. In 1931, he was heard regularly on THE CAMEL QUARTER--HOUR program over CBS along with Jacques Renard's orchestra. Also on the program was Tony Wons who offered bits of philosophy and poetry. It was reported that Downey received up to 90,000 letters a week. In 1932, he moved into a half-hour musical program of his own for Woodbury Soap heard on the Blue Network.

By 1936, Morton was one of the top musical stars on the air, and earned an estimated quarter of a million dollars a year. On NBC's EVENING IN PARIS (NIGHT CLUB OF THE AIR), he was featured along with the Pickens sisters. In the late 1930s, he left radio for awhile, and appeared in some of the country's leading nightclubs such as the Cafe Lounge of the Savoy Plaza in New York, the Copley Plaza in Boston, and the Mayfair Room in Chicago.

Downey returned to radio in the 1940s with a contract calling for \$4000 each week on the COKE CLUB, sponsored by Coca Cola. During 1946-47, he transcribed a quarter-hour series for Coke, and in 1950, he was heard in a half-hour REFRESHMENT TIME program over CBS. Downey ventured into television in 1949, and appeared every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evening on THE MOHAWK SHOWROOM, alternating with singer Roberta Quinlan, during the months of May through December. On September 22, 1950, he appeared as host of the TV comedy variety show STAR OF THE FAMILY on which he interviewed guests who were related to famous celebrities.

The Pickens sisters were born in Macon, Georgia. Originally, the trio consisted of Helen, Jane, and Grace. NBC put them on the air in 1931 as competition for the Boswell sisters who drew listeners to CBS. Illness forced Grace to leave the program, and Marla Forbe filled in for three months before young Pickens sister Patti joined the trio. The Pickens sisters set a pattern of singing style that is still imitated today. Their musical theme was entitled **Just**

**You and I**. They are also noted for their arrangement of **Mood Indigo**.

The trio remained together for five years. They sang with Buddy Rogers orchestra at the Park Sheraton Roof, and had their own radio program. They appeared in the Broadway musical **Thumbs Up** (1934), and in 1933 appeared in a feature motion picture **SITTING PRETTY** (Paramount) with Jack Oakie. The following year, they made a film short **GOOD LUCK--BEST WISHES** (1934, Educational) with Warren Hull. Among their contributions to the world of music, the Pickens sisters introduced the song **Autumn in New York**.

The trio broke up in 1936 when Jane got an opportunity to do a solo in **The Ziegfeld Follies**. She continued to work solo on several radio programs, such as THE BEN BERNIE SHOW on CBS in 1936. In 1948, she had her own half-hour musical show on NBC with the Norman Cloutier orchestra. Her greatest success came in 1949 when she was starred on stage in **Regina**, a musical version of **The Little Foxes**. In 1950, she was the singing hostess of THE CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LOWER BASIN STREET.

Jane Pickens ventured into television on January 31, 1954, with her own JANE PICKENS SHOW which also featured a male singing group billed as The Vikings. She has remained a familiar face in the New York social scene, and for many years, she produced and hosted the annual telethon for cerebral palsy. In 1972, she made an unsuccessful bid for election to Congress.

The Pickens sisters last appeared together as a trio on television's THE ED SULLIVAN SHOW in the mid-1950s. Today, Jane is married to Walter Hoving of Tiffany's, while Helen is married and resides in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and Grace lives in upstate New York. In 1979, the youngest of the singing Pickens sisters, Patti, tried for a solo comeback by making a few nightclub appearances. She is the wife of Canon Charles A. Shreve, minister of St. Andrews Episcopal Church in Murray Hill, New Jersey.



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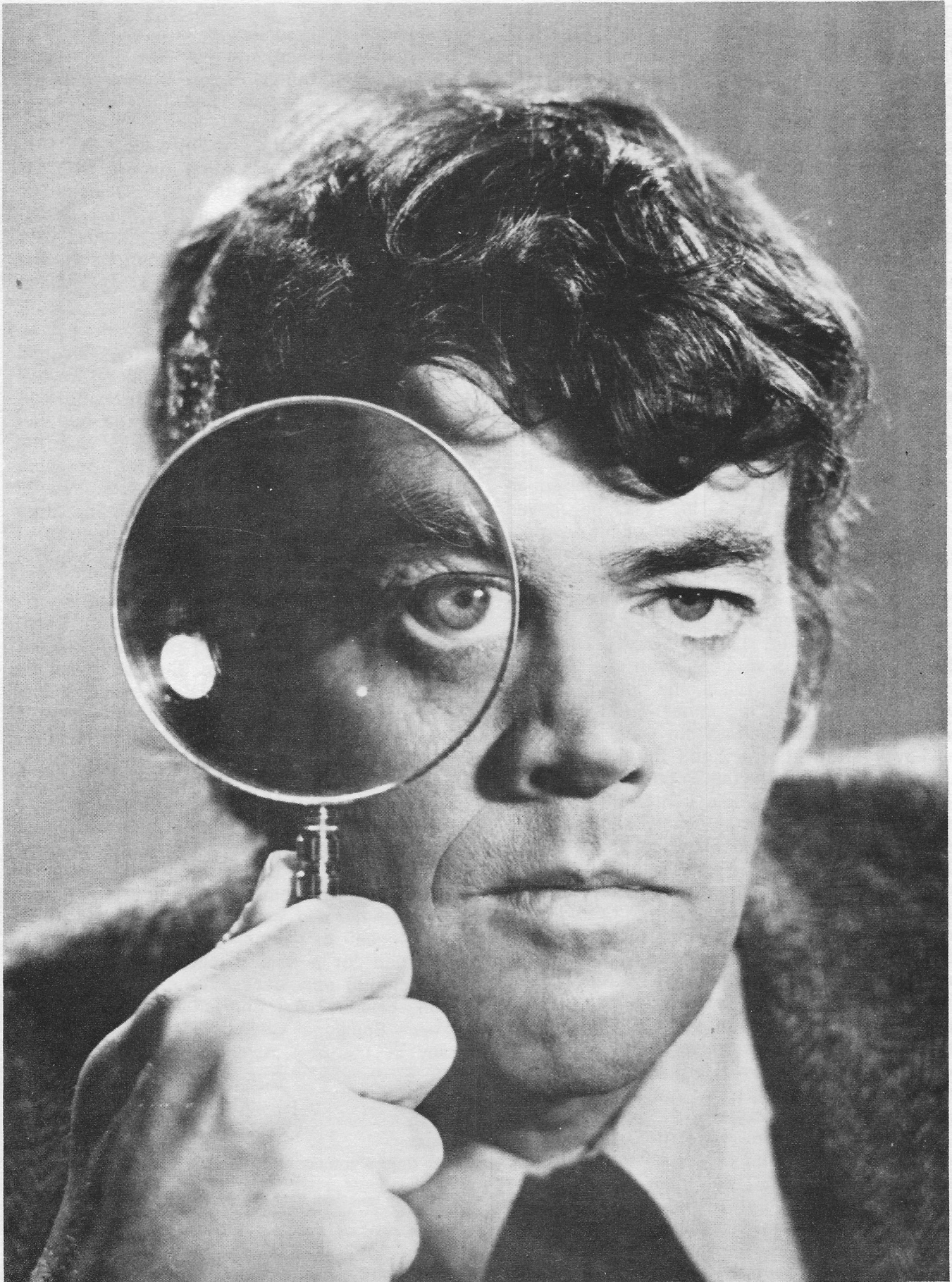
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Jim Hutton starred as Ellery Queen on a popular NBC series. (Courtesy of John Dinian.)

# Ellery Queen on the Small Screen

by Francis M. Nevins, Jr.

The history of Ellery Queen on the small screen began in television's infancy, to be precise on October 14, 1950, when the live series **THE ADVENTURES OF ELLERY QUEEN** premiered in the 9:00-9:30 p.m. Thursday night slot on the short-lived Dumont network. The first actor to portray America's best-known deductive detective in the new medium was Richard Hart, a young man in his 30s with four Hollywood movies to his credit. In January of 1951, after about a dozen appearances as Ellery, Hart died of a sudden heart attack during rehearsal, and was replaced on 24 hours' notice by perennial B-picture leading man Lee Bowman.

The series moved from Dumont to ABC and from Thursday to Sunday evenings (7:30-8 p.m.) in December 1951, with Bowman continuing in the lead. Early in April 1952, ABC moved the show from Sunday to Wednesday and back to the 9:00-9:30 p.m. slot where it stayed until the series went off the air in December. Principal director of Ellery's live **ADVENTURES** was Donald Richardson, who went on to helm episodes of all sorts of TV series from **I REMEMBER MAMA** and **DU PONT PLAY OF THE WEEK** and **THE DEFENDERS** to **LOST IN SPACE**, **THE VIRGINIAN**, and **LANCER**. **TV Guide** gave the program its award for best television mystery series of 1950, but since my parents didn't buy their first set until a year or two later, I have no childhood memories of this first chapter in Ellery's small-screen adventures.

In his book **TV Detectives** (1981), Richard Meyers mentions two episode titles in the series, **The File of Death** and **One Week to Live**. The one untitled segment that I have seen in the form of a 16mm kinescope print was so inept I could hardly believe it was part of an award-winning series. Imagine how awful its early-Fifties competitors must have been!

A second series, this one on film, was prepared and syndicated to local TV stations in 1955 under the title **THE NEW ADVENTURES OF ELLERY QUEEN**. Hugh Marlowe, who had been the first to play Ellery on the long-running EQ radio show of 1939-47, repeated his characterization for this series, and Florenz Ames portrayed Inspector Richard Queen, Ellery's father. Both actors came startlingly close in their physical appearances to the images of the Queens as described in the novels co-authored by Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee.

Unfortunately, most of the 32 episodes of the series--which I saw over and over during the late Fifties on New York's WPIX-TV, Channel 11, both under the original title and as **MYSTERY IS MY BUSINESS**--were indifferently written and directed, and even the few above-average scripts could never have been mistaken for Queen stories. Although I haven't been able to unearth any director, scriptwriter, or cast credits for these shows, I've compiled brief descriptions of each episode along with its first New York telecast date.

**THE NEW ADVENTURES OF ELLERY QUEEN**  
starring Hugh Marlowe and Florenz Ames

## **Stranger in the Dark** 10/2/55

A blind girl returns to her apartment too late to prevent her roommate's murder but in time to brush her hand against the fleeing killer's face. Ellery devises a plan to bring the face and hand together again.

## **Mardi Gras** 10/9/55

In New Orleans during Mardi Gras time, Ellery comes to the aid of a beautiful girl who is being blackmailed after supposedly murdering her lover's wife.

## **The Golden Snow** 10/16/55

During World War II in Italy, two soldiers come upon a wrecked medical supply truck and bury a shipment of morphine they find inside, planning to come back after the war and smuggle the drugs out of Italy. Ellery becomes involved when their attempt to retrieve the morphine leads to murder.

## **The Trigger Man** 10/23/55

Ellery and Inspector Queen are called upon to break up a kickback racket operating in the produce market.

## **The Moll** 10/30/55

The young wife of a minister goes to Ellery for help after an anonymous donor gives \$20,000 to her church and her kid brother is beaten by an unknown assailant.

## **A Fatal Signal** 11/6/55

A fire extinguisher is Ellery's clue to the

solution when the much-hated pitcher of a baseball team is found dead at the team's Florida training camp, apparently from natural causes.

#### **Memoirs Unwritten**

11/13/55

Ellery is confused when a lonely, middle-aged widow confesses to the murder of a famed concert pianist.

#### **Woman on the Wire**

11/20/55

Ellery probes the love-and-hate relationships that led to the death of a member of a high-wire act involving two men and two women.

#### **The Recluse**

11/27/55

A hotel bellhop murders the desk clerk, and takes refuge in the room of a diabetic old woman. Ellery uses a lump of sugar as part of a plan to capture the murderer without endangering the hostage.

#### **One Week to Live**

12/4/55

A bereaved widow is visited by a stranger who demands that she share with him the insurance proceeds on her late husband's life. She goes to Ellery for help, and he decides to investigate the stranger's racket.

#### **Close-up of Murder**

12/11/55

Ellery becomes involved when the wife of a Hollywood producer is murdered after the producer receives threatening letters--which the police think he sent to himself.

#### **Design for Revenge**

12/18/55

A former district attorney, just released from a mental institution, decides to commit a series of baffling crimes. Ellery is called to investigate.

#### **The Mask of Rosselli**

12/25/55

Ellery is baffled when an American doctor is kidnapped in Rome only to be identified a few weeks later as a dangerous masked murderer.

#### **Mr. Big**

1/1/56

Ellery suspects that the suicide death of a small-time gangster is connected with the operations of the underworld's mysterious "Mr. Big".

#### **Custom Made**

1/8/56

When his date receives the wrong dress, Ellery offers to return it to the shop. But when he arrives, he finds a dead man on the shop floor.

#### **Woman in the Chair**

1/15/56

A little girl discovers the body of an unidentified woman in the home of a famous hollywood actor. Ellery and the little girl help the actor try to prove his innocence.

#### **A Letter from the Dead**

1/22/56

An accountant for a big-time racketeer learns too much about the syndicate, and is marked for death. Ellery attempts to break up the syndicate.

#### **Doodle of Death**

1/29/56

Penciled doodles help Ellery connect the theft of a ruby from a jewelry store and the death of a woman at an employment agency.

#### **The Fix**

2/5/56

When a college championship basketball game is lost, circumstances indicate that the star of the losing team was in on a fix. Ellery tries to uncover what really happened.

#### **Once a Killer**

2/12/56

Ellery has three suspects from which to pick the killer in the apparently motiveless murder of a young girl in Acapulco.

#### **The White Orchid**

2/19/56

Ellery is baffled by the mid-winter deaths of three people from sleeping sickness, a tropical disease carried only by the African tsetse fly.

#### **Death of a Wax Doll**

2/26/56

Ellery gets involved when a young boy, visiting a wax museum to see a tableau of a murder he witnessed, is almost killed.

#### **Vicious Circle**

3/4/56

Ellery tries to help an assistant district attorney who was fired from his job and disgraced because of his alleged association with a murderer.

#### **The Night Visitors**

3/11/56

While traveling in Germany, Ellery witnesses the beating of a young couple by a neo-Nazi group wearing uniforms and masks.

**Dark Corridor**

3/18/56

Ellery goes to a quiet hospital to investigate the not-so-quiet murder of an orderly.

**Death in a Ghost Town**

3/25/56

Ellery and his father find a body in a Western ghost town, but it disappears before anyone else sees it. Ellery suspects that somewhere in the ghost town both the victim and the murderer are hiding.

**Double Exposure**

4/1/56

A frightened father comes to Ellery for help when the kidnapers of his son warn him not to go to the police. Ellery compares two photographs, and comes up with a clue.

**Blackjack**

4/8/56

While vacationing on a ranch in Nevada, Ellery witnesses a blackjack game that ends in murder. His problem is that too many suspects are eager to confess to the crime.

**Backfire**

4/15/56

Ellery becomes involved when a group of college girls devise what they think is a scheme for the "perfect crime".

**Comeback**

4/22/56

A fighter is in danger of dying of a brain injury if he goes into the ring to meet the champion. Ellery tries to save the boxer's life.

**The Star of Kashmir**

4/29/56

The theft of a valuable sapphire, the murder of a janitor, and the receipt of an anonymous letter by the police bring Ellery into the case.

**Mission of Murder**

5/6/56

A good-luck coin that brings nothing but trouble to its owner arouses the interest of Inspector Queen and Ellery.

Three seasons later, a new and considerably more ambitious attempt was made to turn Ellery into a small-screen star. During the 1958-59 season, **THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF ELLERY QUEEN** was aired on the NBC-TV

network, live and in color, under the supervision of Albert McCleery, who was one of the top producers of Fifties' teledrama. For the first 20 weeks of the series, Ellery was enacted by the far too young and handsome-looking George Nader. McCleery, in an interview with **TV Guide**, admitted that he had never read any of Queen's novels or short stories, but said his ignorance was unimportant because "Of all the Queen material, we can only use four of the novels." In fact, he used six. "We're going to spend money for scripts and actors," McCleery continued, "not costly props and sets."

But the acting turned out to be barely adequate, the scripts abominable. Six of the first eight weeks' shows were very loosely adapted from Queen novels, and although the debut episode, **The Glass Village**, was surprisingly good (with Ellery substituting for Johnny Shinn, the lead character in the novel), the remaining five were outrageously bad. The other 14 episodes starring Nader were based on novels by a wide variety of American mystery writers, including Harold Q. Masur, William P. McGivern, Hillary Waugh, John Roeburt (who was story editor for the series), and Edgar Box, who was and is better known as Gore Vidal. Shoehorning the character of Ellery into the scripts as a substitute for the detectives of all these other authors did little to improve the show's quality.

After 20 episodes, Nader left the series, and was replaced by Lee Philips, who played Ellery as a man of awareness and compassion, substantially closer to the original conception of the character in the novels. With Philips' assumption of the lead, the series switched from live performances to videotape, and the policy of using scripts adapted from miscellaneous mystery novels was dropped in favor of original efforts. The first of Philips' 12 episodes, **Shadow of the Past**, struck me in 1959 as such a superb story that, until he denied it to me in person 10 or 11 years later, I was convinced that the writer to whom the script was credited, Sam Dunn, was a pseudonym of Frederic Dannay. But none of the subsequent 11 installments matched the premiere in quality, despite the array of fine actors who consistently appeared in the series.

In the following log of the 1958-59 series, episodes based on Ellery Queen novels are marked with an asterisk. "S" indicates scriptwriter, where known.

**THE FURTHER ADVENTURES  
OF ELLERY QUEEN**  
starring George Nader

**\*The Glass Village**

**9/26/58**

Ellery pays a visit to a cousin who is a judge in a New England village. When an elderly woman painter is bludgeoned to death, the townsfolk are quick to suspect a tramp who was passing through the area. Against the wishes of the judge and Ellery, a posse is formed to go after the tramp.

**\*The King is Dead**  
**S: Howard Rodman**

**10/3/58**

Ellery and Inspector Queen are approached by Abel Bendigo, a member of the powerful Bendigo Munitions Company family, when the life of his brother King is threatened.

**\*Ten Days' Wonder**  
**10/10/58**

Howard Van Horn, a young sculptor, asks Ellery to watch him during one of his recurrent attacks of amnesia. Van Horn is afraid that he is committing crimes during his blackouts.

**\*The Door Between**  
**10/17/58**

Karen Leith, born and raised in Japan, comes to live on Washington Square, where she lives the life of a recluse, concentrating on writing her novels. Then she meets an old friend, Dr. McClure, and soon they announce their forthcoming marriage, which is opposed by the doctor's daughter. When Karen is found killed, McClure's daughter is accused.

**The Eighth Mrs. Bluebeard**  
**[from the novel by Hillary Waugh]**  
**S: Mel Goldberg**

**10/24/58**

An insurance company is forced to pay out \$50,000 on a policy when a man's wife dies in a canoe accident. The company believes that the man has killed several wives for their insurance, and sends salesman Jack Graham to bait a trap for the killer.

**\*Cat of Many Tails**  
**10/31/58**

The mayor of New York City calls on Ellery to help solve a series of strangulations for which the police can find no motive but which they believe to be the work of one killer.

**Death Before Bedtime**  
**[from the novel by Edgar Box [Gore Vidal]]**  
**11/7/58**

Ellery accepts an invitation to visit Senator Leander Rhodes, who plans to run for President. But shortly after Ellery's arrival, Rhodes is murdered.

**\*Double, Double**  
**S: John Roeburt**  
**11/14/58**

Ellery receives in the mail a number of newspaper clippings relating a series of supposedly accidental deaths in a small town where he once lived. Then he is visited by a young girl from the same town who tells him that her father has disappeared, and asks for his help.

**So Rich, So Lovely, and So Dead**  
**[from the novel by Harold Q. Masur]**

**11/28/58**

Ellery investigates the murder of a wealthy countess who was killed shortly after appealing to him for help.

**The Diamond-Studded Typewriter**  
**[from the novel by Carlton Keith]**

**12/5/58**

Alice Anthony asks handwriting expert Jeff Green to help her prove that the late James Gavin is her father, who deserted her and her mother years ago.

**Four and Twenty--to Live**  
**[from the novel by John Roeburt]**  
**S: Robert E. Thompson**

**12/12/58**

Ellery is menaced by a girl with a gun who wants him to phone the governor and request a stay of execution for her condemned father.

**Paint the Town Black**  
**[from the novel by David Alexander]**  
**S: S.S. Schweitzer**

**12/19/58**

A friend gives a valuable small statuette to Ellery for safekeeping. Soon afterward, Ellery becomes involved in international intrigue when he's approached by strangers who offer to buy the statuette and, when he refuses, attempt to steal it.

**The Hollow Man**  
**[from the novel by John Roeburt]**  
**S: Howard Rodman**

**12/26/58**

Ellery becomes involved in the search for a former welterweight champion who's been missing for five years. With Frank Silvera (Sol), Whitney Blake (Nina), Murvyn Vye (Marco), Wesley Lau (Max), John Goddard (Rocky), John Munro (Aldo), Russell Trent (Hobie), John Newton (Lt. Anders).

**Bury Me Deep**  
**[from the novel by Harold Q. Masur]**

**S: William Mourné**

**1/2/59**

Ellery returns unexpectedly to his New York apartment, and finds a beautiful woman, apparently drunk and making herself at home. Shortly, however, the woman dies, poisoned, and Ellery attempts to learn her identity and find her murderer.

**The Jinn City Story**

[from the novel by John Roeburt]

**S: Nicholas E. Baehr**

**1/9/59**

Ellery's plane is forced by heavy fog and bad weather to make an emergency landing at a small-town airport. There, Ellery is approached by a strange old man who asks him to help someone falsely accused of murder.

**Heir to Revolution**

[an original script]

**S: Robert E. Thompson**

**1/16/59**

The U.S. government asks Ellery to travel to a Southeast Asian monarchy which is on the verge of being taken over by Communists. Ellery is one of the few people who can identify a young man who claims to be the rightful heir to the throne.

**The Murder of Whistler's Brother**

[from the novel by David Alexander]

**S: Sheldon Stark**

**1/23/59**

The director of an art museum asks Ellery to recover a stolen Cezanne painting within 24 hours so that it can be shown at an important exhibition.

**Death Likes It Hot**

[from the novel by Edgar Box [Gore Vidal]]

**S: Robert E. Thompson**

**1/30/59**

A friend of Ellery's drowns in tropical waters, but Ellery knew his friend to be an expert swimmer, and suspects the death was murder.

**Margin of Terror**

[from the novel by William P. McGivern]

**S: Warner Law**

**2/13/59**

During a speaking engagement in Naples, "Papa George" Dimitrovich, a former Soviet official who defected to the United States, is kidnapped by Soviet agents who intend to force him to return to Russia. Ellery extends his Italian vacation, and tries to find Papa George.

**The Room Upstairs**

[from the novel by Mildred Davis]

**S: Don Ettinger**

**2/20/59**

Ellery receives a call for help from a friend, a small-town policeman who suspects that an auto accident involving the daughter of a prominent citizen is connected with the finding of the unidentifiable body of a young girl in the river. With Marion Seldes (Hilda), Judith Braun (Doris), Dayton Lummis (Mr. Corwith), Dabbs Greer (Jake).

starring Lee Philips

**Shadow of the Past**

**S: Sam Dann**

**2/27/59**

Ellery's evening at home is interrupted by rookie policeman George Prescott, whose fiancée's father has been murdered. With Lili Darvas (Rosa Koenig), George Voskovec (Dr. Koenig), Georgann Johnson (Miss Dale).

**The Chemistry Set**

**3/6/59**

Toy manufacturer Amos Roeburt asks Ellery to help recover a number of his chemistry sets for children which contained an explosive chemical compound when they were sold. With Jeff Donnell (Laura Benson), Conrad Nagel (Amos Roeburt), Ruth Warrick (Sharon).

**Cartel for Murder**

**3/20/59**

The daughter of a financier tells Ellery that her father's recent death was not suicide but murder, and accuses a man with whom her father was involved in a big business deal. With Anne Meacham (Joan Foster), Alexander Scourby (J.B. Sanford), Barbara Dana (Mimi), Meg Mundy (Margot Gaines), Martin Balsam (Costa Starchos).

**A Girl Named Daisy**

**3/27/59**

Ellery takes a girl to visit a carnival, where he meets a friend who warns him that there's trouble brewing. With Shelley Berman (Barker), Sherry Britton (Daisy), Jan Norris (Caroline), Neil Laurence (Stan), Coe Norton (Stellago), William Thourlby (Goliath), Glenn Styres (Ace).

**The Paper Tiger**

**4/3/59**

After his janitor friend is murdered, the general manager of a paintbrush firm becomes involved with gangsters. With Paul Hartman (Bill Wilson), Nancy Carroll (Fanny Wilson), Doretta Morrow (Dr. Winifred Schneider), Alvin Epstein (Elwood Parker), Kimetha Laurie (Blind Girl),

Nathaniel Frey (Tony Bevilacqua).

**The Small Elect**

4/10/59

On a book-autographing and lecture tour, Ellery is the houseguest of socialite Elizabeth Howe. While he's lecturing to a small group in the Howe library, a fuse blows, and a murder is committed in the dark. With Edna Best (Edna Brewer), Judith Evelyn (Elizabeth Howe), Edward Andrews (Dean Pirie), Happy Felton (Dr. Gavin).

**Confession of Murder**

4/17/59

Young Tommy Barrett confesses to a robbery and shooting, but retired boxer Kid Duffy doubts the boy's guilt, and turns to Ellery for help. With Wayne Morris (Kid Duffy), Glenda Farrell (Mrs. Barrett), Scott Marlowe (Tommy Barrett), Dan Morgan (Mr. Barrett), Jeanne Bal (Carol Kenneally).

**Castaway on a Nearby Island**

4/24/59

When an elderly recluse is found dead on Staten Island, Ellery notices an unusual crest on his ring, and begins an investigation which leads him to a New York society family. With Lueen MacGrath (Serena Parrish Maxwell), Lloyd Bochner (Philip Maxwell), Evelyn Ward (Vanessa Harvey).

**The Curse of Aden**

5/1/59

When socialite Celia Donahue's legendary ruby is stolen and her butler killed, police ask the help of Ellery, who has written a book about the ruby. With Barton MacLane (Capt. Beuler), Hurd Hatfield (Raymond Vincent), Julie Adams (Irving), Ruth McDevitt (Mrs. Celia Donahue), John McGiver (Dr. Kanow), Roxanne Arlen (Ann Voorhis).

**Dance Into Death**

5/15/59

Watching a ballet performance from his box, Ellery sees the prima ballerina suddenly collapse on the stage. It soon develops that the girl has been murdered. With Morey Amsterdam (J.C. Smith), Tamara Geva (Natalia Cherkasov), Wood Romoff (Nicholas Reynaud), Philip Abbott (Lt. Winslow), Martin Balsam (Gordon Egstrom), Sandra Donat (Lisa Harris).

**Body of the Crime**

5/29/59

Ellery is foreman of the jury that acquits Jeff Jordan, who was accused of the murder of his friend Ed Rawling. But after the trial Jordan

tells the newspapers that he is in fact guilty. With Gloria de Haven (Lily Bennett), Ruth Warrick (Myra Rawling), Susan Cabot (Joanne Lewis), Robert Webber (Jeff Jordan).

**This Murder Comes to You Live**

S: Ben Hecht

6/5/59

Ellery accompanies poet Alonzo Christian to a TV studio where Christian is to appear on a talk show. While the program is on the air, the poet is murdered. With Ben Hecht (Alonzo Christian), Geraldine Fitzgerald (Vanessa Rusk), Ray Walston (Archer Hempstead), Georgann Johnson (Angela Payne), Robert Emhardt (Barton Findlay), Buster Crabbe (Lt. Garver), Earl Hammond (Boris Temple), Crahan Denton (Dr. Norman McLean).

During the 1960s, Ellery made no new appearances on the small screen, but one of Queen's rare pieces of fiction without Ellery, the novelette **Terror Town** (*Argosy*, August 1956), was filmed in 1963 for THE ALFRED HITCHCOCK HOUR (CBS-TV) under the title **Terror in Northfield**. Somehow, I missed the episode when it was broadcast, but at least I can provide the cast and credits.

**Terror in Northfield**

[from Queen's novelette]

D: Harvey Hart

S: Leigh Brackett

With Dick York (Sheriff Will Pearce), Jacqueline Scott (Susan Marsh), R.G. Armstrong (John Cooley), Gertrude Flynn (Flora Sloan), Denis Patrick (Frenchy LaFont), Katherine Squire (Mrs. LaFont), Peter Whitney (Bob Hadley).

Leigh Brackett, of course, is well-known for her work with William Faulkner on the screenplay of Howard Hawks' 1946 film **THE BIG SLEEP**, based on Raymond Chandler's novel. She died early in 1978. Queen's novelette dealt with a series of violent deaths in the New England hamlet of Northfield--deaths all on the exact same spot--and with the on-again-off-again romance between the town librarian and the deputy sheriff. I would assume that the telefilm was reasonably faithful to its source.

At the beginning of the 1970s, there seemed to be a strong likelihood that Ellery would return to prime time once again. Universal Pictures prepared a two-hour pilot film for a new series. The series almost made it to regular status, but was replaced at the last minute by MC MILLAN AND WIFE, starring Rock Hudson and Susan Saint James. The pilot film itself was broadcast in its entirety, however, on NBC-TV's WORLD PREMIERE late



in 1971.

**Ellery Queen: Don't Look Behind You**  
**Producer: Leonard J. Ackerman**  
**Executive Producer: Edward J. Montagne**  
**Director: Barry Shear**  
**Screenplay: Ted Leighton**  
**[from Queen's "Cat of Many Tails"]**  
**Music: Jerry Fielding**

With Peter Lawford (Ellery Queen), Harry Morgan (Inspector Richard Queen), E.G. Marshall (Dr. Edward Cazalis), Skye Aubrey (Christy), Stefanie Powers (Celeste Phillips), Coleen Gray (Mrs. Cazalis), Morgan Sterne (Police Commissioner).

Peter Lawford played Ellery as a mod Londonesque swinger with silver-streaked hair down to the eyebrows and a veddy accent, while Harry Morgan with his Brooklyn twang was given the role of Richard Queen, Ellery's beloved--uncle. (Someone must have realized that the two stars' accents were ludicrously incompatible for a father and son, but the solution to the problem was purest idiocy.) The script attempted to update to 1970 a novel, probably Queen's best, which is inextricably rooted in the milieu of the late Forties. The rich characterizations in the novel were reduced to cardboard, and several mediocre action-and-suspense sequences without basis in the book were added to the brew, but at least the bare bones of Queen's story were not broken. The direction was reasonably proficient, the budget higher than had ever been allocated before to a film based on Queen, and on the whole, Fred Dannay told me, he liked the picture, which could have been quite a bit worse.

A few years later, another feature-length Queen pilot was filmed, this time under the auspices of the producer-writer team of Richard Levinson and William Link, who made their debut as authors in **Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine** when they were 20 years old ("Whistle While You Work", **EQMM**, November 1954). In the next 20 years, the team enjoyed huge success as TV scriptwriters, culminating in their creation of that prince among stumblebum sleuths, Lieutenant Columbo.

In the first episode of that immensely popular series ("Murder by the Book", **COLUMBO**, 9/15/71), the authors had a world-famous mystery writer murder his collaborator in perfect-crime fashion, only to be detected by Peter Falk as the shambling Lieutenant. It was no secret to Queen fans in the viewing audience that the murderer and victim were based on Fred Dannay and Manny Lee (although the series detective created by these characters **within** the teleplay was clearly

derived from Agatha Christie's Miss Marple). In their Ellery Queen pilot film, however, Levinson and Link paid a more direct tribute to the author who started them on their own careers, and on the whole they did an admirable job, backdating to the late 1940s but otherwise preserving in tact and, even in some ways, improving on the structure of Queen's interesting but flawed 1965 novel **The Fourth Side of the Triangle**.

**Ellery Queen**  
**NBC-TV, 2 Hours**  
**Directed by David Greene**  
**Produced and written by Richard Levinson**  
**and William Link**  
**Based on Queen's "The Fourth Side**  
**of the Triangle"**  
**3/3/75**

With Jim Hutton (Ellery Queen), David Wayne (Inspector Richard Queen), Ray Milland (Carson McKell), Kim Hunter (Marion McKell), Monte Markham (Tom McKell), John Hillerman (Simon Brimmer), Gail Strickland (Gail Stevens), Tom Reese (Sergeant Velie), Tim O'Connor (Ben Waterson), Vic Mohica (Ramon).

Fashion designer Monica Grey is murdered in her penthouse, pulling out the plug of her TV set and clock as a cryptic dying message (an element that wasn't in Queen's novel). Chief suspects are her Thursday evening lover, financier Carson McKell, and McKell's jealous wife and hot-tempered son, each of whom, in turn, is charged with and then cleared of the murder. Ellery uses a series of anagram clues to uncover a fourth theory and then--after issuing a most Queenlike "challenge to the viewer"--turns the dying message into the keystone of a fifth and final solution.

Unfortunately, Jim Hutton (who died of cancer in 1979) portrayed Ellery not as a dynamo of intellectual excitement and detached compassion, as Queen conceived him, but rather as a nearsighted young stumblebum, forever misplacing his glasses and bumping into people and objects like Mr. Magoo. Quite clearly, Levinson and Link's conception of Ellery was precisely that of a diffident Columboesque sloucher, and Queen purists were not happy with the decision to portray him that way.

It was Hutton's pleasantly vacuous performance as Ellery, however, that sold the series, and in the fall of 1975 **ELLERY QUEEN** returned to prime time on NBC after an absence of 17 long years. In all, 20 60 minute filmed episodes were broadcast, all but one of them original scripts. (The exception was **The Mad Tea Party**, which was based on Fred Dannay's favorite

among the early Queen short stories, and which is beyond doubt the finest filmed Queen of all time.)

The series, like the pilot, was set in the supposedly nostalgic late 1940s, and boasted big-name stars in each episode, a satisfying number of attempts to "play fair" with the viewer, and several continuing characters who had no roots in anything Queen had written, but were delightfully entertaining regardless. John Hillerman had the part of the pompous radio supersleuth Simon Brimmer, whose genius for coming up with the wrong solutions to murders outside the studio was infallible, and Ken Swofford popped up every few episodes as stereotypical 1940s Demon News-hawk Frank "Front Page" Flanagan. David Wayne was magnificently crusty as Inspector Queen, and after the first seven installments, Jim Hutton shed his klutziness, and began to play Ellery as a more human detective.

Needless to say, I was glued to my set throughout the series, and my episode-by-episode log runs as follows. ("D" stands for director, "S" for scriptwriter.)

#### ELLERY QUEEN

starring Jim Hutton and David Wayne

#### **The Adventure of Auld Lang Syne**

[from a story by William Link,

Richard Levinson, and Peter S. Fischer]

**D: David Green**

**S: Peter S. Fischer**

**9/11/75**

During a New Year's Eve party in a posh ballroom, a wealthy tyrant announces his decision to cut the other members of his party out of his will, and is murdered in a phone booth a few minutes later. Absent-minded Ellery spends most of the episode trying to get to the scene of the crime. When he arrives, he solves the murder instantly by interpreting one of the silliest dying messages in the history of detective fiction. With Joan Collins (Daisy Frawley), Ray Walston (Howard Pratt), Farley Granger (Paul Quincy), Barbara Rush (Emma Zelman), Guy Lombardo (himself), Charles Robinson (Lewis Halliday), David F. Doyle (Don Becker), Thayer David (Marcus Halliday).

#### **The Adventure of the Lover's Leap**

**D: Charles S. Rubin**

**S: Robert Pirosh**

**9/18/75**

Ellery investigates the apparent suicide of an heiress who spent her last moments duplicating the actions of the murder victim in one of Ellery's novels. This episode marks the first appearance of John Hillerman as obnoxious

radio sleuth Simon Brimmer and of the recurring insiders' joke of having all the characters named after famous mystery writers. With Don Ameche (Dr. Marsh), Anne Francis (Evelyn Chandler), Jack Kelly (J.T. Latimer), Ida Lupino (Stephanie Kendrick), Craig Stevens (Jonathan Kendrick), Susan Strasberg (Cathy Kendrick).

#### **The Adventure of the Chinese Dog**

[from a story by Gene Thompson]

**D: Ernest Pintoff**

**S: Robert Van Scoyk**

**9/25/75**

Ellery and Inspector Queen come to the little town of Wrightsville for a fishing vacation, but when the local tycoon is found bludgeoned to death with a jewel-encrusted golden dog statue he had bought as a wedding present for his daughter, the sheriff drafts the Queens into detective service. Ellery is portrayed as a superklutz, and Wrightsville as a hick village in this poor episode. With Orson Bean (Warren), Geraldine Brooks (Tilda), Eugene Roche (Sheriff Eberhardt), Robert Hogan (Gordon Wilde), Katherine Crawford (Julia), Robert F. Simon (Eben Wright), Murray Hamilton (Henry Palmer).

#### **The Adventure of the Comic Book Crusader**

**D: Peter Hunt**

**S: Robert Van Scoyk**

**10/2/75**

Ellery is one of the suspects when a ruthless comic book publisher is killed after announcing plans for an EQ comic despite Ellery's irate protests. In this episode, Ken Swofford makes his debut as demon newshawk Frank "Front Page" Flanagan. The solution is ripped bodily out of the then current movie hit **MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS**. With Tom Bosley (Bud Armstrong), Eddie Firestone (Phil), Lynda Day George (Alma), Donald O'Connor (Kenny Freeman), George Sperdak (Vincent), Joe Maher (Lyle).

#### **The Adventure of the 12th Floor Express**

**D: Jack Arnold**

**S: David H. Balkan and Alan Folsom**

**10/9/75**

Ellery investigates the "locked-cage" slaying of a newspaper publisher who was shot to death while alone in his private elevator. Meanwhile, Front Page Flanagan blunders around the premises trying to beat Ellery to the solution. This unguessable but fair impossible-crime problem is one of my favorites of the season. With Pat Harrington (Mitchell McCully), Dina Merrill (Harriet Manners), Paul Stewart (Thornton Johns), George Furth (Albert Klinger), Kip Niven (Arthur Van Dyke), Ruth McDevitt (Zelda Van Dyke), Tyler McVey (Henry Manners).

**The Adventure of Miss Aggie's  
Farewell Appearance**  
[from a story by William Link,  
Richard Levinson, and Peter S. Fischer]

**D: James Sheldon**  
**S: Peter S. Fischer**  
10/19/75

Ellery must determine which of a group of radio performers tried to poison a soap-opera star and, when that failed, shot her to death in a hospital bed. A good plot, plenty of radio nostalgia, and the pomposities of Simon Brimmer help make this a fine episode. As the broadcast date indicates, for this one week the series was shifted from Thursday to Sunday evening--and, according to Fred Dannay, did twice as well in the ratings. With Eve Arden (Vera Bethune), Bert Parks (Lawrence Denver), Betty White (Louise Demery), Paul Shenar (Wendell Warren), Penelope Windust (Anita Leslie), Beatrice Colen (Mary Lou Gumm).

**The Adventure of Colonel Niven's Memoirs**

**D: Seymour Robbie**  
**S: Robert E. Swanson**  
10/23/75

In this undistinguished episode, Ellery looks into the death of a British military officer whose recently published war memoirs exposed several traitors. With Rene Auberjonois (Marcel Fourchet), Lloyd Bochner (Colonel Niven), Gretchen Corbett (Jenny O'Brien), Robert Loggia (Alexei), Pernel Roberts (maitre d'), Nina Van Pallandt (Sonja), Peter Bromilow (Colin Esterbrook).

**The Adventure of the Mad Tea Party**  
[from the story by Ellery Queen]

**D: James Sheldon**  
**S: Peter S. Fischer**  
10/30/75

Ellery is invited to a Broadway producer's estate to discuss a stage adaptation of one of his novels, but assumes the role of detective when the producer disappears. This is not just the best episode in the series but the best filmed Queen ever, with a script that manages to be faithful to EQ's story even while filling in its single logical loophole. It's fortunate that by this point in the series Jim Hutton had stopped playing Ellery as a klutz. Once again, the characters in this version are named after famous mystery writers. With Edward Andrews (Spencer Lockridge), Jim Backus (Howard Biggers), Rhonda Fleming (Laura), Larry Hagman (Paul Gardner), Carmen Mathews (Mrs. Allingham), Julie Sommars (Emmy), Patricia Smith (Diana Gardner), George Janek (Johnny).

**The Adventure of Veronica's Veils**

**D: Seymour Robbie**  
**S: Robert Pirosh**  
11/13/75

Ellery and his father compete with Simon Brimmer on the case of a vaudeville producer who apparently died of natural causes but left behind a film clip in which he claims he was murdered. An abundance of old-time burlesque humor enlivens this amusing but rather easy to solve puzzle. With Julie Adams (Jennifer Packer), George Burns (Sam Packer), Jack Carter (Risky Ross), William Demarest (Pop Dennis), Don Porter (Greg Layton), Barbara Rhodes (Veronica Vale), Joshua Shelley (Dick Bowie), Hayden Rorke (Marcus Brady), Romo Vincent (Gus Banana).

**The Adventure of the Pharaoh's Curse**  
[from a story by Rudolph Borchert]

**D: Seymour Robbie**  
**S: Peter S. Fischer**  
12/11/75

Ellery suspects murder, not the titular curse, when the seventh owner of an ancient sarcophagus dies of an apparent heart attack. Simon Brimmer once again bedevils the Queens in this moderately enjoyable episode. With June Lockhart (Claudia Wentworth), Ross Martin (Dr. Tremaine), Simon Oakland (Norris Wentworth), Nehemiah Persoff (Mustafa Haddid), Nancy Fuller (Margie Coopersmith), Wallace Rooney (Harry the Guard), Joel Steadman (Bud Wentworth), Nedra Deen (Lois Gordon).

**The Adventure of the Blunt Instrument**  
[from a story by Michael Robert David]

**D: Ernest Pintoff**  
**S: Michael Robert David and Robert Van Scoyk**  
12/18/75

An eccentric mystery writer is murdered while having a phone conversation with Ellery about an award the dead man had just undeservedly received. This was the last new episode to be broadcast in the Thursday night time slot. With Joanna Barnes (Camellia Justice), John Dehner (George Tisdale), Eva Gabor (Magda Szomony), Richard Jaeckel (Nick McVey), Dean Stockwell (Cliff Waddell), Ellen Weston (Mary Parks), Keene Curtis (Edgar Manning), Robert Cornthwaite (Osterwald), Clyde Kusatsu (Mateo), Robert Casper (Melville).

**The Adventure of the Black Falcon**

**D: Walter Doniger**  
**S: Marc B. Ray**  
1/4/76

Ellery and Simon Brimmer are both present in a fashionable New York restaurant when one of the owners is poisoned in the wine cellar and, in his last moments, pulls down a bottle of

rare vintage whose trademark matches the insignia on the dead man's ring. With this episode, the series moved permanently to Sunday evenings in hopes of improving the ratings. With Howard Duff (Eddie Morgan), Signe Hasso (Flora Schumann), Tab Hunter (John Randall), Roddy McDowall (Armitage), Lewis Charles (Nick Kingston), Rosanna Huffman (Nancy McGuire), William Schallert (Alexander), Susan Stafford (hat check girl), George Skaff (maitre d').

#### **The Adventure of the Sunday Punch**

**D: Seymour Robbie**

**S: Larry Alexander**

**1/11/76**

An up-and-coming prizefighter dies in the ring during a match with his sparring partner, but Ellery discovers poison in the victim's water bottle, and races Front Page Flanagan for the solution to the murder. With Robert Alda (Frank Anthony), Dane Clark (Sam Hatter), Lloyd Nolan (Doc Sanford), Janet MacLachlan (Corrina Ogden), Otis Young (Joe Adams), Terrence O'Connor (Melinda Sanford), Art Aragon (Eddie), Maggie Nelson (Vera), Pervis Atkins (Rocky).

#### **The Adventure of the Eccentric Engineer**

**D: Peter H. Hunt**

**S: David P. Lewis and Booker Bradshaw**

**1/18/76**

Ellery and his father investigate the death of a famous inventor who was killed while playing with an elaborate electric-train set in the workshop. The train is fascinating but the detection undistinguished. With Arthur Godfrey, David Hedison (Roger Woods), Dorothy Malone (Carol), Ed McMahon (Lamont Franklin), Dick Van Patten (Billy Geeter), Patricia Wilson (Bridget), Bobby Sherman (Doug), Ann Reinking (Lorelei), Ellen Madison (Emily Woods), Art Ballinger (newscaster).

#### **The Adventure of the Wary Witness**

**D: Walter Doniger**

**S: Peter S. Fischer**

**1/25/76**

Ellery tries to help a college classmate who is on trial for murder, but claims he will be cleared if the "mystery woman" who witnessed the crime will come forward. When the woman who does come forward is herself murdered, Ellery and Front Page Flanagan fight for the scoop on the killer's identity. Guest star Sal Mineo was knifed to death by a street mugger shortly after this episode was broadcast. With Michael Constantine (Leo Campbell), Dwayne Hickman (Linville Hagen), Sal Mineo (Jimmy Danello), Michael Parks (Terry Purvis), Cesar

Romero (Armand Danello), Dick Sargent (Tom Celebrezze), Tricia O'Neil (Yvonne Danello), Kate Woodville (Priscilla Hagen), Sam Gilman (Judge), James Demopoulos (Nick Danello), Jackie Russell (Virginia).

#### **The Adventure of the Judas Tree**

**D: Walter Doniger**

**S: Marty Roth**

**2/1/76**

Ellery investigates when a wealthy man is stabbed to death with a Chinese ceremonial dagger and left hanging from what is popularly called the Judas tree. With Dana Andrews (Louis Martine), Bill Dana (Salvatore Mercadonte), Clu Gulager (Father Devlin), George Maharis (Dr. Tony Bender), Diana Muldaur (Paula Sherman), James Shigeta (Philip Yang), Jack Kruschen (Gunther Starr), Ted Gehring (Buford), Michael Pataki (Al Russo).

#### **The Adventure of the Sinister Scenario**

**D: Peter Hunt**

**S: Robert Pirosh**

**2/8/76**

Ellery and the Inspector are in Hollywood watching the filming of a Queen novel, when the much-hated actor playing Ellery is shot to death on camera. One of my favorites in the series. With Noah Beery (Lionel Briggs), Don DeFore (Dave Pierce), Troy Donahue (Gilbert Mallory), Vincent Price (Michael Raynor), Barbara Rush (Claire Mallory), Susan Damante (Pamela Courtney), Jack Murdock (Al Garvin), James Sikking (Steve Hewitt), Paul Carr (Lt. Braden), Karl Lucas (Sergeant Harris), Jack DeMave (Sonny North).

#### **The Adventure of the Two-Faced Woman**

**D: Jack Arnold**

**S: Robert E. Swanson**

**2/29/76**

Ellery and Simon Brimmer look into the murder of a woman art speculator who had just paid a fortune for a painting by an obscure artist. With Theodore Bikel (Sergio Vargo), Joyce Brothers (Lillian McGraw), Forrest Tucker (Clint McGraw), Vera Miles (Celeste Wakefield), Victor Buono (Dr. Friedland), Edward Mulhare (Myles Prescott), Alfred Ryder (Gravette), Diana Chesney (Edna).

#### **The Adventure of the Tyrant of Tin Pan Alley**

**D: Seymour Robbie**

**S: Robert Van Scoyk**

**3/7/76**

A popular songwriter is murdered during the musical interlude on a radio interview show, and Ellery tries to clear a friend who had just publicly accused the victim of stealing a hit

tune from him. Simon Brimmer rears his pompous head again as usual in these episodes with radio motifs, but the solution will be more obvious to veteran readers of Queen than it was to Simon. With Rudy Vallee (Alvin Winer), Polly Bergen (Dinah Winer), Michael Callan (Gary Swift), Albert Salmi (Herb Nash), Renee Jarrett (Penny Winer), Ken Berry (Paul Parker), Norman Fell (Errol Keys), Brad David (Dan Murphy), Dori Bremmer (Laura Schramm).

**The Adventure of Caesar's Last Sleep**

**D: Richard Michaels**

**S: Rudolph Borchert and Michael Rhodes**

**3/14/76**

A crusading prosecutor goes after Inspector Queen's scalp when the star witness whom the Inspector was guarding is murdered before he can complete his testimony about organized crime. With Eddie Albert (Lee Marx), Jan Murray (Ralph Caesar), Stuart Whitman (Erwin Murphy), Kevin Tighe (Jim Millay), Elizabeth Lane (Ruth Caesar), Michael V. Gazzo (Benny Franks), Erica Hagen (Melody Todd), Timothy Carey (Jay Bonner).

**The Adventure of the Hardhearted Huckster**

[from a story by Robert E. Swanson and Lewis Davidson]

**D: Edward Abrams**

**S: Robert F. Swanson**

**3/21/76**

Ellery investigates the murder of a ruthless advertising executive who was quietly eliminated in his office during the lunch hour. Meanwhile, Front Page Flanagan plans to expose the murderer on the debut of his own TV news show. With Eddie Bracken (Horace Manley), Bob Crane (Jerry Crabtree), Carolyn Jones (Rita Radcliffe), Juliet Mills (Florence Ames), Fred Beir (James Bevin Long), Herb Edelman (Max Sheldon), Chuck Bergansky (chauffeur), Maggie Nelson (Vera), Danny Wells (waiter).

**The Adventure of the Disappearing Dagger**

[from a story by Stephen Lord]

**D: Jack Arnold**

**S: Stephen Lord and Robert Van Scoyk**

**4/4/76**

Ellery probes the murder of a retired detective who was killed while investigating a five-year-old unsolved homicide. Another impossible crime situation, and a reasonably good one, brings the new episodes of the series to an end. With Mel Ferrer (Brandon Childs), Walter Pidgeon (Hamilton Drew), Dana Wynter (Alyssa Childs), Gary Burghoff (Jerry Hacker), Ronny Cox (Buck Nolan), Michele Marsh (Norma Lee

Burke), R.G. Armstrong (Sam Buffo).

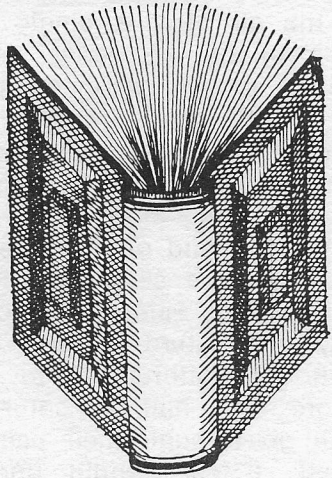
According to Fred Dannay, the series drew as many as 20 million viewers per week. Unfortunately, the networks do not consider such numbers sufficient, and Ellery Queen was taken off the air after a single season. (The overall concept of the series and apparently some leftover scripts were resurrected for a short-lived NBC series called THE EDDIE CAPRA MYSTERIES, starring Vincent Baggetta.)

As of the 53rd anniversary of the creation of Ellery Queen, this marks the end of his adventures in the land of the tube. But in view of the four separate series on the air over a 30-year period, it is safe to predict that in due time Ellery will return to the small screen again. With that faithfulness to the character created more than half a century ago future Elleries will go through their paces, the great man himself, I fear, would find it hard to predict. His fans can only wait and hope.



Olan Soule, leading man on CBS' *First Nighter* program, aired Thursdays 10:30 p.m., relaxes at home with his children—Jo Ann, 9 and Jon, 7. The show's been on the air for 16 yrs.—Olan with it.

# GYRT Looks at Books



**TV MOVIES 1981-82** by Leonard Maltin. 886 pp. Signet, New York, 1980. \$3.95. **MOVIES ON TV 1982-83** by Steven H. Scheuer. 752 pp. Bantam, New York, 1981. \$3.95. Reviewed by Michael R. Pitts.

These two large size economy paperbacks both deal with the same subject and have the same formats and prices but there the comparisons end. Maltin's book, in this fourth edition, covers some 13,000 feature films available for television with additional listings for over 1,300 movies made for television. As with previous editions, **TV Movies** provides a good guide for the armchair viewer with its succinct thumbnail sketches of each film and a fairly reliable ratings system. Scheuer's book, which goes back to 1958 and has gone through eight revisions, is far less satisfying for a number of reasons. For one thing, Scheuer covers only about 11,000 titles, or 3,300 less than Maltin, and the writeups are not nearly as good as those in **TV Movies**. For this edition "undistinguished films of the thirties, forties and fifties" have been eliminated from the text and critical comments on "some of the worst films of the past decade" have been dropped. The reader, however, is given heavy doses of the editor's ultra-liberal views, an example being his calling a mishmash like **THREE WOMEN** "a remarkable work of art."

Basically the main difference between **TV Movies** and **Movies on TV** boils down to the fact that the Scheuer book **tells** the reader what to like while Maltin's volume gives a breezy look at each film and basically says "have a good time."

-MRP

**MOVIES MADE FOR TELEVISION** by Alvin H. Marill. 399 pp. Arlington House, Westport, CT, 1980. \$29.95. Reviewed by Michael R. Pitts.

In the realm of movie books there has been a proliferation of titles on a varied number of subjects in the last dozen years or so. Many of these volumes have filled important gaps in cinema history and have added greatly to cinematic literature. On the other hand there have been a considerable number of volumes which, quite frankly, have not been of much value, except to the general reader or to a small number of fans interested in a specific area of film. Finally, there have been a smaller number of books which are of little, or any, use cinematically and one often asks the question, "Why?," when presented with such works. **Movies Made for Television** is a book that, quite honestly, can fall into all three of the above categories, depending on one's viewpoint as to its worth.

Subtitled, "The Telefeature and the Mini-Series 1964-1979," this volume is a compilation of casts, credits and plot synopsis for hundreds of movies made expressly for television. Outside of a brief introduction the book is basically an encyclopedia of telefilms with several handy indexes complimenting the main body of work. The information provided is a good roundup of technical data and is a boon for the researcher. Further the book is a big, handsome volume populated with some 350 well chosen and attractive photographs. As such it is sure to delight film buffs who are into telefeatures.

Unfortunately the book's liabilities far outweigh its assets. Although an attractive volume it is way too expensive, there are omissions and the book is lacking a comprehensive history of the telefeature. What is even more disappointing is what the book does not contain. Actually **Movies Made for Television** only tells half the story of the telefeature artform. Dealing only with movie made for TV by the networks, it completely omits such film made prior to 1964 (and there were quite a few), it leaves out the many films which received theatrical and TV release which were made from television programs and it also leaves out a number of British programs which have been issued as films in this country. The history of the telefeature is a long, complicated and fascinating one, but is a story not told in this book.

**Movies Made for Television** is a book that will satisfy those readers interested in the material it presents. It is a book which will be disappointing to those wanting a complete history of telefeatures. For most film book readers, however, it probably will hold no interest at all and most likely will be ignored.

-MRP



Al Jolson and wife Ruby Keeler are holding hands during a rehearsal break for the Chevrolet radio show of 1932 and 1933. NBC Photo. (Courtesy of Otis R. Lowe and the International Al Jolson Society Inc.)



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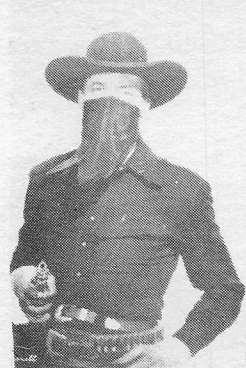
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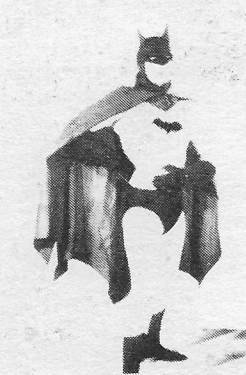
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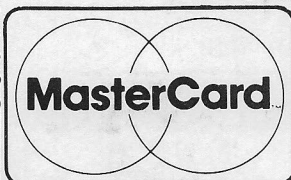
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