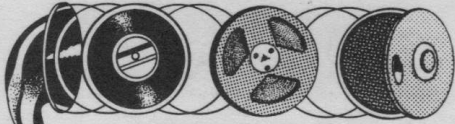
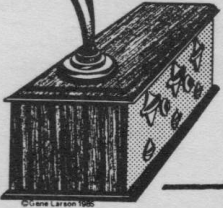


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Letters



from our readers

Dear Mr. Snyder,

I read with interest your article in the Spring 1995 NARA NEWS. Your OTR program sounds very similar to my one hour introductory class to OTR that I gave at Humanities Nite at our local high school several years ago. As the class gathered I handed out a page of trivia questions while playing a tape of old radio theme music in the background. My talk begins with about three minutes of radio history (facts, figures, networks, etc.) and then play the first 2-3 minutes of "The War of the Worlds" with a brief description of the events which followed over the next several days. Next I describe the Amos and Andy phenomenon and play the excerpt where Andy is shot at the altar and the national attention which followed. Bloopers and the genius of the sound men are featured in several excerpts from different shows. Dramatic radio is covered with the last five minutes of Suspense "Sorry Wrong Number" with Agnes Moorehead. Comedy and commercial interjection is combined in a Fibber McGee and Molly sketch featuring Harlow Wilcox (Waxy). More comedy and blooper with the famous "grease rack" episode on Jack Benny and the follow up on the next week's show. I close with the Jack Benny/Fred Allen feud and how it carried over onto other shows.

I have refined my presentation over the years to fit the audience. Recently I have been asked to do theme shows for various organizations (Thanksgiving, National Nurses Appreciation Week, tax season, etc.). I pick the majority of my excerpts from the comedy shows as I have found that dramatic shows are deadly for large group listening.

Now, my reason for writing. I have been asked to do hour shows at a local nursing home. The first time I did my "Do you Remember?" give and take presentation, but it fell flat. There was no response. The next two times I just played some comedy shows, introduced the shows with a little bio sketch and just let them sit in their wheelchairs and listen. Some left, some fell asleep and a very few laughed at the jokes and seemed to enjoy listening. My question: any hints on how to get a more active response from this kind of audience?

Dan Schryver
154 School Road
Voorheesville, NY 12186

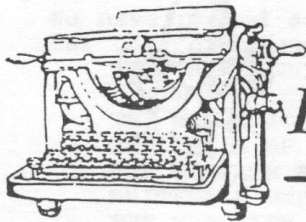
EDITOR'S RESPONSE: I just recently put my program on in a nursing home for the first time. I received much the same response as Dan. Does anyone have any suggestions for him/us.

Mr. Snyder:

As one of NARA's newest members I would like to make a suggestion. Since communication via computer is becoming more popular, I thought that sharing E-Mail addresses among members may be a good idea. This new medium could allow members to share their interests and possibly make new friends.

Marc Flanagan
Rocky River, Ohio

EDITOR'S REPLY: I'll be happy to list whatever address people want used. In the classified ads, you will note I have used both of Marc's addresses.



From The Editor's Desk....

We'd like to welcome Charles Sexton as one of our "regular" columnists for the NARA NEWS. He is the author of the massive Lum and Abner piece that concludes in this issue, and he has now agreed to provide us with regular columns. Welcome Charles.

You will note that some of our regular columnists are missing from this issue. I've been rather overwhelmed with a large number of columns sent in by our members and so I have asked the regulars to permit me to "bump" them from time to time so that we can get everyone's stuff in without too much delay. The columnists have been most gracious in letting me do this. I am absolutely delighted with this turn of events, with so many of you sharing your thoughts with the rest of us. This "extra" material adds variety to that of the regulars, and we do indeed want as wide a range of ideas as we can get. This also gives our nine regulars a rest from time to time. The contributions of all of you are both appreciated and needed.

Last November I had the opportunity of meeting Bill Murtough, one of the "notables" from radio's golden age. I found him to be a fascinating individual and I asked him to write something for us. I'm very pleased that he consented to do so and you will find his very interesting column on page seven. We also welcome back Jack French with his usual very well researched information.

You will note elsewhere in this issue that we have reduced the cost of our commercial advertising. Our original rates were probably somewhat out of line. We feel that this new price structure is just what it should be.

I plan to attend the Newark convention in October, the SPERDVAC convention in November, and the Lum and Abner convention next June (you can find information on each of these on page 47). I look forward to renewing my friendship with many of you. If I haven't met you before, and you will be in attendance at one of these programs, I hope that you will introduce yourself to me. I certainly look forward to your comments and suggestions, whatever they might be. And if you've never attended an OTR convention, I hope you will plan on doing so in the near future. You will be delighted with what you encounter.



JIM SNYDER

THE SCANFAX UPDATE

by
DON ASTON



I take my computer in hand and rather hesitantly bring another report to NARA's membership. Well, here goes another effort. I hope I don't put my foot in it again.

I stated previously that we do not plan on making the SCANFAX Collection part of a rental library. I should have been more specific by saying "the current rental library." This has proven to be the main problem with the membership. We need to keep this special collection separate. I really did not intend for all of you to think that you couldn't have access to the material. I just didn't know how to get it out to you. We want you to be able to rent the material and also to have your own copy. The copy can be made by NARA for you to keep or you can copy a borrowed Archive cassette.

Right now the cost for borrowing would be \$1.25/cassette. The borrower would pay for the return shipping charges. We would prefer a UPS shipping address from the member and UPS shipping on the return. The more cassettes borrowed, the cost would decline, such as 12 cassettes for \$14.00, 24 cassettes for \$25.00. Members would have the cassettes for 30 days. After that time an additional charge would be added. Borrowed cassettes would have to be shipped back to the Archive by the date in the package.

If you wanted to keep the cassette, the cost would be \$5.00/cassette donation to NARA.

There are other ways a member may wish to use the SCANFAX Collection such as for research and looking for specific material. Some members may wish to have something from the collection not yet available on cassette or to see if something is in the collection. We would charge a search fee and a recording fee. That could amount to \$10.00 per hour for a member and \$20.00 or more per hour for non-members.

Why would you pay for special services? Remember, we do not have any paid staff in NARA. We are all volunteers. In order to place material on cassette, we must take time from our busy schedules to do this. If we must search for a specific program or material, the person doing the special search should receive something for their time and effort.

At this time, the collection is still housed in a secure environmentally controlled storage area. We are placing the reels on shelves as time permits. This is a slow process as this can only be done on week ends. We have access during the week, but most cannot put in time on week days.

We have placed some shows on cassette for the member's use. So far the following are available.

THE SIX SHOOTER w/James Stewart---39 shows, the complete series.

THE MAGNIFICENT MONTAGUE W/Monty Wooley --- 44 shows

THE HALLS OF IVY w/Ronald Colman -----28 shows

THE PRIVATE FILES OF REX SAUNDERS w/Rex Harrison ---14 shows

WHITEHALL ONE TWO ONE TWO-----21 SHOWS

THE MARRIAGE w/Jessica Tandy, Hume Cronin ----24 shows

TALES OF THE VALIANT-----10 shows

CHRISTOPHER LONDON w/Glen Ford -----2 shows

THE FORTY MILLION-----4 shows

We have copied some news from 1938 thru 1940 but as yet it is just random shows. The above listed programs are available. If you wish a list of show titles and dates for these shows, send \$1.00 and a self addressed stamped envelope requesting the series you would like. The shows may be obtained on cassette at the rental prices listed in this article. Send requests to NORTH AMERICAN RADIO ARCHIVES, LTD., SCANFAX COLLECTION, P.O. BOX 1392, LAKE ELSINORE, CA. 92531.

I hope I have not caused any more concerns about this new collection or NARA in general. As shows are found and copied to cassette, we will inform the membership. If I have raised new issues that raise more questions, please contact me directly. If you have any input or suggestions that can help NARA in anyway, I want to hear from you. NARA is growing and is experiencing growing pains.

EDITOR'S NOTE: NARA's treasurer, Don Aston, works very hard for this organization, as you can see from his column above. He puts a great deal of his time and money into this and his efforts on our behalf are greatly appreciated. On the following page you will find a reprint of a newspaper article from last winter. This will help you get to know this dedicated individual a little better.

Arizona Adventure

December 29, 1994

Snake, Rattle and Roll

Last summer I began a routine of hiking up Camelback Mountain at dusk almost every weekday. To get into the groove of things, I wore a Walkman so I could hike/run up the trail to music. One evening I was deep into the rhythms of Peter Gabriel when a hiker coming toward me stopped dead in his tracks. His face became white and I wondered if there was something about me that really frightened him. I stopped, since

I couldn't get around him, and shouted over Gabriel's chiming in my ear, "Is something wrong?" He was looking down, so I looked where he looked — something was wrong. A rattlesnake sat coiled in the middle of the path, and I hadn't heard its warnings because of my headphones. We both safely maneuvered around the snake, but since that day I haven't put my Walkman back on when climbing Camelback.

Randy Stevens

Phoenix

'Mr. Old-Time Radio' keeps shows from vanishing

Sunday, January 22, 1995 •

THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Story and photo by Gene A. Dees

LAKE ELSINORE

When Don Aston was growing up in the Los Angeles area in pre-television days, his parents wouldn't let him listen to scary radio dramas like "Weird Circle" and the "Haunting Hour."

More than 40 years later, Aston can listen to almost any radio show he wants.

He owns more than 4,000 reels and more than 16,000 cassette tapes containing approximately 100,000 broadcasts. Included in the number are many of the scary radio shows he wasn't allowed to hear years ago.

Uncounted thousands of people listen to programs retrieved from the Lake Elsinore resident's archives, which include radio dramas aired nightly on KNX (1070 AM) at 9 p.m. and 2 a.m. and Sundays at 8 p.m. on KRTM (88.9 FM) in Temecula.

It's not that Aston started out to be "Mr. Old-Time Radio," a moniker attached to him in October at the Old-Time Radio Convention in New Jersey. It happened by accident — something that grew out of an idea to help students in the English classes he taught in Inglewood.

When Aston was born in 1938, radio, not television, reigned as the home entertainment medium. While the scary shows were off-limits to him, such shows as "Your's Truly, Johnny Dollar" and "Fiber McGee and Molly" were not.

In 1969, Aston wanted to nurture his students' creativity and decided to use some old radio shows as a tool to teach them about dramatic writing. A friend had a few tapes of old programs and loaned them to Aston for his classroom.

Aston had his students listen to shows from "The Lux Radio Theater: The Theater of the Mind" and then write their own drama scripts.

Not all the students were captivated, but Aston was. He became fascinated with radio shows and began seeking them out and collecting them.

Twenty-five years later his collection has become a repository of radio entertainment history and is used for background in television and movie productions. No longer does Aston have to seek out radio show collectors and dealers across the nation: The collectors and dealers come to him.

A visit to his archives is like a lapse into history — albeit an updated model.

Stacks of cassette tapes present the same actors, the same music, the same comedians, and the same laughter originally captured in radio studios decades ago. Some corners are filled with the original discs on which the shows were first recorded. Tape duplicators spin out stories that repeat the original versions recorded by Orson Welles, Vincent Price or William Conrad.



Don Aston is surrounded by recording equipment and radio memorabilia in his archives of radio broadcasts.

Lodged among the material are 1930s-era radios, posters advertising shows like "The Shadow" and "Lights Out" and framed collections of admission tickets used by studio audiences to see live broadcasts. There are also secret decoder rings and other novelties that came from Depression-era cereal boxes filled with the products of program sponsors.

Aston considers "Gunsmoke" to be among radio's best programs. He can quote the opening lines without blinking, giving the exact number of paces between Marshal Matt Dillon's office and the Long Branch Saloon.

He knows as much about associated Gunsmoke trivia — including the program and its actors' transitions into television.

For instance, Matt Dillon's radio voice was William Conrad, who later went on to TV prominence as the TV detective Frank Cannon in "Cannon" and the "Fatman" in the series "Jake and the Fatman."

When it came time to select the voice for Dillon, everyone said "don't get Conrad," Aston said. "William Conrad was everywhere on radio in 1951, so they auditioned nearly all the available actors before coming back to Conrad."

William Conrad's voice just seemed to fit the part of Matt Dillon, according to the producers of the show. So Conrad won the contract. When the show went to television, actor James Arness got the part.

The only case of a television show going from TV to radio was "Have Gun Will Travel." It appeared on television first and was adapted to radio not long before the radio shows died out in 1962.

Most old radio shows had a less enduring outcome. Seventy-five to 80 percent have been lost for various reasons, Aston estimates.

Some shows were live and never recorded. Many were recorded on large, fragile glass discs and broke. Some were thrown out to make room for newer recordings.

Originally, the discs were made of aluminum but World War II demands for the metal changed that.

A more recent loss occurred about five years ago when Armed Forces Radio wanted to get rid of thousands of old discs. Aston and a nonprofit group called North American Archives Ltd. tried to save the recordings.

A conflict developed about legal ownership and Armed Forces Radio would not release the discs. The entire collection became part of a landfill in Long Beach. North American Archives was not allowed access to the discs before their disposal so Aston does not know which shows were lost.

Newly discovered discs occasionally turn up when an heir discovers a cache while cleaning out a relative's attic or basement.

In such cases, Aston receives a call asking if he has equipment to play the discs or copy them to tape. It is a task Aston gladly performs because it means a heretofore "lost" radio show will wind up preserved in the archives.

What does Aston consider his most notable achievement?

"I guess it would have to be my preserving all the old Gunsmoke radio shows," he said. "Gunsmoke is my favorite."

Aston's work helps the movie industry. He sometimes is asked to supply radio shows for "background color." He supplied the radio sequences for the TV movie about Life photographer Margaret Bork-White and the background radio sequences for the TV miniseries "The Winds of War."

Aston is supplying period radio sequences for the soon-to-be-released motion picture "Devil in a Blue Dress," featuring a Los Angeles detective.

It's Aston's knowledge of the subject that gives life to the requests. He found some shows of the era that included ads for Bullocks department store and a circus appearing in Los Angeles at the time.

Over the years Aston put together a catalog of his available radio shows. It has grown into a 300-page, inch-thick book used by collectors as a reference.

Aston's reputation as an authority on the subject of old-time radio has grown significantly since his Inglewood teaching days.

Don Ramlow of Michigan, an official of Friends of Old-Time Radio, introduced Aston as a speaker at the 1994 national convention in New Jersey and dubbed him "Mr. Old-Time Radio."

The description is accurate, said Jay Hickerson of Hamden, Conn., one of the convention's organizers and its master of ceremonies.

Aston "has done much more than just collect old radio programs," Hamden said. "He has been at the forefront of preservation efforts to ensure that the art form will be with us for many years to come."

PHILLIP MORRIS PLAYHOUSE

by William Murtough



Bill Murtough was the engineer for such radio shows as the JIMMY GRIER ORCHESTRA, LOWELL THOMAS, GRAND CENTRAL STATION, and the PHILLIP MORRIS PLAYHOUSE. We welcome him to these pages as he shares some of his remembrances from one of these popular radio series.

The Phillip Morris Playhouse was one of my favorite shows. That was back in the early 50's. I did it for about two years. It originated from the CBS Playhouse 2 on West 45th Street, between Time Square and Eighth Ave. This was formerly a legitimate theater and still had the ice bin in the basement for the ice for the air cooled theater. That was my echo chamber and it worked very well in that particular studio.

The director of the show was Charles Martin. Not only a good director, but a nice friend. I knew he was a bit eccentric, but it merely amused me. We had a very good two years that I did the show with him. (He would also try to take care of my personal affairs). He was really something. The Associate Director was Gene Hite, who was an older man, a very gentle soul. Knew the business from A to Z. Worked with Kostelanitz in the past and was a very good associate director. Charlie counted on him. In fact it was Gene who was responsible for me being on the show.

The orchestra was conducted by Ray Block. It was a full sized studio orchestra doing the music. Sometime later we switched to recorded music but that was another story.

Ray Block was replaced by Elliot Lawrence who was a dance band leader. Came from Philadelphia, was quite well known, real nice gentleman, young fellow. We became quite good friends. Ray Block, thinking back on it now, probably had to do a Sunday night television show. This was when Phillip Morris Playhouse was on Sunday evenings and probably they had taken Ray for the Ed Sullivan Show and that's probably what happened to the orchestra later on. They didn't have enough musicians, but we'll get to that.

Elliot was our regular conductor for quite some time, the voice of Johnny was Johnny Roventini, a little fellow who stepped out of the store windows every Sunday evening and paged "Call for Phillip Morris". His brother Frank was always with him. We also had a very friendly relationship over the years. Jack Amerine was doing the sound effects. He was an oldtime sounds effects man. I was a little bit apprehensive. Jack could be pretty caustic and when we were first assigned to the show I thought that this might be not too good a relationship. However, within a weeks time, I guess, I couldn't do without him. He was a joy. We got along fine and I counted on him, I was very unhappy when he would be off on a vacation. His replacement was Bob Mott who was very capable also. Nice guy. The announcers that I remember, were Don Briggs, Joe King, and Frank Simms. It was the Biow Agency with Les Tomlin as the contact. We had a regular cast of characters. James Broderick, who was Mr. Biow's son-in-law, was a newcomer. Mr. Biow didn't want him to be an actor. Charlie was always afraid he was going to get fired for using him, but he did anyhow because he liked Jimmy and so Jimmy was with us regularly. That was his beginning.

Robert Culp was a college student on the west coast. He had won a college contest but he quit college, came to New York and showed up much to Charlie's horror. Charlie was very upset about that, felt guilty because he had quit college but he took him on also doing small parts. Charlie's girlfriend, Jewell Lane, a nice little gal, also did small parts.

Then we had the regulars, Ward Wilson, Ed Begley, who used to drive Charlie crazy. Charlie used to always have coffee and Danish for us. And with the coffee and Danish, when it appeared, there was always a container of orange juice for Charlie. Ed used to get into it and drink the orange juice and then also he would, in front of Charlie, tell the cast that he had bought the coffee and Danish. He would infer it. He would say that "I hope you all enjoyed my treat this morning." Charlie would fume.

Betty Garde, who was an old timer. Arthur Vinton, my nice friend, Alice Frost. I knew her really, because I knew her brother long before. Alice, when she would be on the show, we'd always go to the Picadilly Hotel for lunch together. This wouldn't go over too well with the actors, as they didn't associate with the engineers. When they'd ask Alice if she was going to join them for lunch, she would say, "No. I'm going with Bill." That just got a dirty look.

Jerome "Jerry" Cowan was also a regular with us. The show was always wrapped around a noted star. A noted star would be a movie star usually, sometimes a stage star, but it would normally be a movie star who would have the lead in the show and I forgot to mention my stage crew in that Play House. Amos Bond, Bill Young, George O'Mally, and Joe Rocks, little Joe Rocks. They were life long friends of mine afterward. They could never do enough for me, and I could never forget them. They were absolutely the tops, the nicest guys that you could ever want to work with. Anything that they thought I needed, I had it.

As I said, we did have noted people on the show. One week we had a noted English couple whose names I'm not sure of, I think I remember, but I won't try to identify them, for several reasons. These shows were on the stage of a legitimate theater. The normal set up was that we had a large orchestra, which was upstage and on the apron was always one cast mike. A 44BX cast mike on a stand sideways to the audience. That was the way we did it in the theaters. The actors would work on either side of the microphone and none had their back to the audience and the audience could see them.

Well this particular couple got started on the rehearsal. Charlie always worked out in the studio. Only Gene and I would be in the control room. I would set a microphone on the apron for him, so he could talk to me. There seemed to be a little problem this day with this particular couple. First of all let me explain that we only had five actors on the show, it was about as small a cast as we ever had. We normally only worked with the one cast mike, Charlie liked it that way. Well this couple was fussing, so Charlie stopped the run-through and came into the control room and said, "I've got a problem out there. These two people want two mikes. They want an extra mike." and I said, "Well that's no problem, I've got a room full of them back stage." "No, no. I don't want them to have it." he said, "you know the trouble with them is, it isn't that they are crowded, they're snooty. They're snooty English people and they don't want to work on the same cast mike with the maid. Of course they didn't know that the maid was Charlie's girl friend Jewell, which didn't help matters any. So we talked it over and I said that I'd be happy to do it. But Charlie said, "no, no. I don't want you to do it."

He said, "Can you think of a reason that you can give me that it won't work?" I said "I think I can do that." So he said "OK. Go on and get another mike and put it out for them, give us about a few pages in script and then come up with your reason why we can't have the two mikes."

So he went back out, I put up the second mike. The couple thought they had won their point. They didn't know Charlie. So we started to continue the rehearsal. After a couple of pages, I hit the talk back and told Charlie I was having a problem with the two mikes. Well we put on an academy winning performance. I was the one getting beaten and Charlie was being pretty tough. He wanted to know what the problem was, and I said "the two microphones won't phase". Now if that had been true, all you'd have to do is rotate the microphones 180 degrees and it would be fine. But they didn't know that. So he brow beat me. I'm telling you, you wouldn't believe it. He said that I didn't know my job, that I didn't know what I was doing and so forth, to a point that this couple was getting so upset that they were begging him to take the second mike out. He was saying, "Well that engineer in there, he's getting paid enough. He's not so stupid that he can't figure this thing out, and so forth." Well, finally he gave into their insistence. He said, "Alright. Come out and put the mike away." And they went on and everything went fine, and of course when they weren't looking, Charlie turned around, took the big cigar out of his mouth, waved it and gave me a big wink and a big grin and we were on our way. That was the way Charlie was. It was a great performance.

Another day one of the famous actresses came in late. He was in the control room shooting the breeze with me and he was furious. He was calling this gal about everything you could think of to me. He was really ripping her off. "Who does she think she is..." and so forth. Well, when she came in the stage entrance and came walking around the front of my control room, which was on the audience level, looking up at the stage. Charlie dashed out. He put on this magnificent performance of, "Oh my dear. How beautiful you look today and how good it is

to see you." Well he just fell all over her. And then as he leaned around back of her it was the big grin and wink, and we went to work.

On another night, at this point we were working out of the 52nd Street studio building(I don't know why we were changed, but we were working out of the big studio on the second floor, Studio 22, which was over studio 21, the Godfrey Studio, a big high audience type studio) and Paulette Goddard was the star. She and Charlie had been in the control room talking about getting a partnership deal together. It was like listening to a couple of professional financial wizards. It was very funny.

After the show Paulette was sort of tired and she knew that there was a big crowd outside the studio, waiting for autographs and so forth. She was complaining that she didn't feel up to it. I said, "Well, I can take you out and they won't even see you." So I took her down to the basement level. A lot of people didn't know, including some of my peers, that there was a passage way between that building and our office building, where my engineering headquarters were. In the basement of this building was the field shop, maintenance shop, for our technical equipment. As I was coming up the basement stairs with Paulette on my arm, one of our field engineers, who had a thing for girls, (he was always taking his camera to the night clubs on remotes, and would photograph the show girls) was just starting down the steps. He saw me coming out of the basement with Paulette Goddard, I thought he was going to fall down the steps. He didn't know there was the passage way between the two buildings. I never told him differently, I let it rest at that. So I took her out the front door of the office building and we walked through the crowd. We walked right by the people that were standing there waiting for her to come out the next door exit. No one saw her. I hailed a cab, put her in it and waved good-bye. I felt sorry for the guests, they were still standing out there on the sidewalk waiting for her to come out. I don't know how long they stood there. But the show itself was fascinating. It was a good show to do. Very professional. And Charlie was a genius.

We'll get to the story of when we went to Louisville to do the show. That's a whole other segment. But we did lose our live orchestra, as I say, went to recorded music and it did lose, for me, a lot of prestige, but it was still a good show to do. We had a good time doing it and also I always felt that I learned an awful lot from my friend, Charlie Martin. He was certainly a genius. I did hear wild stories about him when he was a writer on March of Time. But, I only saw him go berserk once once. That is part of what follows.

At one point it was decided to take the whole show, this is when we had the live orchestra and so forth, down to Louisville, Kentucky. This meant, quite a trip, very big show and equipment and so forth. This was the home of the sponsor, Phillip Morris and I don't know if there was any particular reason for it, but, there was a big auditorium in Louisville. The first thing that happened was...I don't know if I already knew about this assignment or not...but my boss called me in and said that somebody had gotten to Charlie and had given Charlie a big pitch that he didn't need to take his engineer with him. That the local station could do it. So, Van, my boss, who didn't normally do things too well, this time I had to hand it to him. He agreed 100% with Charlie. He said, "That's fine. We'll have our affiliate station down there supply the engineer, we'll supply all the equipment and all the help we possibly can. We'll do everything we need to do to get the job done and I think it's an excellent idea. And it would save the agency money..." and on and on, He agreed 100%. Then he came up with just one remark. "Just remember Charlie, you don't have Bill with you."

That changed the whole aspect of the thing. And as it turned out, it was a good thing that it happened that way. I don't know what would have happened, it would have been a disaster, as we found out afterward. Well, anyhow, I must have had 20 - 25 pieces of equipment and I had to go by train. Had to have a pick-up truck. We had a regular fellow named Timmy that did this for us, take me to the station, get the porters to put the equipment on the train, all that sort of thing. A lot of the equipment. I had to have a double bedroom in the Pullman. Made for two people! the idea being that anything with tubes in it had to be with me in the bedroom. That was as company policy. Lot of people didn't realize a lot of our policy was made by CBS. A lot of times they thought that it was a union contract. It wasn't, it was company policy. Much, much stronger than any Union contract. That was the deal.

So, Timmy took me down to the railroad station and we put all of the electronic equipment in the bedroom, and we put the rest of it in a baggage car.

The train was not going to go directly to Louisville. The Pullman was going to Louisville, though, but the train was not. There was a change of trains in Pittsburgh the next morning. It was, I think, in the evening when I left. Anyhow, the train was going to change there. I remember getting off after the train was reorganized to make sure my baggage car was still up front. Those were some of the things you had to remember when you were traveling, that you had to get your equipment there.

I got to Louisville, the local engineer of, I think it was WHAS, was waiting for me with a truck and we loaded the gear on it. Now this fellow was a very helpful guy but this was all new to him and he would have been the guy from the local station. He had no idea of what was going on.

Oh, by the way, we were going to tape record this. We were not going to do it live. Probably a conflict of nights. It must have been for some occasion and we aired on a Sunday night. So we were to tape the deal, I had two big Ampex machines with me, I think they were the big 350's, two cases each. One for the electronics and one for the actual mechanical end of it. Four of those, plus everything else. I don't know how many mike stands, a dozen or so. Amplifiers, PA speakers, you name it. There was everything. So we got to this auditorium and this guy helped me, he was my assistant, for the whole day. Helped me set the thing up, we got it pretty well organized. However, that was when disaster started. First of all, we didn't take the house orchestra. Instead, Elliot Lawrence, was playing at a night spot, not in the immediate vicinity, but near enough to be useful. So he brought his dance band to do the music. Now, there is a vast difference between a dance band and a studio orchestra playing mood music. But, anyhow, that's what we had.

Then it was augmented with eight local musicians. Eight violinists and they were not exactly the greatest violinists. They were no Rubinoff. So that was a bad deal. The orchestra was not too great. Elliot of course was great, but the orchestra was not.

Then they had a sound effects man from the local station, who had never done sound effects. It was a very simple show. I guess Charlie knew what he was getting into. All I remember was there were foot-steps on the stairs. I finally taught the fellow how to do foot-steps on stairs, after watching my friend, Jack Amerine.

The star of the show was Patricia Morrison, who was doing Broadway musicals. I don't think she ever did movies. She did Broadway musicals and concerts. Very fine vocalist. Very fine singer. We also had our usual group, Jimmy Broderick and Robert Culp, Jewel Lane. I remember Ward Wilson and Betty Garde went with us. I don't remember who else. Anyhow, we

got into this thing. Then something happened with my end of it. I had these two machines set up and when I tried to record with them, I was getting a high pitched squeal, or whistle. I'd never run into this before, I never did afterwards. So I was having my problems in the control room. But during the run-through...all this talent that had never seen a radio studio or done a radio show before, let alone a dramatic one. And things were getting pretty bad. So Charlie came streaking into the control room shrieking, "It's amateur night in Dixie!" Never forgot that, because it was, it was amateur night in Dixie, Louisville, Kentucky.

Then he sat down and went to pieces. He absolutely went to pieces. And, instead of getting upset, I guess, I got annoyed. I turned to him and said, "Charlie. For crying out loud. Have you ever lost a show yet." and he said "No." and I said, "Well why in the hell are you starting now? I've got enough problems with these tape machines and everything else and I don't need this." And he pulled himself together and he said, "You know, you're right Bill" And he went back out and we had no more problems. We did the show. It came off pretty well. But I never forgot Louisville Kentucky. There one tag to this thing! We were using the large 10" reels of tape and Charlie had told me about somebody from NBC riding on a Pullman with the tapes of a show and the generator wiped them clean. That's where those old Pullmans got their power. They had generators underneath with belts connecting them to the axles. They had batteries to sustain them, but the generators were what kept up the power, He said that this fellow had a room like I did over the trucks where the generator was and that it wiped the tape

clean. Well, that was a long trip back to New York. I happened to have the tapes in a steel case and had them up on the luggage rack away from the floor but I was not at ease until I got back to New York in the studio and found out that the generators had not wiped the tapes.

I don't know if that was a true story that Charlie told me or not, but it certainly did me in. Incidentally, when we went to the recorded music, my boss called me in and told me that the company wanted to switch to recorded music. He thought it was for economy reasons, but that didn't make any sense, because they weren't paying the bill anyhow. The sponsor was paying the bill.

Well, anyhow, he told me that he wanted me to sell Charlie on the idea. He was afraid that Charlie was going to get upset and the company wanted me to pacify him and get him to accept this. So, I did. I talked to Charlie, and as I said, we had a very good relationship and he agreed to the change without any argument. The company was very relieved at that.

They built up some transcription machines, RCA 70-C's. I think they put three of them on a dolly with a mixing unit and all the facilities for them. The guy that was going to do this was going to work out on the stage, not in the control room. He would be out on the stage where Charlie could see him, and he could see Charlie and so forth. It was a very good arrangement. The only problem was that a fellow who was in sound effects, who was not exactly the greatest, somehow got wind of this deal. Knew that there was an extra fee in it, which was the way it worked then. We got extra fees and over time and so forth. We did very well on these shows.

So, he knew about this. He knew there was some money in the show, somehow, he pitched and got the job of doing the recorded music, not really being with it. It's all entirely different than doing sound effects. So the first Sunday, we were still in the playhouse at that time and we started the run-through. Came the first music cue and the recorded music wasn't feeding through. This chap came in and said there was something wrong with his equipment, it wasn't working, plus some very uncomplimentary remarks about CBS equipment. This was not too good a thing to happen, particularly after the whole sales pitch that went on to convince Charlie that it would be a satisfactory arrangement.

he made an issue of it, I guess it was out on the stage because it was done in front of people, including Charlie and he was berating this new equipment that he had. That it was a bunch of junk and so forth and that it wasn't working so on. Then he came into the control room and called for the maintenance shop to send someone over to find out what was wrong and then took off. When the maintenance man came, I had no idea what went wrong because it was out on the stage. I had no idea what he did. They were furious because they didn't know what the problem was, I didn't know what it was, except that this guy said it didn't work. Well, it was not a nice affair. Anyhow they finally got it working and it came off alright. The next day my boss called me in and had heard what had happened and he said, "If I find out who the SOB was that made those remarks to those people after we got through selling the deal, I'm going to fire him." Well, I never knew why he didn't know who it was. Well, maybe he didn't want to because he didn't want to fire the guy, but he was pretty sore about it.

Well, anyhow, somehow that guy got taken off the show and then another engineer made a deal with them to do the job and pick the music, he had a lady friend who was hired to help him. The two of them, not only did the music but they picked it and it worked alright, except that I found out that the fellow was trying to get my job. One day when I had him cover for me in the control room while I went to the sand box, when I came back my AD, my friend Gene Hite, told me never to go out of the control room, never have him come in, just leave the mikes set. This fellow was trying to make a name for himself in the control room.

Then one week I found out that my friend, Gene, who had been with Charlie long years before I was, was dumped. He was dumped off the show. I couldn't figure this out why, because he was an excellent Associate Director. When I got to the studio, the following Sunday morning, Charlie took me into the control room. When we got inside he said, "You know that Gene has been relieved from the show" and I said "Yes."

Then he said, "Well, I don't know what anyone told you, but I want you to hear it from me directly, so that there is no mix up in why it happened."

What had happened was, I didn't notice it but, it happened the previous Sunday during the run-through that Gene corrected Charlie, he was out in the studio, and the cast was reading the script and Gene corrected him on something, in the way it was being handled or something, but he corrected Charlie in front of the cast. And Charlie explained, "Now that isn't the problem.

The problem is that he did it in front of the cast. If he had taken me aside and told me, there would have been no problem, but he did it in front of the cast and it makes me loose my grip with the cast. I've got to be in charge when I'm directing." And he said, "You know, the problem was, he was right and I was wrong. If he hadn't been right, there would not have been a problem."

Well, that was Charlie. He dropped Gene, but he admitted that Gene was right and knew that he was wrong. That was Charlie Martin. I'm telling you, he was quite a guy.

In case you're wondering about these Associate Directors, they're called AD's. Originally they were called production men. They went through several titles but their main job was timing of the script and advising the director what the time element was, how long, how much they were over and helping them find cuts, they didn't direct at all. They were just an assistant really to the director and kept the records. They also kept the studio log. That wasn't the FCC log, just a sheet of data of who the performers were, time elements, and so forth. They were CBS staff and most of them were pretty nice guys.

Well, when Gene left the show, we had a new guy on the staff, Henry Howard. He had been a director for one of the Hummert shows, I've forgotten which one of the shows, Mr. Chameleon, FBI, one of the Hummert shows. He had been with them and he came on staff as an AD. The first week we were doing the show, he decided to exercise his so called authority. During the rehearsal, he commented to me that he didn't think I handled the board fade properly, that I should do it in a different manner. I explained to him that I worked for the director and the director was the one who decided whether he liked it and what way I did it and if he didn't like it then I would change it. That settled that and I had no more problems with him. It was a matter of protecting his turf. Some of them wanted to direct and we had a little hassle about that. There also was a time when they wanted to throw the hand cue to start the show, which normally the engineer did. Finally the company came into it and said, OK, you throw the hand cue when the engineer tells you. So the engineer couldn't throw the hand cue to start the show. He had to tell the AD to throw it. The engineer didn't mind much. He had other things to worry about.

So that's the story of the Phillip Morris Play House.



JIMMY DURANTE is a new book by David Bakish, who is an English professor at the City University of New York.

From his beginnings as a Coney Island piano player, Jimmy Durante was one of America's best-loved entertainers for nearly seven decades. Known for his distinctive "schnozzle" and raspy voice, he became a stage, screen and recording star.

Every aspect of Durante's career is covered here: his early vaudeville and Broadway days; the 38 movies he made; his radio appearances; the mixture of new and old material he brought to television in the late 1950's; and his work as a singer and composer.

The book runs 303 pages and costs \$29.95. It may be ordered from McFarland & Company, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640 or call (800) 253-2187.

OTR AVIATOR HEROES

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BY JACK FRENCH



The Wright Brothers were certainly our first true aviators, but the airplane had little impact on our popular culture until the sky battles of World War I over Europe. The exploits of those flimsy bi-planes spawned a torrent of pulp fiction magazines, kids novels, and silent films. By May 1928, exactly one year after Lindbergh's solo crossing of the Atlantic, we had our first nationally syndicated comic strip with an aviator hero, "Tailspin Tommy." Then, in December 1932, came the first radio program with airborne heroes, THE FLYING FAMILY, which Cocomalt sponsored on NBC.

There were over twenty radio series that featured a flying hero (or in one instance, a heroine) during the Golden Age of Radio, but comparatively few audio transcriptions have survived to the present day. As might be expected, the syndicated shows, because they were on disc for re-broadcast, had the highest rate of survival.

Many of the flying adventure shows left meager legacies to our modern age: a few sponsor premiums, brief references in vintage magazines, and the fading memories of former cast and crew members. That's certainly true of PHANTOM PILOT PATROL (Howard Duff's first starring role), HOWIE WING, FLYING TIME, WINGS OF DESTINY, (sponsored by Wings Cigarettes) and THE BLACKHAWKS.

With some of the other shows, at least one episode is still in existence and usually it's the audition show, the only one ever put on a disc. Among these series are THE FLYING HUTCHINSONS (8-4-39) and SMILIN' JACK (2-13-39). The former is based upon the exploits of a real-life, airborne family while the latter, of course, sprung from Zach Mosley's comic strip. SMILIN' JACK compiled three unsurpassed records: 1) the longest-running aviation comic strip (1933-1973); 2) the last movie serial made based upon a comic strip (Universal Studios, 1942); and 3) the shortest duration of any aviator radio series (three months).

Flying heroes came to radio relatively early; there were three syndicated shows produced in the late '30's: THE AIR ADVENTURES OF JIMMY ALLEN, SPEED GIBSON OF THE INTERNATIONAL SECRET POLICE, AND ANN OF THE AIRLANES. This trio are represented in the following total episodes, respectively: 135, 178, and 65, all of which probably

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Many of the details in this article were discussed in my seminar at the FOTR Convention at Newark, NJ in October 1994. Portions of this article have previously appeared in the Jan/Feb 1995 issue of "Chattanooga Airwaves", a publication of the Chattanooga OTR Club, and re-printed here with the permission of its editor, Bob Axley.

represent the entire run.

The lead actors in JIMMY ALLEN were Murray McLean and Robert Fiske, while Ed Prentiss (who would later portray "Captain Midnight") was the announcer. Cast members of SPEED GIBSON included Howard McNear, Hanley Stafford and Elliot Lewis. As of this writing, the identity of "apprentice air-hostess, Ann Burton" and the rest of her cast are unknown.



The Leader Was Known as Captain Midnight

Our "Big Three" in popularity and longevity would have to be CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT (1940-1949), HOP HARRIGAN (1942-1948), and SKY KING (1946-1954). However, the total number of surviving audio recordings do not reflect any such parity. There are nearly 300 of HOP HARRIGAN, only about 125 of CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT, and less than 20 of SKY KING.

CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT began in the fall of 1938, heard only a few Midwest stations. The first sponsor, Skelly Gasoline, was still on board when the show achieved network status in 1940. However it was Ovaltine that sponsored CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT for the next nine years.

This successful kids adventure show made Ovaltine a much sought-after kids' drink, if only to get the label to send away for a Secret Squadron Decoder to read the special messages given over the air. This data, thought the pint-sized listeners, would help to defeat the evil Ivan Shark and his beautiful, but cunning daughter, Fury. (For some reason, it always bothered me that she had the same name as STRAIGHT ARROW's palomino.) Boris Aplon, who played Ivan Shark for nearly 12 years on this series, thus becomes the longest running villain in radio.

The usual sponsor for SKY KING, for most of the radio duration and some of the TV version, was Peter Pan Peanut Butter. It's a real treat to hear Mike Wallace, now a hard-hitting TV reporter, extolling the virtues of peanut butter as the radio announcer for the Secret Squadron. Incidentally, SKY KING's young tag-alongs, Penny and Clipper, were the voices of Bev Younger and Jack Bivens, who earlier had played "Chuck and Joyce" on CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT.

There's another strong common element which connects SKY KING and CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT: both series were created by the team of Robert M. Burtt and Willfred G. Moore. This dynamic duo of radio writers originally created THE AIR ADVENTURES OF JIMMIE ALLEN (a syndicated show that began in 1933) and they were also somewhat responsible for a fourth OTR aviator show since one of their principle writers on CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT, Albert Aley, wrote the scripts for HOP HARRIGAN.

Although several air-adventure radio programs made it to the silver screen (usually in serial form), SKY KING was one of the very few to make the flight into television. This occurred in September 1953 when ABC-TV aired it in prime time (however NBC-TV had also been airing the show on Sunday afternoons as early as 1951). Both the radio and the TV versions (with entirely different casts, of course) ran until the fall of 1954. Nabisco Cookies sponsored most of the 130 TV episodes which had Kirby Grant portraying "Sky" with Gloria Winters and Ron Haggerty as "Penny" and "Clipper."



"Tailspin Tommy." Hal Forrest. © Bell Syndicate.

who had an exciting tale to relate. After a quick introduction, we would segue into a dramatization of that tale, played by radio actors. Lord called the show, "THE SKY BLAZERS" and he got Wonder Bread to sponsor it for the run. As soon as he got the show established, Lord dropped Turner and had a radio actor impersonate a series of "Flight Commanders" as the narrator. Despite the war clouds in Europe and the interest in all military flight, the show never caught on that well so Wonder Bread dropped it in the fall of 1940 and sponsored another show in its time slot, YOUR MARRIAGE CLUB. There are four remaining episodes of SKY BLAZERS in trading currency.

Most of our airbourne hero radio series were aimed at a juvenile audience, but a few were produced for the adult listeners. WINGS OF DESTINY must have been one, since it aired at 10:00 p.m. and was sponsored by a tobacco product. We can conclude the same for a 1945-46 series, ISLAND VENTURE, (whose cast included Willard Waterman and Hugh Rowlands) since its time slot was also 10:00 p.m. on another network. I've been unable to locate any transcriptions from either of these two shows.

One of the few adult series we have copies of is I FLY ANYTHING; two episodes exist and both are good. This was a 1950-51 sustainer on ABC with crooner Dick Haymes in strictly a dramatic role. Playing cargo pilot, Dockery Crane, Haymes was assisted by two radio actors who would become mainstays on GUNSMOKE a few years later. Georgia Ellis, who was Crane's secretary, became "Miss Kitty", while Crane's buddy, "Buzz", was George Fenneman, who was the back-up announcer on GUNSMOKE.

On the next page, I've included a summary of my research on OTR aviators with most of the pertinent data set forth. I would welcome any additions or corrections to this summary and am particularly interested in acquiring or trading for any episodes in any series that I do not have now. My address is 5137 Richardson Dr, Fairfax, VA 22032-2810.



HOP HARRIGAN, who was very successful as a comic book hero (debut in April 1939) proved equally adept when he made his appearance on radio in August 1942. His popular show had no trouble finding sponsors and over the years, they included Grape-Nut Flakes and Lever Brothers.

That wonderful, alliterative introduction of HOP's on radio, "America's Ace of the Airwaves", was actually coined by his comic book artist/writer, Jon Blummer, and it was used in the comic books for over a year before we heard it on the air.

From December 1939 to August 1940 we could hear a radio show about flying heroes that was the product of Phillips H. Lord. Using the format of his GANG BUSTERS, Lord had a real-life aviator, Col. Roscoe Turner, begin the program by interviewing a flier



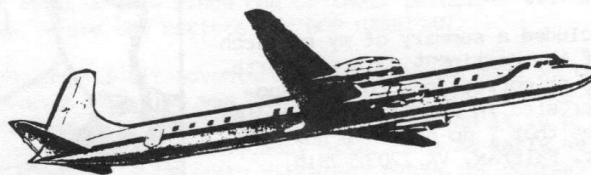
"Smilin' Jack" © Chicago Tribune

OTR AVIATOR SUMMARY



Series	Approx. Dates	Network or Synd.	Length	Episodes Available
THE FLYING FAMILY (resurrected as THE FLYING HUTCHINSONS in 1939)	1932-33	NBC	15	none (?)
		Syn. (?)		1
AIR ADVENTURES OF JIMMY ALLEN	1933-34, 1935-36	Syn.	15	135
PHANTOM PILOT PATROL	early 30s	Syn. (?)	?	none (?)
ANN OF THE AIR LANES	early 30s	Syn.	15	65
FLYING TIME	1935-36	NBC	15	none (?)
SPEED GIBSON OF THE INTERNATIONAL SECRET POLICE	1937-38	Syn.	15	178
HOWIE WING	1938-39	CBS	15	none (?)
CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT	1938-49	MUT	15	125
SKY BLAZERS	1939-40	CBS	30	4
SMILIN' JACK	1939	MUT	15	1
WINGS OF DESTINY	1940-42	NBC	30	none (?)
TAILSPIN TOMMY	1941-42	CBS	15 & 30	4
HOP HARRIGAN	1942-48	ABC	15	270
ISLAND VENTURE	1945-46	CBS	30	none (?)
SKY KING	1946-54	ABC	15 & 30	15
I FLY ANYTHING	1950-51	ABC	30	2

NOTE: The above listing does not include OTR aviator shows with heroes who were on active duty with the Armed Forces (or quasi-military personnel). Therefore such shows as SKY RAIDERS, ROOSTY OF THE RAF [sometimes spelled RUSTY], FLYING PATROL, SCRAMBLE, THE BLACKHAWKS, or DON WINSLOW OF THE NAVY [the latter spent more time in Navy planes than ships.]



LUM & ABNER by Charles Sexton

Final Instalment

Charles Sexton began his very detailed account of LUM AND ABNER with parts 1 and 2 in our spring issue. We now conclude this important paper with parts 3 through 7.

Part 3 - Place Names. Lum and Abner was so popular that the town of Waters, Arkansas, officially changed its name to Pine Ridge on April 26, 1936. The radio Pine Ridge was like a real town. The following list shows the wide variety of business establishments and landmarks mentioned during the run of the show.

All of the following may be located on current maps of west central Arkansas, east Texas and Wisconsin:

Pine Ridge

Cloverleaf Township

Polk County (the real Pine Ridge (Waters) is actually in Montgomery County, just across the county line from Polk)

Oden

Big Fork

Mena, the County Seat (It is referenced in the show as being anywhere from 21 to 30 miles from Pine Ridge. The real Pine Ridge (Waters) is actually about 18 miles away).

Hatfield

Fort Smith

Hot Springs

Little Rock

Mount Ida

Heavener, Texas

Mineola, Texas - where Abner's brother-in-law, Fred, and his family live.

Cleveland, Texas - where Fred lived when Abner visited him in 1945.

Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin - where Lum's Aunt Minnie lived

Other geographic references in and around Pine Ridge:

Cherry Hill

Cedar Creek - between Pine Ridge and the County Seat (Mena)

Pint Oak Flats - the picnic grounds are located here. East of Pine Ridge.

Piney Mountain

Dead Stump Hill - back of Abner's place

The Millpond

Red Rock Quarry - between Pine Ridge and Cherry Hill

Eagle Mountain - east of Pine Ridge

Hog Jaw Valley - east of Pine Ridge

Baldy Ridge
Moon Lake
Briar Creek
Bear Creek
Quachita River
Mule Springs
Greasy Cove
Sugar Loaf Mountain

Part 4 - Pine Ridge businesses.: Like a real town, Pine Ridge had a wide variety of shops, merchants and businesses.

Jot-Em-Down Store - General merchandise. Lum and Abner, Props.

Luke Spears' Lunchroom

Huddleston's General Store and Post Office

Mose Moots' Barber Shop

Kalep Wechunt's Blacksmith Shop

Frank Foster's Filling Station

Douglas Automotive Repair (located behind the filling station)

Sister Simpson Boarding House

Ed Beckley's Drug Store

City Hall

Butcher Shop

Photographer - Fred Elkins

Ira Hodgkins Livery Stable

Will Spencer Printing Shop

Bakery

Doctor's office

Dentist's office

Veterinarian

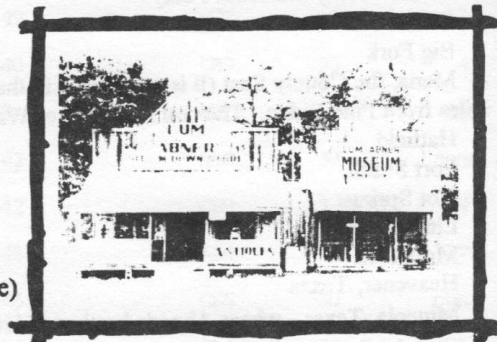
Candy Store

Beauty Parlor (formerly housed the candy store)

Pool Hall

Schoolhouse

**"Lum & Abner Museum"
& "Jot 'Em Down Store"**



Included in National Register of Historic Places.

Sawmill - converted to a Defense Plant during WW II

Jake's Place - used auto parts

Lodge Hall, located above Mose Moots' barber shop

Church

Jail

Cotton Warehouse - Lum and Abner converted it to a motion picture theatre but it burned down

Old Silver Mine

Baseball field - Pine Ridge's baseball team was called the Pine Ridge Pirates

Football field - School football team was called the Pine Ridge Possums.

Open Air Pavilion - outside of town

Mountain View Inn - Hotel outside of town. Closed after the war started. Reopened by Lum and Abner in 1946.

Part 5 - The movies of Lum and Abner. Chet Lauck said he and Tuffy Goff made 10 Lum and Abner movies. Six of these were filmed in the U.S. and the others overseas. Following are synopses of the six domestic films, with particular emphasis on similarities between the film and radio versions of 'Lum and Abner'. Little is known of the overseas films, and any information concerning them would be welcome.

Dreaming Out Loud (1940)

Lum and Abner solve the hit and run death of a little girl by finding her handkerchief in the car which hit her. Features Frances Langford as Alice, the love interest of young doctor Ken Barnes, and Phil Harris as a drummer (salesman). Alice also ran the Post Office which was located in the Jot-Em-Down. As all fans know, the Post Office was located in Dick Huddleston's store, not the Jot-Em-Down (although in one sequence during the run of the show, Lum and Abner tried to start their own Post Office without Uncle Sam's permission, but this didn't last long). Also, Dr. Barnes' office was located above the Jot-Em-Down store. In the radio version, the Jot-Em-Down, at one time or another, housed a bakery, library and print shop, but no doctor's office. Also, they were all on the ground floor. In fact, a sketch of the store in the 1936 almanac shows there was no second floor. Except for Lum and Abner themselves, none of the radio Pine Ridge characters appear in this movie.

The Bashful Bachelor (1942)

This movie consisted of several sub-plots, all joined loosely together. Lum tries a variety of stunts, with Abner's reluctant assistance, to convince Miss Geraldine (ZaSu Pitts) he is a hero. After all, they have 'kept company' since at least 1935. Through a mix-up, Lum nearly marries the widow Abernathy, but her lost husband, Joseph, arrives in Pine Ridge in time to save Lum from the widder. Finally, Abner wins a horse race which keeps Squire Skimp from taking over the Jot-Em-Down store.

Unlike the first movie, *Dreaming Out Loud*, several of the radio characters had major roles. These included Squire Skimp and the Widder Abernathy, mentioned above, but also Cedric Weehunt and Uncle Henry Luncford. Other radio characters mentioned but not actually appearing included Gomer Bates, Elizabeth Peabody and Grandma Masters. A hotel and millinery shop are new business references not found in the radio show.

Two Weeks to Live (1943)

Abner believes he has inherited a railroad and he and Lum convince the citizens of Pine Ridge to put up \$10,000 to purchase the right of way for a spur line to be run into town. Trouble is, the railroad is only a single ore car used to carry ore from a mine to the smelter. Due to a mix-up of doctor's records, Abner thinks he has two weeks to live and, in a effort to raise money to pay back that donated for the non-existent railroad, he volunteers for a variety of dangerous jobs including riding a rocket ship to Mars. Finally, Abner finds out he is not sick after all, the right of way is resold for \$20,000 and all Pine Ridge investments are saved.

Besides Lum and Abner, other radio characters featured included Grandpappy Spears, Ulysses, Grandma Masters, Maimie, and Squire Skimp. Gomer Bates was mentioned but did not appear. References were also made to Piney Mountain and Cherry Hill, two prominent geographic locations mentioned frequently on radio.

An interesting departure from the radio series is found in the opening scene where Lum and Abner are playing checkers and obviously have been at it for a long time. In the radio series, Abner and Grandpappy Spears were the checker players, but only when Lum was out on deliveries or otherwise occupied since he frowned on checker playing during store hours.

So This is Washington (1943)

The plot of this movie came from an actual Lum and Abner radio adventure. In the radio version, Grandpappy Spears discovers a secret formula for making synthetic rubber but gets hit on the head and develops amnesia. Not only can he not remember the formula, he can't even remember his name. He later takes the name Buster V. Davenport which he concludes is what the initials in his underwear, BVD, stand for. In this movie, Abner invents the synthetic rubber. He and Lum go to Washington to tell the government about it, and, while waiting to find someone to talk to, they spend a lot of time on park benches dispensing out their down-home wisdom. Before Abner can explain his formula, he gets hit on the head and becomes, as did Grandpap, Buster V. Davenport. Lum takes him back to Pine Ridge, hoping the familiar surroundings will restore his memory. They don't, but he gets hit on the head again which does the trick. The synthetic rubber fails but is determined to be a good substitute for asphalt and can be used to repair runways.

Radio characters appearing briefly in this film included Grandpappy Spears, who takes over the Jot-Em-Down while the boys are in Washington, Mrs. Pomeroy, Aunt Charity Spears, Gomer Bates and Robert Blevins. Lum and Abner meet Robert in Washington where he is a newspaper man. On the radio show, Robert is a background character and, in fact, is killed in action during WW II, one of the more dramatic moments in Lum and Abner radio history. Other characters mentioned but not appearing included Cedric Weehunt, Mose Moots, and Luke Spears. There are also references to many place names around Pine Ridge including Cherry Hill and Briar Creek as well as references to the Schoolhouse, Mose Moots' barber shop and Luke Spears' lunchroom.

Goin' to Town (1944)

As a joke, a couple of city slickers passing through town, convince Lum and Abner that Pine Ridge is setting on top of a rich oil deposit and offer to buy the land. Lum, tells the townsfolk not to sell but to set up an oil company of their own. They put up the money but, of course, there is no oil. Lum and Abner travel to Chicago to find the slickers but their fellow townsmen think they have skipped with the money. The slickers become convinced there really is oil in Pine Ridge and put up enough money to save all the mortgages which had been put up to finance the oil well.

Radio characters appearing included Cedric Weehunt, Tom Foster, Squire Skimp (who owns most of the town in this movie and wants the rest of it), and Sister Simpson. Kalep Weehunt is also mentioned but does not appear.

Partners in Time (1946)

This is the most charming of all the movies. Lum reminisces with a young lady who has just had a serious fight with her husband about how he and Abner came to be business partners and how the true love of his life, Elizabeth Meadows, became Mrs. Abner

Peabody. Nearly the whole story is told via flashback as Lum relates how Abner, who was on his way to California, stopped by Pine Ridge to visit Lum, with whom he served in the Spanish-American War. Lum, who was always shy around the women-folk, lost Elizabeth's hand to the more aggressive Abner. In fact, Lum relates that Elizabeth never did know how he felt about her. Later, he and Abner go into business together with the Jot-Em-Down store. As the result of his story, the young lady and her husband are reconciled.

Many radio characters were featured in both present and flashback times. Grandpappy Spears, Squire Skimp, and Cedric Weehunt are among those in the present and references were also made to Kalep Weehunt, the Widder Abernathy, and Cherry Hill. In flashback scenes, we meet Elizabeth, who rarely had a line on the radio show, as well as Squire, Milfred Spears and his intended, Abigail (not Charity), Kalep Weehunt and Ezra Seestrunk. Incidentally, Lum and Abner use their real voices in the flashback scenes.

Oddities in the movie include Lum living in a boarding house rather than his own home, and, in flashback, Abner as quite the well-to-do young man with a flivver who could pay \$5 for a box supper.

Lum and Abner Abroad (1955?)

Howco Productions

This is one of the foreign-produced films. I've only seen the first few minutes, so I don't know much about it. Although the portion I saw was from a poor video copy, the immediate thing that jumped out at me was the fact that Abner was clean shaven. He sounded like Abner and he acted like Abner but he sure didn't look like Abner.

Part 6 - Lum and Abner story themes. Following are the major themes of the long run of shows from 1940 to 1947. The longest concerning con-man Diogenes Smith, ran for a couple of months, while others were often completed in a week or so.

A new bank at the Jot-Em-Down

Stolen jewels

Fake bone healer

Library - set up in the Jot-Em-Down in 1941 and remained there through 1945.

During this time the familiar answer to the ringing phone in the store was 'Jot-Em-Down Store and Library, Lum Ed'ards (or Abner Peabody) doin' the talkin'.

Bakery in the Jot-Em-Down

Mousey Gray - pugilist

Diogenes Smith, con-man and counterfeiter, looking for an honest man.

Wonderful World apartments

Publishing business (using Diogenes' printing presses)

Elizabeth leaves Abner

Abandoned baby

Professor Sloan, the new schoolteacher

Rocketship to Mars

Mousey joins the army

Cedric engaged to Winifred Redfield

Golden Era discussion club

Truck route scheduled to by-pass Pine Ridge

"Howdy Folks"

WELCOME TO

PINE RIDGE, ARKANSAS

"LUM & ABNER TOWN"

Grandpap's discovery of synthetic rubber
Buster V. Davenport of Toledo, Ohio
New dentist in town, Dr. Samuel Snide
Savings bond drive
Robert Blevins is killed in action during WW II
Mabel Melrose - a new wife for Lum?
Runaway Ellie Conners
Kalep Weehunt, schoolboard president
Moving picture business
Lum, the delivery boy
Diamond business
Lum, the barber



Treasure hunting in Tennessee
Jot-Em-Down store museum
Abner's father comes to visit
Grandpap's miracle spring water
B.J. Webster steals Grandpap's farm
Lum's trial for embezzlement
New schoolteacher, Miss Platt
Abner's trouble in the home
Old Doc Peabody, marriage counselor
Lum's singing debut
Trapped in a cave-in
Curse of the Koonlin Diamond
Robert the Robot and Dr. Fontaine Grill
Announcement of a six week vacation for Lum and Abner from July-August 1945
End of WW II - return to air
Lum's new business plans for a split atom factory
Lum, roller skating champ
Lum coaches the Pine Ridge Possums, the local football team
The boys hire a returning serviceman (actually a servicewoman - a WAC - Miss Hartford) as general manager of the Jot-Em-Down
Matrimonial Bureau
Miss Hartford elopes
Armed robbery at the Jot-Em-Down
Partnership insurance
Silent Lum, political boss of Pine Ridge
Mayor Elizabeth Peabody
New lady barber in town
1,000 th consecutive broadcast on the Keystone network. The Keystone Broadcasting System was described as a transcription network principally covering Beyond Metropolitan Markets from coast to coast and consisted of 230 affiliated stations in 1946. Headquarters was in New York City with other offices in Hollywood, Chicago and Cleveland.
Women take over Pine Ridge city government
Dr. Roller, the pest controller
Search for Quantrell's Raiders' buried treasure
Kay Kyser mistaken for Henry J. Kiser

Lum goes into the piano tuning business
Lum, the house builder
Dr. Withers, the new veterinarian
Lum opens a restaurant in the Jot-Em-Down
Radio station VPR - The Voice of Pine Ridge
New radio program, the Pine Ridge Princess
Mountain View Hotel
Jewel robbers
Little Pearl returns to Pine Ridge from the service - summer 1946
Labels come off canned goods
Bob Hope visits Pine Ridge
Lum wins new car; races Squire
Lum, the women's hat king: Bon Mot of Pine Ridge
They go to Hollywood and try to appear on Tom Brennaman's show with their hats

Part 7 -Lum and Abner premiums and contests. Most of the shows we have are without the original commercials and, unlike many of the children's serials of the time, the items offered are not discussed in the body of the program. So, we have to rely on other documentation to establish what was offered and when.

1935 Contest to name the new traveling grocery store (a delivery truck). I have no information on the prize(s) associated with this promotion.

1936 Walking Weather Prophet Badge

Lum and Abner Almanac

1937 Lum and Abner Almanac

Let's Lect Lum pinbacks. Lum ran for president in 1937. This may have been when these pinbacks were offered. On the other hand, Lum ran for president of so many things, including the school board, that this pin may have been associated with almost any one of them.

1938 Lum and Abner Almanac

1939 Jot-Em-Down Store Catalogue, Calendar and Game and Party Book for 1939. It was available by mail for 25c in stamps or coin and the top from a can of Postum. This is a hardbound book and may have been available in retail stores, too.

1942 Name Lum and Abner's baby contest. This refers to the abandoned baby sequence occurring on the radio show at this time. Abner wanted to name the baby 'Little Charlie Abner' and Lum wanted 'Lum'. Before they could decide, the baby's mother returned to reclaim him. I don't know how the contest ended. First prize was a \$750 war savings bond or \$500 spot cash or \$50 a month for a year. There were 37 other cash prizes. (From Movie-Radio Guide of August 15, 1942

Others, dates uncertain

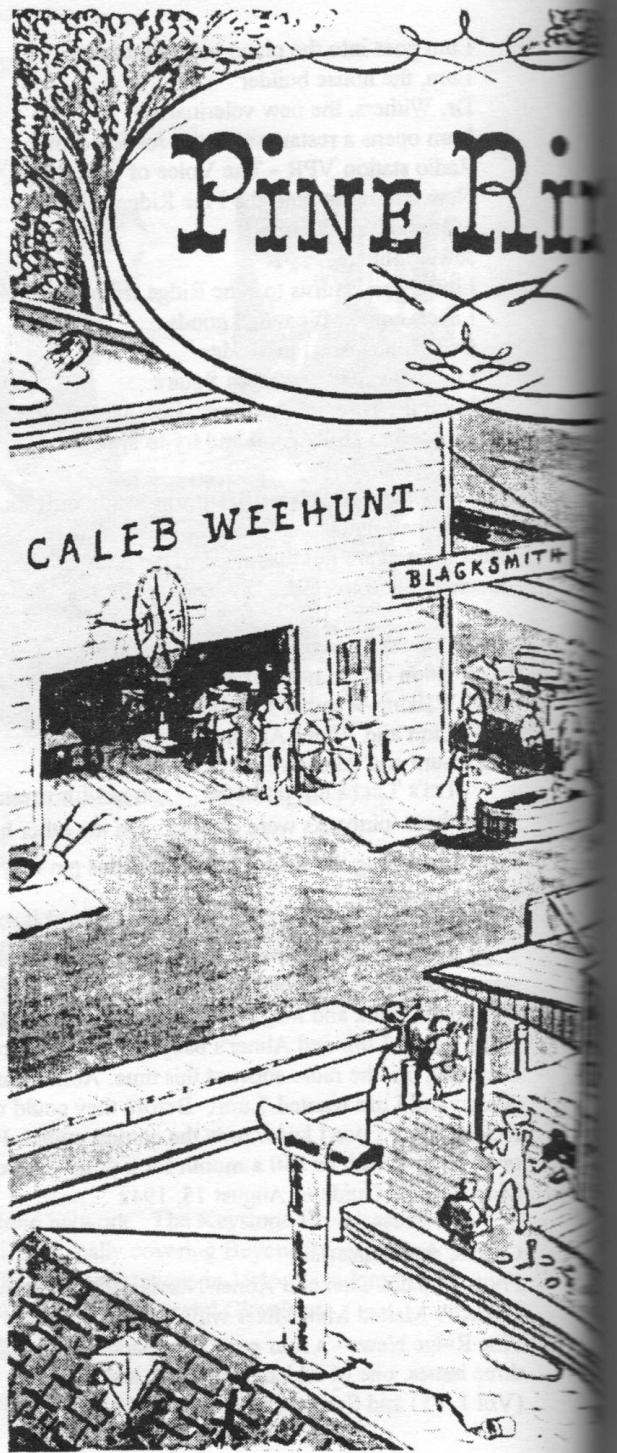
Photo of Lum/Chet and Abner/Norris with and without makeup.

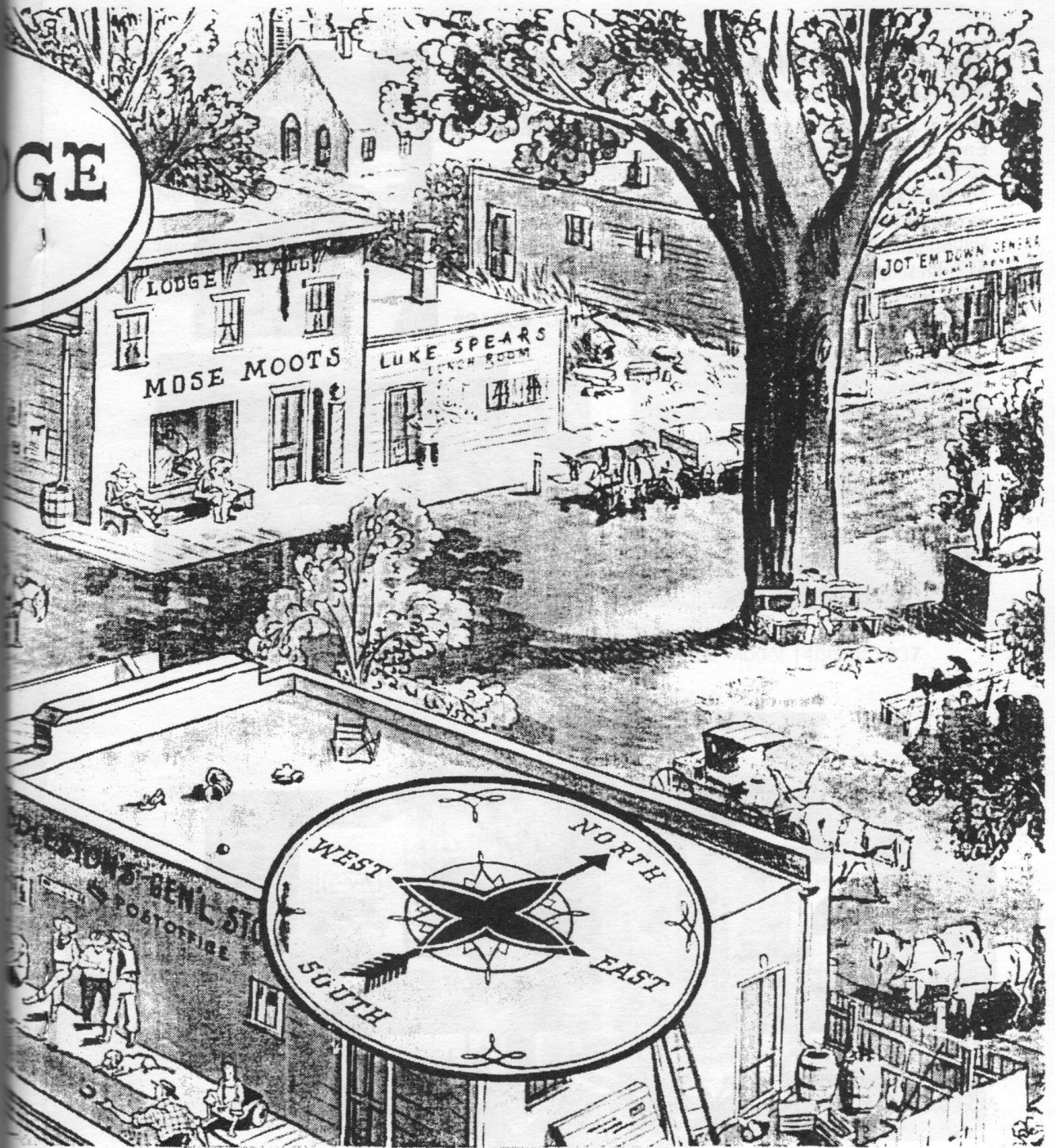
Horlick's Malted Milk Mixer with Lum and Abner's caricatures on the side.

Pine Ridge News - a four page newspaper published from November 1933 to ?. I have three issues, one of which is undated, and the other two with dates of November 1933 (Vol 1, #1) and Spring 1936 (Vol 3, #1).

This sketch of Pine Ridge, Arkansas seems appropriate to go along with Charles Sexton's massive paper on Lum and Abner, concluding in this issue.

This is taken from
LUM AND ABNER'S
1936 FAMILY
ALMANAC AND
HELPFUL HINTS.





BOOK by Hal & Carol Stephenson SHELF

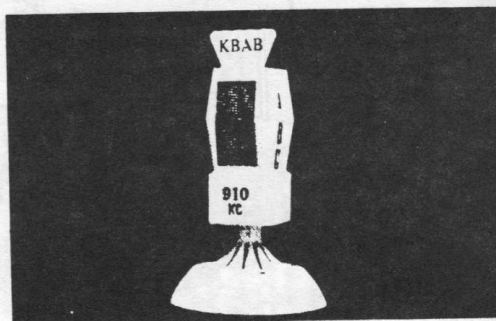
Here is a glance through three books on radios themselves. Each book is represented with one page here.

Radios: The Golden Age by Philip Collins, 1987, 119 pages mostly of full-page beautiful color photographs by Robert Patterson, one crossword puzzle, and a bibliography. \$17.95, paperback, Chronicle Books, 275 Fifth Street, San Francisco, CA 94103; distributed in Canada by Raincoast Books, 112 E. 3rd Ave., Vancouver BC V5T 1C8.

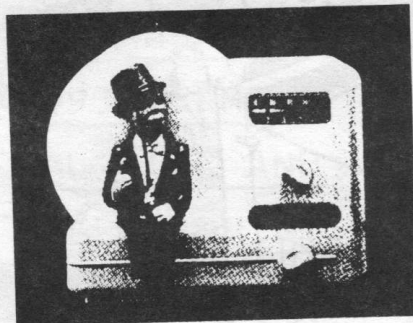


Philip Collins managed to get photographs of more than 100 radios from the 1920's through the 1940's from 15 collectors (p. 116), companies and archives (p. 118).

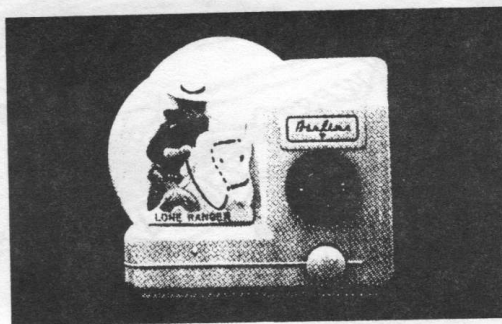
Collins' books do not have prices. Lane & Lane's book does have prices.



"Mike" Radio, circa 1957



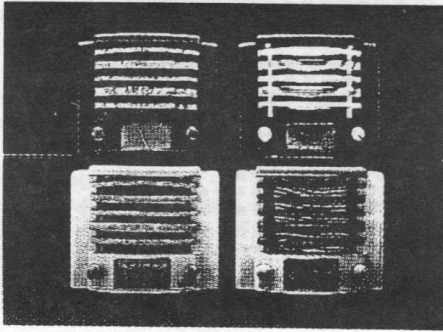
Charlie McCarthy radio, 1938
Majestic Model 1, metal and bakelite



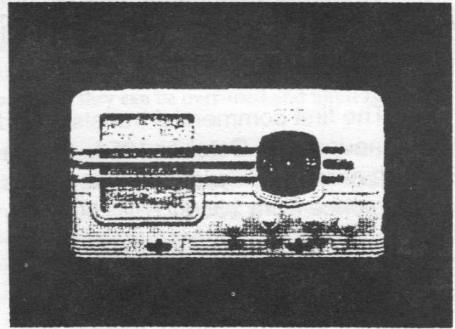
Lone Ranger radio, 1951
Airline Model 05GCB-1541

Radios Redux: Listening in Style by Philip Collins, 1992, 120 pages mostly of full-page color pictures by Sam Sargent. \$17.95 paperback, \$29.95 hardbound. Publishers as the same as for *Radios: The Golden Age*.

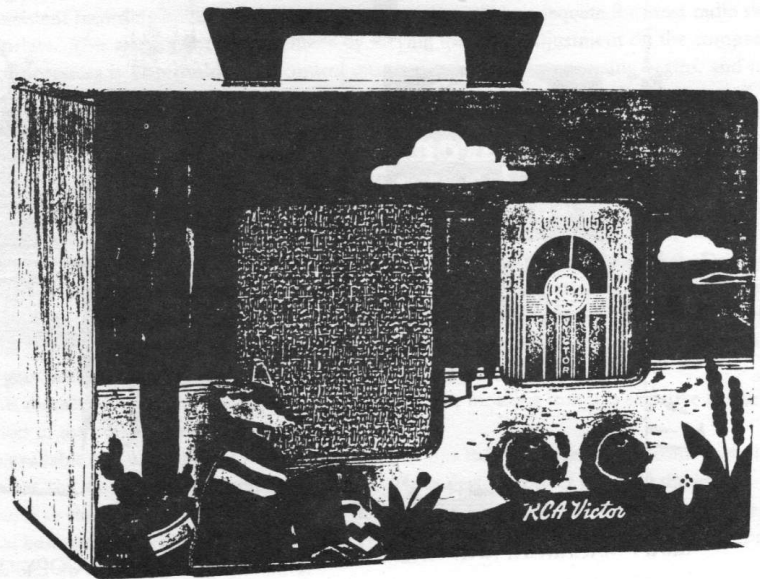
Very few models from overseas manufacturers could rival the imaginative flair of North American companies. Here is a variety of expressions of an art form--fanciful grill work, harmonious colors, cartoon favorites, cowboy stars, and even one for the famous Canadian Dionne Quintuplets born in 1934. Radios came in playful shapes like bowling balls, camers, books, record players, microphones, or with a futuristic look called streamlined moderne.



Kadette Classics of 1936



Fada Model 146G of 1937



RCA "La Siesta" of 1939

Transistor Radios: A Collector's Encyclopedia and Price Guide, 1994, by David R. Lane and Robert A. Lane. \$19.95 paperback, \$24.95 in Canada, ISBN 0-87069-712-9. 170 pages including a glossary, a list of collector's clubs, bibliography, and index. Published by Wallace-Homestead Book Co., an imprint of Chilton Book Co., 201 King of Prussia Road, Radnor, PA 19089-0230

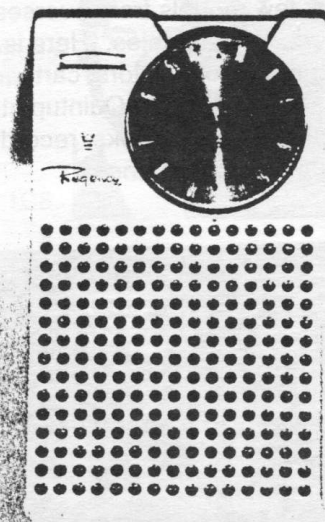
The first two chapters are "History of the Transistor" and "Keys to Collecting Transistor Radios". The Transistor Radio Price Guide is 116 pages. It is followed by the 33-page Novelty Radio Price Guide.

There are over 2,200 price listings with hundreds of black-and-white photographs and an eight-page color section.

The first commercial transistor radio was announced in October 1954--the Regency TR-1. It came in a variety of case colors that range in price from \$350 to \$2,750.

Snoopy on Doghouse, circa 1980, \$35.

Kraft Macaroni and Cheese, 1992, \$15.



REGENCY TR-1, BONE WHITE



KRAFT MACARONI AND CHEESE



SNOOPY ON DOGHOUSE



The Listening Guide

More tricks for radio show collectors

Processing radio shows part 2: Compressors & limiters

by Bob Burnham



In a previous column, I covered the use of an equalizer to improve the quality of shows in your collection — to be specific, using a parametric equalizer to filter unwanted noise, and a graphic equalizer to improve the tonal balance.

Radio shows, being largely spoken word, have a fairly wide “dynamic range” in comparison to perhaps, certain types of music. Dynamic range refers to actual level changes and measured by the fluctuation of VU Meters on tape recording equipment. Analog tape equipment (such as regular cassette machines we all use) has limitations. If you record too low, you’ll have to turn the playback level up higher to hear it. This results in hiss. If your record level is too high, distortion will result. An audio compressor is a device which automatically “rides gain” so your levels will always be consistent. Old time radio collectors can use these devices to great advantage, but like any other type of processing, they can be over-used and unpleasant side-effects will be the result.

The difficulty of radio shows is some of them were preserved by less-than-perfect methods — It is important to equalize and filter the shows as much as is necessary BEFORE even thinking of using any type of audio compressor. The compressor does not know the difference between, for example, tape hiss and the radio show itself. In riding the gain, and increasing the sound level during low portions, the tape hiss, disk noise or other flaws will also be equally increased and often made worse. As stated, it is therefore, mandatory to filter as much of the noise out as possible **before** compressing. You can do this in one step simply by connecting the output of your equalizer to the input of your compressor, and this is what I recommend.

There are a few settings on a compressor than will take a bit of getting used to. Also, in most compressors the meters, LED bars or whatever work backward compared to the meters we are all familiar with on cassette and reel tape machines. With a compressor or limiter, the meter normally shows the amount of gain reduction. Below a certain threshold, what comes out is the same as what goes in, and the needle, LED or whatever will sit at **ZERO** at the far **RIGHT** of the scale. You normally will want to see some movement here in order to gain the benefit of the processing. It is normal for there to be 15-20 decibels of dynamic range in a typical radio show. For consistent recording levels, 4-6 decibels of compression will be adequate for most radio shows, but more or less is sometimes appropriate. This adjustment is easily made by varying the input adjustment on the compressor.

Another adjustment on some compressors is **Threshold**. This control sets the level at which processing begins, and to some extent, will have an overall similar effect as input level setting. Some compressors do not have this adjustment at all, and it’s internally set.

The **Ratio** control can play a big part in making the processing sound invisible. With ANY KIND of audio processing, you want to improve the sound that’s already there, and not add unpleasant artifacts. By altering the dynamic range, you really ARE altering the sound, but (hopefully) doing it in such a way that makes the show more recordable and more listenable, without altering the intended “feel” of the way the original sound engineers **wanted** it to sound and originally transcribed it.

The **Ratio** setting determines the number of decibels of change in the input level compared to the output level. Depending on the compressor used, low ratio settings will provide a desirable gentle averaging of levels. High ratios, however, can be used effectively if the **input** level we already mentioned, is set conservatively. The advantage of a high ratio is it allows you to set an absolute maximum peak level and the sound will never go beyond that point. The disadvantage is during very low periods during the program, the amount of gain with this type of arrangement may create unwanted side effects.

The type of compressor that this discussion has been limited to is a wide band unit, meaning that it is sensitive to the full range of human hearing and the action of the device is controlled by one basic circuit.

Multi-band processors are also available and used at most AM, FM and TV stations today. These devices consist of often 6 or more “bands” labeled similar to what you would find on a graphic equalizer. These devices correct not only the level imperfections but also the tonal balance so that (within reason) each source in the studio whether it be reel to reel, cassette or CD player will have consistent amount of bass, mid-bass, midrange, treble, etc. This can help a broadcast station achieve improved transmitter efficiency, and sound the best on the widest range of radios.



This would also be great tool for old time radio show collectors, but unfortunately is well beyond the budget of the average collector.

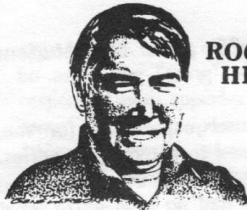
Another one of the attractive features of having an audio compressor as the last device in your old time radio processing chain is convenience when adjusting an equalizer. Certain frequencies (especially lower bass frequencies) will cause levels to rise abruptly during the adjustment process. A compressor will compensate for this, if adjusted correctly, so that you will never "pin" the meters in the red on your recording deck.

There is good news for the old time radio collector regarding cost: Thanks to modern technology, the cost of an audio compressor is extremely affordable. At the very bottom end, for example, the list price of the DBX 163X is UNDER \$200, although I would recommend a better model. Other companies that make excellent processors in the under \$300 range are Symetrix, Rolls and Phonic. My preference would be for Symetrix products. As a side-note, Symetrix is made entirely in the U.S. Rane is another good company, and I especially like Behringer processors, which are made in Germany.

In a future installment of this article, I'll cover my personal experience in using yet another type of equipment to improve radio show sound quality: The dynamic noise filter. Behringer calls its "De-Noiser" a "Programme Adaptive Noise Reduction System" and holds an international patent on this device that can reduce unwanted noise by up to 35 decibels (that's a lot). It's NOT a total miracle cure for old time radio shows, but when used in addition to the processors already discussed, can help eliminate tape hiss or another noise for very little investment. As always, your comments are welcome. You can use the usual method of contacting me by U.S. Snail at Box 2645, Livonia, MI 48151. More ideally, use e-mail if you can. You'll get a personal response from me within 24 hours! Internet address is platecap@gatecom.com.

Back in the very earliest days of radio, Western Union had this special telegram form made up for contacting your favorite radio station. We assume this form was not used if you wanted to complain.

CLASS OF SERVICE DESIRED <input type="checkbox"/> Telegram <input type="checkbox"/> Day Letter <input type="checkbox"/> Night Message <input type="checkbox"/> Night Letter <small>Patrons should mark an X opposite the class of service desired; OTHERWISE THE MESSAGE WILL BE TRANSMITTED AS A FULL-RATE TELEGRAM</small>	 WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM		Receiver's No.
			Check
			Time Filed
	NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT GEORGE W. E. ATKINS, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT		
	Send the following message, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to		
<h1>APPLAUS-A-GRAM</h1>			
To Broadcasting Station.....			
Address.....			
			
DICTOGRAPH UPRIGHT LOUD SPEAKER <small>"A SOUND INVESTMENT"</small> <small>(DICTOGRAPH PRODUCTS CORPORATION NEW YORK, N.Y.)</small>			
Artists and broadcasting stations have earned your thanks. APPLAUD BY TELEGRAPH. Telegrams can be telephoned direct to the WESTERN UNION office. Many broadcasting stations are glad to read to their audience the congratulatory telegrams they receive. Telegraph—then listen in.			



ROGER
HILL

THE OLD CURMUDGEON

So by now you've been exposed to Gene Larson's conception of what I look like. Am I really Asian in appearance? Must've been those marriages to Asians that did it.

Not knowing exactly when this will appear in NARA NEWS, I hesitate to say much which can be time-dated. Nevertheless, if any of the NARA members get a chance to attend SPERDVAC's annual convention in Los Angeles, I hope you'll go at least once. My wife and I made it to their 1992 and 1994 conventions and thoroughly enjoyed the experiences. Having a picture of Leonard Maltin (one of my current day heroes) with my wife was a real treat. For as busy as Mr. Maltin is, he sure is accomodating when it comes to requests such as pictures. The Gassman brothers and those who staff SPERDVAC do a superb job in putting together such an event. For me, another treat was getting to meet David Breninger, who served with his wife as our very first newsletter editor in 1973. We hadn't had contact with each other since 1974 so it was wonderful to become reacquainted.

While both SPERDVAC and REPS (The Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound) had membership brochures at the convention, all that NARA had for inquisitive people was a single sheet flyer Jim Snyder had made available. We really need a nice light brown brochure as we once had. Any artistic volunteers out there? We can't ask Gene Larson as he's been contributing so much for these past 20 years that I honestly think NARA has abused him in not giving more recognition to his talents and help. It takes him a long time to produce some of the cartoons and artwork for NARA.

Speaking of artwork, Gene sent me some of his past items to see if we can assemble them into some kind of greeting card package. If any members have

similar talents and would like to contribute to this project, send your artwork to me at my San Bruno address (see inside front cover) and whatever we can create, you'll receive correct compensation. Gene also has a wonderful large poster he has done on soap operas. When we visited him in summer of 1993, I got to see it and was so impressed that I think it would be a wonderful item to offer to anyone interested in vintage radio. Gene has agreed to lend it when we're ready to have it reproduced. The problem? Cost of proper reproduction, even of black and white, onto decent poster stock at a printers is somewhat expensive. Anyone have suggestions?

Back in 1970's, NARA made available to members a poster reproduction of the caricature poster (original was in nice pastel colors) by CBS in 1950 after their talent raid. I had borrowed the original from a former professor (Charles Smith) at San Francisco State University and had reproductions made in B&W. I have just one of these left in my own possession presently and I took it to a copy store where they have a very large photocopy machine. The photocopies they made cost \$2.95 each and were not very good but perhaps better than nothing. If anyone out there wants a photocopy of this poster, I will take it to the store again and make you a copy but will need you to send me \$6 (\$3.29 for copy plus tax) and the remainder for a mailing tube and postage/handling. If NARA has enough funds in the future, we might be able to properly print up more of these CBS items if the demand is sufficient.

As some of you know, I teach part time at City College of San Francisco in the field of biology. Over the years I've tried to find ways to incorporate some of my old radio materials into teaching. It's not always so compatible with biology but maybe more possible than you might think. For example, when teaching about

respiratory system and discussing effects of smoking, I've played some of the old radio commercials based on smoking and have discussed the association factor of shows such as Jack Benny (Lucky Strikes); Philip Morris Playhouse; Camel Caravan, and so on. Students sometimes (not always though) find these old ads interesting since they never hear such things today on radio.

Another way of including old radio materials into my teaching has been to offer as extra credit, an audio tape cassette with a program on it. "Surface Tension" is one good show because it deals with protozoa and microscopic level life which students usually have seen in the lab. The concept of shrinking humans and the difference in time spans is also of interest.

Since biology is concerned with LIFE, nearly anything involving life forms could qualify for an extra credit listening experience. "Death of a Wombat" and "Hyenas" are suitable for a general biology course; "Donovan's Brain" is excellent for human biology because of the "mad scientist" approach; Hancock's Half Hour episode in which he goes to a blood bank is very funny (I think) but seems a flop for those students who have tried to use it (they have trouble listening and understanding the accent).

I've used "My Son John" and "Thing on the Fourable Board" from Quiet Please as well as "Ring of Toth" from the Escape series. Have the benefits of using these is just getting across to students the use of imagination and listening skill needed to follow these stories. It's a real eye-opener for most of them to hear such things. Sometimes students respond that they don't like the tape at all; others say they really enjoyed it. One student who did a fine job reviewing "The Thing On the Fourable Board" has agreed to let me use her paper in this column. I haven't changed any of her words or grammar even though I think she meant "geologist" instead of "geographer". Her review was so well done, I thought you would enjoy

reading what one 26 year old student wrote.

This was a very unusual experience for me. First of all, I am not used to listening to stories. I am more accustomed to reading them. I had no idea what to expect. I had no clue as to what the story would be about. Boy was I surprised!

The story opened up with "Billy" introducing his wife who liked to be called "Mike". Billy also told us that his wife was very beautiful and also very ill. However, he never mentioned her particular illness. He then proceeded to tell what I thought was the audience (us—the listeners) about how he used to be a rough neck. What that means is that he used to work drilling for oil.

Initially, I thought that Billy's audience was us—the listeners. He spoke in a very personal and direct manner so it felt like he was talking to me. This was most obvious when he began telling the story about the one night when he and a geographer were the only one's on the work site. Because the work crew had been drilling and had hit water, they had to cement the hole and let it dry. To find out what they were drilling into, they used a core drill--this drill was hollow and collected specimen from the hole. The geographer was curious about the sample in the core. Upon examining it, they found a gold finger that had been "one mile under for one million years". Upon further examination they found a finger-stone finger, hard and cold which disappeared when the mud surrounding it was brushed off. Both the geologist and Bill were frightened--they got drunk to avoid thinking about what they had discovered and fell asleep. Bill woke up after hearing a frightful yell and found that the geographer was dead, apparently because he had fallen off of the fourble and broken his neck. Missing from his left hand was his pinky, which had on it the ring they had found.

He was questioned by the police, but eventually let go so that the crew could continue their work. A number of accidents followed, killing one more man and causing the entire crew to quit. Billy felt a presence, but he could not see it. He left when the crew left, but he was driven back to the spot by a sense of curiosity. When up on the forable, he heard what seemed like a child's

cry, but he could not see anything. Frightened, he asked the "thing" to come out. The "thing" responded with superhuman force, knocking down some heavy equipment. Then Bill felt the "thing" touch his arm. He found, at his feet, some red paint and threw it in the direction of the "thing".

As he described HER, she was beautiful. She could not see if she had nothing to help her be seen and she could not hear very well either. Surprisingly, Billy fell in love with her and he discovered that grease paint-make up- allowed her to see and be seen. It was this "thing" that Billy introduced as his wife. He hid her body with clothes. And, he warned, he learned to keep away from her when she was hungry. And the reason? She liked to eat humans.

When the story opened and it seemed as if though he was addressing us, the listeners, he wasn't. He was addressing someone in his home, someone in the same room as him. He did not want "us" to meet his wife, but the person in the room with him. And the reason? This was his wife's next meal.

It was an excellent story, and I was quite surprised with the discovery that his wife was the thing on the fourble. And even more surprised that Billy had his wife's dinner sitting in front of him. I must admit, the story was gross, but I enjoyed it.

Other students did reviews also of other tapes but this was one very nicely done review I thought worthwhile to share with you. We presently have about 17 tape cassettes with one item per cassette which students can borrow to listen to when they need a little extra credit. I'd like to expand this "library" of extra credit offerings eventually to 50 or more suitable programs and make it a requirement that each student listen to at least one item of their choice during the semester.

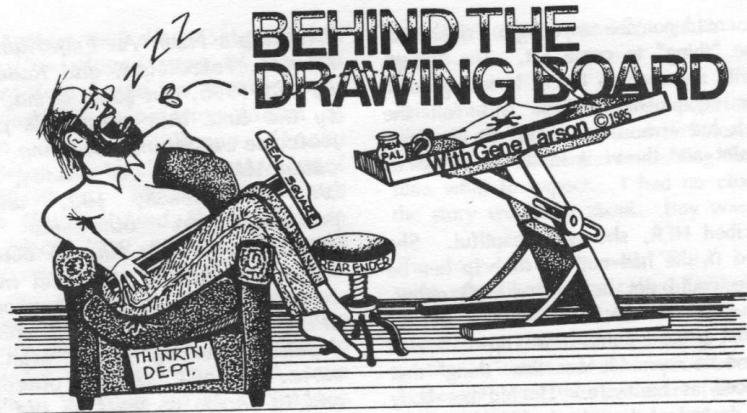
Renewing correspondence with other collectors and fans of vintage radio has been one of my joys this past year. Unfortunately, available time for the hobby becomes less and less since my wife and I expect to be opening a store called

"Nothing's New: An Emporium of Vintage Movies, Television, and Radio Programs" by mid-1995. In fact, it may be a reality by the time this column is published. I welcome anything relating to these 3 categories you, the reader, might have. We will lease, buy, rent, borrow, purchase, or otherwise make any arrangements you like to obtain relevant items for sharing with and informing our customers. I intend to promote NARA, SPERDVAC, RHAC, REPS and any other organizations of radio, film, tv in the store. We will rent out videos of movies and tv shows as well as old radio shows on audio tape. Books, scripts, still photos, lobby cards, posters, sheet music and other items will also be rentable to customers. Eventually we may be doing some sales and even mail order but in the beginning, rentals will be our main thrust. So if you have any items of possible use, please do contact me. Thanks.

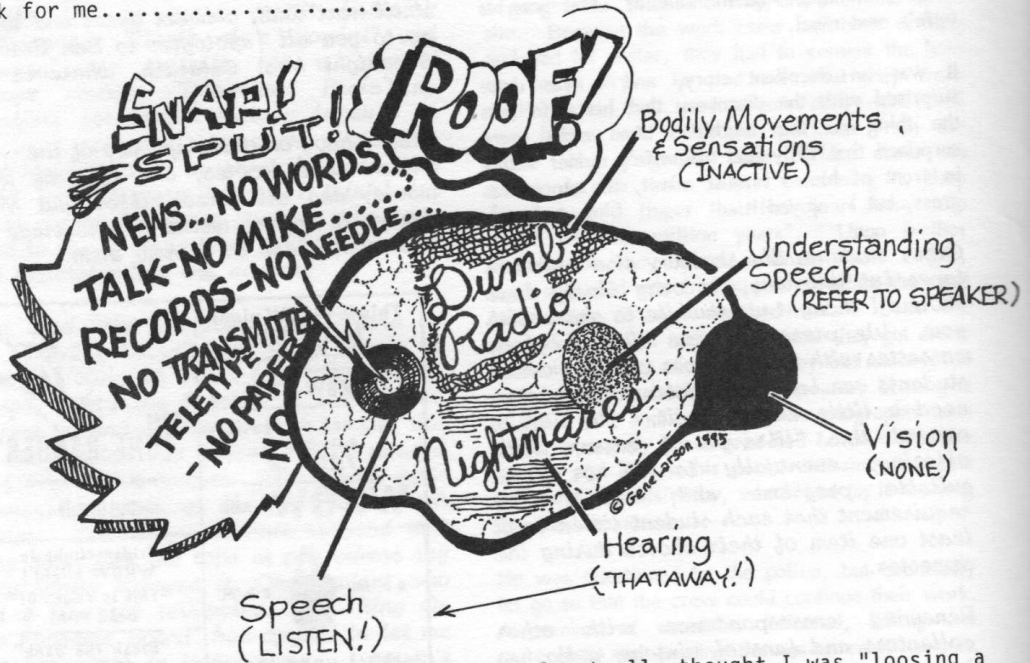
Until next time, a tweet tweet and toodle oo to you all (apologies to Ben Bernie). Goodnight Mrs. Calabash, wherever you are!

P.S. I have on videotape two of the Great Gildersleeve movies, one Life of Riley movie, and all three Fibber and Molly movies if anyone would like to trade for copies of these or borrow them.

<p>This is WKBW night TELLO-TEST Money for listening for your phone WKBW-6:15 "Accent on Music" Bobby Nicholsen 7:15 P. M. WKBW-ABC</p>	 <p>"THE LONE RANGER" "Rough 'n' Ready Adventures" 7:30 P. M.</p>
<p>8 P. M.  8 P. M. DASHIELL HAMMETT'S "FAT MAN" "That Sensational Private Eye" 8 P. M.</p>	<p>Friday Night Is WKBW Night! "This Is Your FBI!" 8:30 P. M. "Break the Bank" 9 P. M. WKBW-1520 Don McNeill is coming!</p>



I've positioned myself in the "THINKIN' DEPARTMENT" (see above) once again to see if I can recall more interesting things to tell you about. Most of these things I can draw from my own strange experiences in the field of broadcasting. Drawing, of course, is my occupation. And I just drew a goofy thought: What if a person could just draw a picture of his (her) brain, then write-in the subject and have that particular subject burst forth in all its glory? Think of how that would eliminate "writer's block".....the very thing I'm suffering from at this very moment. Ok, ok....I'll take my own suggestion to the paper and see if it'll work for me.....



Hey! It works! Dumb radio nightmares. I actually thought I was "loosing a few cogs" when these really strange happenings began creeping into my sleep. Much to my relief, it seems that this is one of the natural hazzards of being in the broadcasting business....not because I enjoy being haunted every so-often by these afflictions, but by the fact that all the radio friends that I dare approach with this subject have the same goblins!

Each episode seems to begin normally but don't stay that way for long. As an example, one episode had me sitting at a familiar broadcast console and playing records on a turntable. The music was just about to run out so I turned to the side to "cue" another record for airplay and as I reached for the arm to set it on the record...it wasn't there! And the other record had just stopped. As I turned back to explain to whatever audience there might've been, the MICROPHONE was missing. Lord knows what happened after that. Many of these happenings end up with the most horrible thing that can happen to a radio man....DEAD AIR!

Then there was the little gem when I was coming up on a newscast and the introduction to it was just fading. I looked down to see ALL BLANK PAGES. As I recall, I ran over to the old teletype machine to see if I could pull out of my dilemma and it had no ribbons OR paper in it. I was spared the memory of what may have happened next.

Another time I was working at this very familiar radio station, everything in its place except for the fact that its location was off somewhere else. And everyone who worked there knew me but I didn't know ANY of them. That's all I can remember of that situation. But these little hauntings churn on at their own chosen rate and nights. They also continue to bug my radio friends and probably will until we stop dreaming altogether. The only good out of all of this is the fact that I'm not the ONLY one going through these uncontrollable "nighthorses." If we all had to have therapy because of this "mass hysteria" we'd have one wild time! Ha! Ha!

In reality, plenty of waking nightmares happened to most broadcasters at one time or another. Not only were we the butt of in-house jokesters, but a lot of things just happened naturally. I'd mentioned at least one nightmare that contained a teletype machine. These were the old time rigs that would "walk" right out the door unless they were anchored down in some fashion. I seem to have the fortune of working at the radio stations where I had to do everything from doing air shifts to cleaning the toilets on a normal day. Teletype machines were mechanical monsters and commanded constant attention....they would seemingly alternate between running out of paper and breaking ribbons. Those ribbons were the big black messy things that managed to get more of the ink on us than it did on the paper at any given time. The ink was of the INDELIBLE type so we would usually appear to have just crawled out of the inside of a printing press each time we had to change a ribbon. Oh, yes, we'd try rubber gloves to avoid the mess but I think that ink would eat right through them. We operators learned the different sound those old clacking bell-clangers made. A soft "plup-plup-plup" meant that the paper was jamming up inside. A loud "clackitty-clack" signalled a (oh happy day!) ribbon had self-destructed. If the machinery "felt" inventive, it had the talent to "chew" the paper up into thousands of tiny pieces and spit them out all over the floor. And it would take an hour or so just to take the unit apart and clean all the paper out of its insides. Then it would continue its combative efforts in any and all combinations on some days. After I left radio, of course, these nasty monsters were replaced by computerized units. In my radio days teletypes were the primary sources of up-to-the-minute news and weather reports.

Transmitters were another source of lesser pleasure on the job...at times. They would "dump" (go off the air) when they got too hot, too cold, or too sick to operate. Some just didn't want to work an eight-hour day. Mostly, the transmitters were located away from the station, sometimes by several miles. They were strategically located either on top of an abandoned mountain, surrounded by water at high tide, or right inside some farmer's bull pen. I usually had to go out to these various sites with the engineer just to help him keep his sanity.

Housing for transmitters usually consisted of just enough space to shove them in- place with just enough room left over to place a ventilating system and accommodate a very thin person. (Most engineers I knew were very large beings.) These transmitter shacks also bred some of the most unusual creatures unknown to the outside world. Spiders were huge, blood-red, ice-blue and every color of the rainbow, sometimes all of the colors mixed. Beady eyes peered out from dark spaces, and high-voltage hornets hung from inside some final sections of transmitters. (Maybe THEY weren't high-voltage but they lived in dangerous territory.) Sometimes a snake would greet us at the door.

Good Lord! No WONDER some of us have goofy radio dreams! Transmitters were the heart of operations and had to be maintained regularly. But normally we operators took meter readings every half-hour back then. And they were operated from switches or telephone dials from a rack, usually in the control rooms.

However, I worked at one station where the transmitter was sitting right next to the control room...except for a wooden partition between them. I worked the all-night shift at this station on weekends. No one else was around. I had to raise and lower power from daytime to nighttime. On this one particular early Sunday morning I flipped the power switch from "low" to "high" and a huge bolt of lightning crashed across the mercury vapor tubes right in front of me! When I pulled my head out of the ceiling tile and found the socks inside of my shoes, I called the engineer, who was of the younger generation, and whimpered what had happened. He simply said: "Yeah....it does that" and hung up.

Radio towers were the final instruments beyond the transmitter and radiated the broadcasts (without getting technical here) into the air and to the receivers. I learned, after being "zapped," that the ground will bite you if you don't jump away from the tower before you land. And that rf (radio frequency) power or voltage is hot as fire and can burn holes in you. Just another facet of radioland.

Actually, I believe that the basis of the radio nightmares comes from the fact that a lot of us had to work at more than one station at a time somewhere along the way. And more than once we'd give the wrong call letters on the air and find the different studio settings confusing until we were accustomed to the duality. I only cross-broadcast once and that was definitely enough for me (and evidently my subconscious, too). At one of the stations I was pretty-much free to do my work and at the other station I received a "memo" for everything I either did or didn't do. Therefore, I do believe that particular set of experiences helped to feed these life-long illusions.

If any of you are having similar sleeping experiences, let us hear from you. And if you happen to be a psychiatrist or psychologist....what the heck? Who doesn't "need help" these days?? Ha! Ha? Back to the drawing board!



Old Time Radio Meets Internet Technology

Lou Genco (lgenco@crl.com)

"Old Time Radio", one of the earliest electronic information / entertainment / hobby media, is now attracting new fans via one of the newest electronic communication methods -- The Internet. The Internet, originally known as "Arpanet", and started by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) several years ago, is now available to just about anybody with a computer, telephone and modem. The Internet is actually a very large number of computers, electronically linked together with copper wires, fiber optics and satellite links. Many millions of people, in most nations of the world, can freely access Internet through various services, and avail themselves of educational, entertainment or business information. In most cases, there is no additional fee to access this information, beyond the connect fees charged by the local Internet service provider.

Many Internet providers are available in the United States, along with "gateways" to the Internet, such as Compuserve, Genie, America-on-Line, Prodigy, Delphi and others. Almost all colleges/universities offer Internet access, as do a growing number of electronic bulletin boards and municipal "free-nets".

Several months ago, Bill Pfeiffer (founder of *Airwaves Electronic Publications*) and Lou Genco started a free mail/news service for Internet subscribers who enjoyed old time radio. OTR - related articles and letters are digested, and sent to subscribers every night by personal email, so they can be read at the subscriber's convenience. Typically, 15,000 digest issues are emailed each month, and the subscriber list keeps growing. There is a good mix of experienced OTR collectors and new, interested fans, with lively and informative discussions about audio quality, favorite programs and voices, program critiques, offers to trade tapes, technical tips and other information.

In addition to the nightly OTR Digest, Internetters can access two World Wide Web pages, two FTP sites and a Gopher dedicated to OTR and similar radio activities. The World Wide Web is much like an electronic book, in which Internetters can choose areas with a hypertext link, and view or download interesting information such as OTR program logs, electronic pictures of golden-age stars, databases of OTR program material, convention notices and collector/vendor addresses. FTP (File Transfer Protocol) allows Internetters to download datafiles to their own computer for later reading. Gopher gives even more access to various interesting areas. In the not too distant future, Lou hopes to make short "sound bytes" of well-known OTR programs available, so

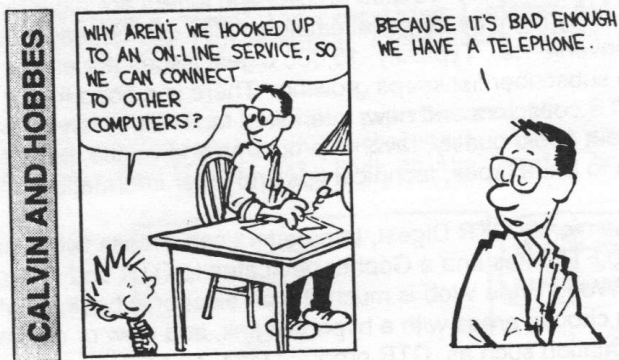
subscribers with computer sound cards can listen to or download the sounds while they are reading the OTR Digest.

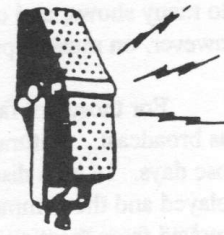
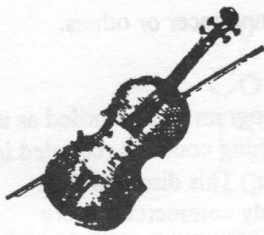
The most fun for most of the subscribers seems to be the opportunity to meet folks with similar interests, and carry on "public" discussions in the OTR Newsletter, or "private" discussions by email. We have subscribers from Australia, Great Britain, Canada and other interesting places, most of whom seem both very knowledgeable in things OTR-ish, and quite helpful to those new to either computers or OTR.

Readers with access to Internet can obtain more information on the OTR Newsletter, WWW pages and other electronic offerings by sending email to **lgenco@crl.com**, with the subject: **Request otr.faq**. The email will be handled by a robot, rather than Lou, so please observe the lower case letters in the subject, and note that the body of the email will be ignored.

If you would like a free email subscription to the OTR Digest, send email to **otr-request@airwaves.com** with the subject: **SUBSCRIBE**.

If you would like a copy of a complete issue by mail or fax, contact Bob Burnham, BRC Publications, PO Box 2645, Livonia, MI 48151-0645; (313) 277-3798, fax: (313) 277-3095. Bob will also be talking about computers / Internet and OTR at the Friends of OTR convention in Newark, NJ, this October.





FROM

JACK PALMER

COUNTRY MUSIC PROGRAMS AND THE AFRS

This article is a slight digression from my regular comments on old country radio, but it does involve a country radio series, and since it also applies to many other radio programs, it may be of interest to other OTR fans.

A couple of years ago, I ran into a little problem with two of my Grand Ole Opry shows. The two shows were both taken from AFRS files and were dated 23 April 1949 and 10 September 1949. During the many years I have been listening to old radio shows, I have occasionally noticed the same musical performance on two different shows of the same series. I had always assumed the artist had performed the same number on different shows of the series. However when I started checking this out I discovered that was not always true on AFRS shows, and in this case was definitely not true.

The shows involved included performances by a well known country performer named Montana Slim. (Real name Wilf Carter). I have a friend who is a great fan of Wilf Carter, so I mentioned to him that I had two Grand Ole Opry shows featuring Wilf as a guest. The friend informed me that I couldn't have two Grand Ole Opry shows with Wilf Carter (or Montana Slim), since he only appeared on the Grand Ole Opry one time. My friend had interviewed Wilf Carter personally, and Wilf had been adamant that he never returned to the Opry after his first performance because of the violent disagreement he and Red Foley (The MC on the show.) had at that time.

Since Wilf had been so certain, I decided to look into this matter of an extra recording. A check by a friend of mine, with a good ear, determined that the two performances were not only of the same song, but were identical. I was not quite sure where to go from here so I wrote about it in a country music newsletter and also on the PRODIGY music bulletin board requesting any information anyone could provide on this discrepancy that I had recently discovered.

I received no replies from the newsletter, but my plea for help on the PRODIGY bulletin board was answered by a very kind gentleman in California, who had worked for AFRS back in the 1940's during the Second World War. He explained to me exactly how it was possible to have the same performance on two different shows.

I am sure all OTR fans know that the AFRS shows always had the commercials removed before the shows were transcribed and forwarded to radio stations ran by the military throughout the world. To fill in the gaps left by removal of the commercials, musical bridges were inserted

into many shows, and often new intros were recorded by the original announcer or others. However, on musical programs, a different approach had to be used.

For those not familiar with the AFRS procedure, the original program was recorded as it was broadcast. Naturally this was all done on discs, the only way anything could be recorded in those days. 16 inch discs were used, recording 15 minutes on each side. This disc was then replayed and the commercial breaks were timed to the second. (Not only commercials were removed from these shows. Occasionally material considered objectionable for the GI's to listen to was also removed. An example cited to me was the song 'I'll Be Glad When You're Dead, You Rascal You'. This was not considered appropriate for men facing possible death overseas.)

After the commercials were timed, earlier shows of the same series were reviewed for bits that would fit into the blank slots. (I don't know what they used for the first shows they recorded, but I assume they used other recorded music.) These bits were then placed on record in the order they would be needed on the final recording. The two discs (the original show and the new bits) were then re-recorded on a third disc. The final disc was timed to exactly 29 1/2 minutes. Since this was all being placed on disc, it had to be recorded exactly as it was to be played. It astounds me that they could do this so well. Since eventually hundreds of shows were processed like this I'm sure the AFRS people grew very good at it. But I'm sure everyone was glad to see the discs replaced by tape in the late 1940's..

After I learned about this procedure, it was obvious how the two Wilf Carter appearances on the Grand Ole Opry occurred. Wilf's performance from the first show had been used to replace a commercial on the second show. It is also positive that this was not the only show so changed. I'm sure if a person took the time it would be possible to find that many of the other musical and variety shows had been added to in the same way. It doesn't affect my enjoyment of the AFRS versions of the shows, but it does make me wonder just exactly what was added to the original show!

As for Wilf Carter, he may have only appeared on The Grand Ole Opry once, but he was star of one of the early country music programs on network radio. Next time I plan to cover him and some other early country singers, when I discuss some of the earliest country music programs on network radio. Programs that appeared years before the barn dance shows reached network status.

One final comment. Several people in the country music field have told me that Vernon Dalhart (A very early country singer) was the first Singin' Sam on the radio. I can find nothing anywhere in the OTR area that would confirm this statement. I would love to hear from anyone who could definitely either confirm or deny this statement, or even recommend where I could check to myself to confirm or deny it.

Mining OTR Gold

By Norman Glen Cox
Correspondence Welcomed
1550 Waltham Rd
Concord, CA 94520

Radio has always been an important source of entertainment and education in our lives and through the years it has had pages and pages of information written about it. Many of these learned pieces, written by the best journalists of the day for newspapers and magazines, are now sitting in file cabinets and on row after row of bookshelves at your local library just waiting for you to, once again, bring them to the light of day.

If your nearby library is like ours it will have drawers crammed full of microfilmed newspapers, both local and national, that, with a little mining, will yield to you many articles and ads about the medium of radio that we are all so interested in. The respected New York Times, during the 30's and 40's, always devoted several pages in it's telephone book sized Sunday edition to the printing of the upcoming week's radio programs and would turn its ace staff loose on writing up detailed articles about our favorite shows and personalities. These radio articles were given as much ink and space as the New York drama scene and the world of movies and music. If your library has newspapers on film, the New York Times will most likely be well represented. Ours has films of this daily paper going back to 1875.

Also, in many libraries the leading national magazines of past years are bound up into large, hard covered volumes and stored way in the back on floor to ceiling shelves. Life Magazine, Colliers, Saturday Evening Post, Time, Popular Mechanics and Literary Digest are just a few that are ready for my use anytime the mood hits me.

How do you unlock all of this information without rolling through each spool of film or turning each and every page of the magazines and how do you find it all before you turn into a 99 year old hermit with Coke bottle bottom glasses?

The answer is the Reader's Guide To Periodical Literature. You remember those big green monster books don't you? They're the ones that your high school teacher tried to get you to use when you had to write up a dreaded essay on some current news event. Go ahead. Sit yourself down at the usually empty reference desk and pull out one of the books for a year that interests you. No one will pay any attention to you.

For this article I chose the July 1941 to June 1943 volume of the Reader's Guide as a representative example. Under the heading "Radio" there were 16 full, double column pages detailing by topic and title all of the magazine and national newspaper articles written for that time frame. One of the articles I noticed had the tantalizing (to me) title of *Oscars of the Air-The Peabody Awards for 1943* and the guide told me that it could be found in the April 5, 1943 issue of Time Magazine on pages 43 and 44. My trip down the aisle to the bound volumes of Time yielded to me exactly what I was looking for with a minimum amount of fuss. I flopped the magazine on the copy machine and for 10 cents I took home a piece of OTR history.

Another title in the same book entitled *War of the Air Waves* caught my eye because I am currently working on an article about German radio and propoganda for one of the other clubs I enjoy. The listing was *NY Times M p 12+ Dec 28, 1941*. Now at this point you must remember that librarians love the printed word or else they would be a bank teller somewhere and with a smile and a little bit of info from you as to what you are looking for they will gladly get you pointed in the right direction. After handing over the above cryptic information to my librarian, she led me to the drawers of filmed newspapers and pulled out a spool and handed it to me.

Feeding the film into the viewer I rolled forward to December 28 to the paper's magazine section and started looking for a page 12 in the Sunday Radio section number 9. The article was there with much information for my use. On the same page, with several other radio articles, were about a dozen photos of the leading radio personalities of the year. So, starting out and looking for one article, I found many more that were of equal interest to me.

Try it yourself. Take the above listing to your local library and ask for the New York Times of December 28, 1941 and you're off on a fun adventure into the history of radio.

If you get the bug and decide to start browsing through the microfilms of your local newspaper, you might run across items of a more local flavor that can give you an entertaining idea of the history of radio in your hometown. On a rainy afternoon in San Francisco, with some extra time on my hands, I wandered over to the main library and headed up to their newspaper section and running through some reels at random, I found the below article (abridged by me) on the early days of radio in the Bay Area that appeared in the now defunct *San Francisco News*. Dated July 3, 1958, this well researched and fun piece, one of a series of three, was written by its News Staff Writer William Steif.

Remember Radio When

If **KPO** was the queen of early San Francisco radio, serene, majestic and strictly high class, **KFRC** was the clown prince. When **KFRC** was licensed in 1924 it was a tiny coffeepot with a French accent. The City of Paris was the licensee and it had its studio on the department store's mezzanine. The transmitter was atop the Whitcomb Hotel.

It was a catch-as-catch-can operation, though it contained a seed of its future great frivolity. The seed was the manager who helped put the original 50 watts on the air, a Lowell High School graduate and "ham" operator named Harrison Holliday.

In 1926 an auto dealer, Don Lee, was looking for ways to promote the sale of Cadillacs and LaSalles. A cutie in his organization, the ad manager, dredged up the idea of using radio. Lee bought **KFRC** and moved it and Holliday into his dealership on Van Ness Ave. Whatever he paid for the station--and some say it was as little as \$10,000--it was cheap at twice the price.

It was **Holliday**, a gay, dreamy eyed chap with a little mustache and a fondness for high life, who steered **KFRC** into some brilliant programming.

He was the creator of the radio variety how and the memory of "The Blue Mountain Jamboree" is still verdant among thousands of Californians. Into this compact hour went a little music, a lot of comic skits and a free and easy, relaxed manner which had huge appeal. Much, of course, depended on the talent Holliday recruited.

FROM ACROSS THE BOND

There was Al Pearce, a native San Franciscan who leaped from the real estate business to the "Jamboree" and his own "Happy Go Lucky Hour".

There was Benay Venuta, Morey Amsterdam, Mabel Todd, Margy Lane Trusdell and Ed and Pegeen Fitzgerald.

There was an intense young piccolo player who migrated to Seattle to lead the orchestra for a Far Western network which promptly failed and then wandered down to San Francisco-that would be Meredith Willson.

There were plain and simple announcers like Mark Goodson, Ralph Edwards and Don Wilson, and Dud Williamson who started "Queen for a Day", Tom Brenneman and John Nesbitt, who originated "The Passing Parade" from the Van Ness Ave. studio.

Among the big big big shows were "Ed & Zeb," "Feminine Fancys" and "Horace Heidt and His Musical Knights." There was also a little dandy in which Harold Peary, who eventually became "The Great Gildersleeve," barked like a dog.

This show started every day with what may have been the most nauseating verse of all time: "Who's that little chatterbox, The one with pretty auburn locks. Who do you see. It's Little Orphan Anneeeeeeeee." But the show sent millions of American children screaming to their mothers to buy Ovaltine. It may be that KFRC struck a supreme blow for permissive childhood

KFRC affiliated with the spanking new Columbia Broadcasting System in 1928 and ran head and head with KPO-NBC right up until 1936, when the Don Lee coast network had a large hand in forming the Mutual Broadcasting System.

In that Golden Era, those eight years when San Francisco was the center of Coast productions for the networks, the smaller Bay Area stations were just pooping along.

KGO, founded by General Electric in Oakland in 1924, was swallowed up by NBC and emerged as NBC's "slopover" station for its slopover Blue Network. KSFO, founded in 1925 as KTAB (for Tenth Avenue Baptist Church, Oakland), was barely co-existing, and this was also the condition of KYA (founded 1926) KQW (which became KCBS years later) and KJBS.

Occasionally one of the smaller stations would attract a half hidden star from KPO or KFRC, but mostly the little outfits had to rely on second and third raters, their own wits and by playing the gradually improving phonograph records, a no-no on the major stations.

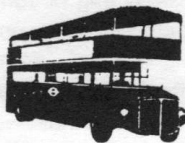
It was a lovely time. Everyone was broke, uninhibited and fresh, it seemed. The ice age of disc jockeyism and triple-spotted commercials had not yet settled on radio. But then, everything looks better through the rose colored glasses of time.

(The End)



Norman Cox, membership number 237, has been a NARA member for over a dozen years and is a retired banker.

FROM ACROSS THE POND



by Ray Smith



The cats have been comfortably ensconced in their temporary quarters, Kitties Haven, which, judging by the daily "room and board" rate should be renamed the Miaow Miaow Hilton. The car has been loaded down with enough clothes, shoes, toiletries and groceries to last a Polar Expeditionary Force for at least a year. With father at the wheel, mother beside him and daughters one and two in the rear, the only thing you can hear to break the serene calm of the sun drenched early morning grain fields as you race down the highway, are the shouts, hollers, protests and roars as everyone argues about a suitable audio accompaniment for the journey. Your wife wants to hear CBC Stereo's classical music Morning Man, Peter Togni, who offers a sort of 'Grieg with Gags' combination. "Such a civilised chap" she says (as if most CBC announcers are UNcivilised). Daughter number one insists that you tune in her favourite "alternate rock" station, suggesting that by placing the word alternate before the word rock, you get "rock for the truly informed" whoever they may be. Daughter number two is in no doubt that the family eardrums should be pierced by station Wowie Zowie which happens to focus on the heavy metal sounds of Big Bonzo and The Mother Druckers (at least that is what you HOPE you heard). And as for dad, quintessentially British to the bitter end, he can't understand why nobody is keen on listening to his "boxed set" of Paul Temple murder serials, recently purchased on cassette from the BBC's retail outlet, known somewhat pretentiously as "The BBC Collection." And just as the odometer which had been set at zero to log the mileage on this marathon journey, registers the magic FIVE OH, (50) somebody shouts through the cacaphony, "My God, I left the stove on!" Yes. It's summer vacation time again. And all you would need to turn that typical vacation scenario into a succesful family comedy show on radio, would be a bit of embellishment and the introduction of a few "eccentric" sounding, radio voices. Across the pond in Blighty, the Brits favourite radio family happened to be American.

These were Americans who loved Britain so much on their first visit, back in 1935, that they decided to make it their permanent home. From the 40's to the 60's, Bebe Daniels and her husband Ben Lyon together with their children, Barbara and Richard, were the "Royal Family" of British radio and television. Their most famous radio series was Life With the Lyons, which enjoyed an eleven year stint on the BBC Light Programme and was heard overseas on radio transcription. Life with the Lyons had all the classic ingredients of a succesful domestic comedy.



Bebe

The family lived in a suitably upper middle class English suburb. Daddy Ben was the typical "head of the household" to the extent that Bebe allowed him to be! Nowadays, Ben's character would be something of a male chauvanist and even back in the 50's, he frequently used bombast to assert



Ben

himself and prove to the family that he was in charge. Bebe Daniels didn't go quite as far as Gracie Allen in playing the giddy female...she managed to let her character appear suitably naive without resorting to the totally helpless and hapless "dizzy Dinah" type of personality. Barbara was the love-lorne older teen, appealing to her father's kindly nature whenever the path of true love went awry. And of course she was teased and taunted



Richard

mercilessly by her young brother Richard who managed to find appropriately insulting nicknames for her long string of boyfriends. They had a live-in cook/housekeeper by the name of Aggie MacDonald, Scottish to the core and brilliantly portrayed by top Scottish actress/comedienne, Molly Weir, who built a successful second career for herself as a best selling authoress and newspaper columnist, something she does to this day! Then there was the next door neighbour Mr. Wimpole, a hen-pecked older chap who pops in and out to get away from his "missus" and a character known as Aunt Florrie, whom I can best describe as a typically upper crust widow woman in "tweeds." Her role in the series was to throw clever acerbic verbal punches at Ben Lyon, who invariably caught them and gave back as good as he got, thus adding to the hilarity.



Barbara

Horace Percival who played Wimpole had a string of radio credits including the wartime series ITMA (It's That Man Again) while Doris Rogers (Florrie) was a well-known radio character actress. Not only was Bebe Daniels the real life wife and mother to the Lyon family, but she was also principle writer on the team which wrote the eleven years of shows. In this task Bebe was assisted by the scriptwriting duo of Bob Block and Ronnie Hanbury, while the entire series was produced by BBC veteran Tom Ronald.

A frequent guest star on Live with the Lyons was "Uncle" Vic Oliver, the American standup comedian and classical violinist who, like Bebe and Ben had emigrated to the UK in the late 30's and joined them on the long running wartime radio show Hi Gang. To call it simply a wartime show is misleading since it ran almost non-stop until 1951, when Live With The Lyons began. These days, Hi Gang enthusiasts remember it as the show that attracted Ronald Reagan as one of its weekly guest stars. Listening to that episode in the radio archives, you are struck not so much by Mr. Reagan's performance, as by the fact that his name was clearly pronounced "Ree" gan by Ben Lyon, while during his Presidency, the media usage was definitely "Ray" gan! The Hi Gang series was so popular with British audiences that it resulted in a 1940 movie also called Hi Gang, telling the story of three crazy Americans lost in London. One of the supporting roles in this run of the mill wartime propaganda movie, was played by a young actor who later became one of the great "knights" of the British theatre, Sir Felix Aylmer.



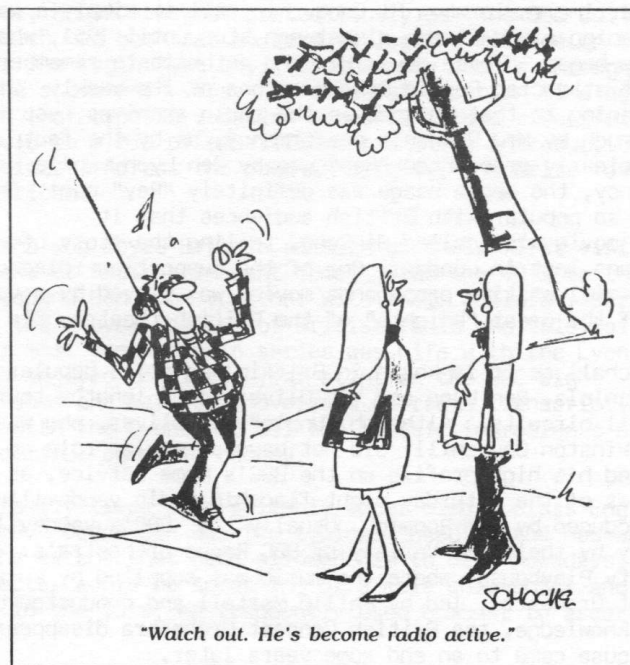
"Lyon's cook"
Molly Weir-1994

Vaudeville or musichall as it is known in Britain was still popular and it was not unusual for Bebe Daniels, Ben Lyon and Vic Oliver to do lengthy tours of the provincial musichall circuits. Although "Uncle" Vic Oliver, who was at one time the son-in-law of Sir Winston Churchill, did not have a regular role on Live With The Lyons, he maintained his high profile on the BBC's Home Service, as the star and master of ceremonies of the Saturday night flagship radio vaudeville series, Variety Playhouse, also produced by Tom Ronald. Usually the BBC's vaudeville shows were supported musically by their BBC Variety or BBC Revue orchestra's. But an exception was made for Variety Playhouse, where the music was supplied by an ensemble known as The British Concert Orchestra, led by Philip Martell and conducted by...Vic Oliver! To the best of my knowledge, the British Concert Orchestra disappeared into the ether when Variety Playhouse came to an end some years later.

Even when the entire Lyon cast transferred to the tv studio's their BBC radio shows continued to flourish. But by the early 60's Live With The Lyons had clearly entered its twilight zone. The kids had grown up in front of a huge listening audience. There was no real attempt to makeover Richard Lyon into a transplanted "Ricky Nelson" type, although he did make a few pop records with little impact. Barbara was the only Lyon who seriously pursued a solo career in Britain, as a cabaret and vaudeville singer turning up on many of the radio and television musical shows that were popular back in those days. These included Variety Playhouse, Saturday Spectacular and the inevitable round of Worker's Playtimes, visiting factory cafeterias all over the country. She was a talented pop vocalist in her own right, making British "cover" records of such US hits as Band of Gold, which often outsold the originals. But to the British public, both she and Richard would forever be the mischievous young offspring of Bebe and Ben. Bebe Daniels Lyon first became a star of the silent screen opposite Harold Lloyd and went on to make numerous Hollywood flickers including She's a Sheikh, The Return of Carol Deane and The Maltese Falcon. She died in 1971. Hubby Ben Lyon who survived her by eight years, returned to the movie business, proving that there was indeed life "AFTER" the Lyons by toiling as casting director for 20th Century Fox UK. Ben's US movie credits included Hells Angels, Bluebeards Seven Wives and I Covered the Waterfront. The Lyons 1953 movie release called simply, Life With The Lyons was a huge success in the UK prompting a 1955 sequel, The Lyons in Paris. Both films turn up periodically on late night television.

For 22 glorious years, from the genesis of Hi Gang to the last hurrah of Life With The Lyons, millions of Britons tuned in their favourite Americans every week. Although the Lyons didn't speak to them in the familiar accents of London, Birmingham, Manchester or Glasgow, they did speak to them as one family to another. And that wasn't just Life With the Lyons...that was LIFE!

Cheerio for now.



CONVENTIONS:



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The various conventions around the country are outstanding places to enjoy old time radio. All provide re-creations of old radio shows and workshops with some of the stars of old time radio. We encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities to add a new dimension to your hobby.

We list dates here as soon as we receive them so that you can plan ahead.

- ① THE 29TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR RECORDED SOUND COLLECTIONS will be held September 17 - 20, 1995 at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. A great number of the programs deal with music, but there are also sessions on OTR and recording. For further information contact Tim Brooks, Box 31041, Glenville Stn., Greenwich, Connecticut 06831. Phone (212) 408-9131.
- ② FRIENDS OF OLD TIME RADIO CONVENTION is an annual affair held at the Holiday Inn North at the Newark, New Jersey airport. For those driving it is just off the interstate and for those flying the hotel provides a free shuttle back and forth to the airport. Contact person is Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, Connecticut 06514. Phone (203) 248-2887. Future dates:
20th ANNUAL CONVENTION - October 19 - 21, 1995
21st ANNUAL CONVENTION - October 24 - 26, 1996
22nd ANNUAL CONVENTION - October 23 - 25, 1997
- ③ SPERDVAC CONVENTION is held each year at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza Hotel at the Los Angeles International Airport. For those driving it is located on the airport entrance road off I-405. The hotel provides a free shuttle service for those flying. Contact person is Larry Gassman, Box 1163, Whittier, California 90603. Phone (310) 947-9800. The next convention date is November 3 - 5, 1995.
- ④ THE 10TH ANNUAL OLD TIME RADIO AND NOSTALGIA CONVENTION will be held at the Marriott Inn in Cincinnati, Ohio on April 19 & 20, 1996. The hotel is just off I-75 close to the junction with I-275 on the north side of Cincinnati. Contact person for information is Bob Burchette, 10280 Gunpowder Road, Florence, Kentucky 41042. Phone (606) 282-0333.
- ⑤ THE 12TH ANNUAL NATIONAL LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY CONVENTION is scheduled for June 22, 1996 at the Best Western Lime Tree Inn in Mena, Arkansas. This is located about twenty miles from Pine Ridge, where the action in this popular radio series took place. For information contact Tim Hollis, #81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, Alabama 35062

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The NARA OTR source list is a three-page compendium of over 80 OTR clubs, publications, archives, libraries, museums, and dealers. It lists the name, address, and if available, the telephone number of each of these sources. It is available from Jack French, 5137 Richardson Drive, Fairfax, Virginia 22032. Cost is \$2.00 for NARA members and \$3.00 for others. Send cash or stamps; please NO checks. All profits from this go to NARA.

Jack Palmer, 145 North 21st Street, Battle Creek, MI 49015 (Phone: 616-962-8807) wants any information on radio shows featuring, or including, Vernon Dalhart who was on the air in the late 20's. He appeared on several shows and was featured on the Barbasol show before Singin' Sam. Also wanted, a copy of GAUDY NIGHT, one of the shows in the Lord Peter Wimsey series which was broadcast both on BBC and National Public Radio. Will buy or trade. Jack would also like to correspond and/or trade with others who collect country music related old radio shows. Anything from the Grand Ole Opry to local artists performing on local radio stations. All replies answered promptly.

Would like information, and a photograph if possible, of Freeman Gosden who played Amos, Kingfish, and Lightnin' on the Amos and Andy show. Marc Flanagan, 21045 Southbend Circle #2, Rocky River, OH 44116. Also at Internet address: Marc219@aol.com .

Looking for big band collectors to purchase or trade remote band broadcasts, especially from the 1930's. Also looking to purchase 16" transcription disks of big band remote broadcasts. All inquiries will be answered promptly. Steve Mallon, 3419 North Nottingham, Chicago, IL 60634 (312) 283-3294. No calls after 10:00 p.m. CDT, please.

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A TIP OF THE ATWATER DIAL TO....

Bob Burnham for complimentary comments through his E-Mail correspondence, which has brought in new members.

Roger Hill for doing a mail follow-up with people who had failed to renew their membership at the end of the year. Also, congratulations to the Hills on the opening of their new nostalgia store.

Jack French for his efforts with the OTR source list that is advertised in each issue. Jack tells us that he receives several requests for it each time the NARA NEWS comes out, with the profits from that endeavor going into the NARA treasury.

Charles Sexton for agreeing to become one of the "regular" columnists for each issue of the NARA NEWS.

Hal Stephenson for "filler" type materials to be used in future issues.

Don Aston for all the effort he is putting into trying to get the SCANFAX collection organized and available to the membership. A gigantic task.

Our columnists for this issue: Don Aston, Bob Burnham, Norman Cox, Jack French, Lou Genco, Roger Hill, Gene Larson, William Murtough, Jack Palmer, Charles Sexton, Ray Smith, and Hal Stephenson.

Those who have already sent in columns for future issues: Jack Palmer (2 columns), Charles Sexton (3 columns), Ray Smith, Hal Stephenson (2 columns), and Ken Weigel (a 2 part column).

“BRAVO!”

DEADLINES: September 15 for the fall issue.
December 15 for the winter issue.