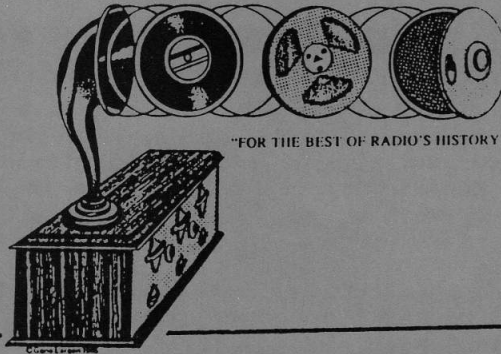


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A JOURNAL OF VINTAGE RADIO

Twenty-five years -- 1972/1997

# NARA NEWS<sup>©</sup>

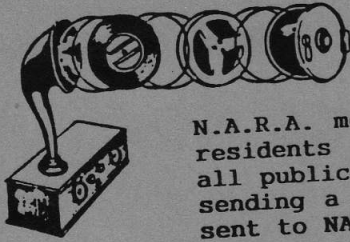
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## NORTH AMERICAN RADIO ARCHIVES

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From the President of the United States



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

February 26, 1997

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the North American Radio Archives.

In the past century, the medium of radio has changed the way we live and the way we view our world. All those involved in the enterprise of radio communications during the "golden days of radio" have played a vital role in connecting people all across the globe, sharing knowledge, culture, entertainment, and technological expertise to make our world a true global village.

The tapes of radio broadcasts from this era are an important part of our nation's history, and I commend the NARA for its dedication to preserving and protecting them so that future generations will be able to enjoy this glimpse into their heritage. You are helping to sustain a unique link between America's rich past and our promising future.

Best wishes for a memorable anniversary.

*Bill Clinton*

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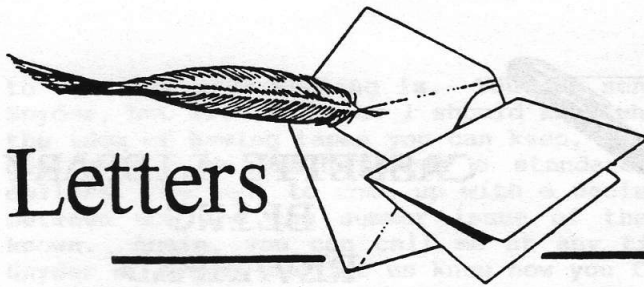
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# Letters



# from our readers

I have been particularly interested in your articles on "Fort Laramie" and the use the National Park Service is going to make of the tapes. It gave me an idea. Since I knew that the audio book tapes are very popular at my local library, I talked with our librarian about the use of the "NBC-University Theater" productions of great works of English literature done from 1948-1950. She thought this might be very popular with high school students, and particularly their parents, to supplement required reading lists. So I made copies of 12 shows that I thought might be the most popular (Moby Dick, Victory, Tom Jones, etc.) and donated them. I'm told that they are being checked out, not like hotcakes, but at a very respectable rate and have been asked if I could supply some more, which I will gladly do. I thought this might be helpful information for other members and also provide some answer to Roger Hill's question in his article last fall about how to interest younger people in old time radio.

Keith Sexton  
Moraga, California

\*\*\*\*\*

I became a member of NARA so that I could get old radio shows from the cassette library. I have not renewed [my membership] because the shows I got from the library were unhearable. They were not worth the rental cost, let alone the membership cost.

Name withheld by request

*EDITOR'S REPLY: The NARA staff has become aware of this over the last few months, and has decided on a course of IMMEDIATE action to completely correct the problem. Please see the message from NARA's president, Ron Staley, on page 5.*

## NARA's 25th ANNIVERSARY

## SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY OFFER

The date was June 2, 1973. The event was the first banquet of the new NORTH AMERICAN RADIO ARCHIVES, LTD. The featured guest was Carleton E. Morse. The Banquet was held at the Cathay House in San Francisco. This historic event was recorded on two cassettes which are available to NARA members as a 25th Anniversary Special. They can be yours, as a member of NARA, for a donation of \$25.00 or more. The cassettes come in a vinyl bookshelf binder with the special logo of the North American Radio Archives, Ltd. on the cover. Send your special donation to:

THE NORTH AMERICAN RADIO ARCHIVES, LTD.  
P.O. BOX 1392  
LAKE ELSINORE, CALIFORNIA 92531

Your special commemorative edition of the banquet honoring Carleton E. Morse will be sent to you via U.P.S. Send NARA your donation right away.

## President's Page



Ronald Staley

## CASSETTE LIBRARY BEING REVAMPED

I'd like to discuss some cogent points with you for a short period of time here. I regret to say that we no longer have Barry Hill as the cassette librarian, but I would like to thank both Barry and Marilyn Hill for their yeoman work in putting up with us for so many years. They've done quite a job in terms of managing the cassette library.

We have decided that we are going to make what amounts to a very lean, quality conscious library. That means that we are going to have the library temporarily off line until the late spring or early summer. Our problem is making sure that all the materials that we have in our library are of a quality that is worthy of the North American Radio Archives. We won't have thousands and thousands of cassettes that in many instances, I understand, were unlistenable. I'm sorry to say that has been the case in many instances. I pledge that we are going to get back on track again and make sure that we have these things in the sound that you have a right to expect, in a very good library, a quality library. It will not be the largest one in the world but it will at least be a quality one. We will continue to add by leaps and bounds to the collection always keeping quality as a number one priority.

I'm going to request that the orders for library cassettes now be sent to the president, that is me, Ronald Staley. Here's how I want you to do it. Make your checks payable to the North American Radio Archives, or NARA. **DO NOT** make checks out in the name of any individual. By law they **MUST** be made out to the organization. Send them to me, Ronald Staley, at 14144 Burbank Blvd. #4, Sherman Oaks, California 91401. If you have any questions at all, my phone number is (818) 989-2137, or my E-Mail address for those who are on the internet is "rstaley@netcom.com" Whatever happens we'll make sure the library keeps functioning and I'll make sure that your orders are taken care of.

I would also like to discuss another possibility with you to see what you NARA members think. It is entirely possible that we will be going to a system whereby, instead of having thousands of library tapes coming in and going out, that you'll order a tape, you'll pay a standard price for it, and you will keep the tape. Now people will say, "Doesn't that constitute selling?" Well, it doesn't make any difference if you are renting the tape and making copies of it; it's all a semantic difference to me. What we would be doing is trying to get the library orders moved much more quickly. We can't do that with the kind of library system that everyone has been used to in the past. It's impossible. So, I'm running it by you

to see what your feeling is. You can send your opinions to me or to Jim Snyder, but either Jim or I should know what your feeling is in respect to the idea of having tapes you can keep, thus having no library, as such, to deal with. We would charge a standard price, probably three to five dollars. We want to come up with a decision by summer time, so you have between now and the summer issue of the NARA NEWS to make your voice known. Again, you can call me at any time or you can write either Jim Snyder or myself and let us know how you feel.

We're moving right along with the 25th anniversary and for those of you who are interested in making a financial contribution to NARA, above and beyond your annual dues, we have a gift for you. For a donation of \$25 or more we will send you a two tape bookshelf edition of the 1973 commemorative dinner, hosted by Roger Hill in San Francisco, and honoring Carleton E. Morse. I've heard this and it was quite a performance. Some of those people are now gone so this is our only way of hearing them. Make checks payable to the North American Radio Archives and send them to North American Radio Archives, P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, CA 92531.

That's basically it for now.



## SHOULD NARA'S REEL LIBRARY CONTINUE?

NARA's reel-to-reel librarian, Scott Jones, has found that he is no longer able to handle this responsibility. Please DO NOT contact him for tapes or catalogs.

In recent years the library has seen VERY LITTLE usage on the part of our members who have apparently switched from using reels to cassettes. This makes us wonder if it is worthwhile continuing to operate the reel-to-reel library. We would like to have the guidance of our members on this issue. If you do have some thoughts, please write to our treasurer, Don Aston, P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, California 92531.

**NARA's  
25th  
ANNIVERSARY**

## GUEST EDITORIAL by Jack French

Jack French was the editor of the NARA NEWS from 1980 to 1985. He is currently the editor of RADIO RECALL, the publication of the Metro Washington Old Time Radio Club which serves the area of our nation's capitol.

Since I enjoy everything about OTR, it's rare when some facet of our hobby gets my goat. But one irritating thing to me is crazy collectors who "edit" programs in their holdings, re-dub it and then trade the shorter version to others. If we're just talking about cutting out the commercials, that's not too serious (even though I and many other traders want them left in).

What really ticks me off are the jerks who chop out sections of shows and then trade the abbreviated versions without warning. Last spring I obtained my first copies of THE COMIC WEEKLY MAN. All four starred Lon Clark and each was 15 minutes long. At the Newark convention, Clark did a re-creation of a show from that series and it ran a half-hour. During the Q & A session I asked Lon what percentage of THE COMIC WEEKLY MAN were the 15 minutes version. "None," he said, "they were all 30 minutes." I slumped down into my chair. I'd been had by another "chopper."

Last month I obtained copies of a late 40's show I'd read about but never actually heard: LONESOME GAL starring Jean King. She intertwined sexy chatter and commercials with recorded music in a 15 minute syndicated show. However all five shows I got from a Midwest collector were only 7 minutes each because his source had chopped out all the songs King played. So, I'm left with stop-and-go chatter. Hickerson's "Ultimate History" says there are 27 full episodes of this show so if you have some, please contact me.

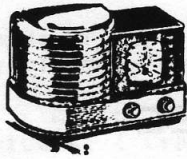
However the champion chopper has to be the guy who took a 30 minute episode of BOBBY BENSON, "Cactus Christmas," and compressed it to 10 minutes by deleting the intro, musical bridges, announcer comments, and entire short scenes. To top it off, that 10 minute version is being traded around while no one can find the uncut version now.

In the spirit of OTR cooperation, I make a point of trading with every novice collector who contacts me. Even if there is little in their small collection I need, I'll request some and reciprocate with dubs of their choice. I cringe when I hear stories from these newcomers being blasted by old-timers who sneer, "I don't need or want to trade anything for your stuff."

I also try to give these OTR virgins some tips on building up their collections and I encourage them to obtain dates for their shows since the arbitrary titles are usually worthless for identification. I'm sure that many established collectors share my philosophy.

While we're on the subject, let me mention a NARA member who exemplifies the generosity of the best of us. A collector in Milwaukee wrote to SPERDVAC's newsletter saying that HOUSE OF MYSTERY was her favorite show, as a kid, and she couldn't find any copies of it. A week later, according to what she told me, a cassette with an episode of that series, "The Bat-Boy," showed up in her mail box. The sender requested nothing in trade, it was just a gift. And that sender's name is our own Richard Rieve!





## Is Our Hobby Dying?

By B.J. George

What first got you interested in listening to old-time radio shows? That question may seem easy enough to answer. Perhaps you grew up in the era when radio was still the main form of entertainment in the majority of households. But if you were growing up in today's age of cable companies trying to outbid satellite services for your television viewing dollars, or where traveling the electronic highway means saving mileage on your car's tires, do you still think you would develop an interest in listening to radio shows? Would you even own a radio?

If you were growing up today, what would it take to get you interested in listening to old-time radio shows? Your answers may help preserve the future of our hobby.

Every now and then I will read a story or an article of how old-time radio is making a comeback. But is this really a comeback? Or simply a nostalgia trip? Are your children or grandchildren trying to stay in your good grace's so they will become heirs to your collection of radio cassettes? Or when you move on to the land of happy listening, will your cassettes go the way of eight track tapes?

This last question may seem a bit off the subject, but I think it may give us one possible solution to how we can ignite a spark of interest for old-time radio for those growing up in today's golden age of cyberspace. What is it about the magic of Walt Disney that they can make a sixty year old film like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* still be able to create a new following of young fans year after year? It's the same story, characters, and even the same voices. But even those of us who saw the movie a hundred times will still find ourselves watching it one more time.

One day while I was watching Disney's

animated version of *The Jungle Book* with my twelve year old twin daughters, I asked them if they could name any other Disney movies in which we hear the voice of the man who plays Baloo the bear? The answer is *Robin Hood* (Little John) and *The Aristocats* (Thomas O'Malley). We soon found ourselves each trying to outguess the other as we tried to match other voices. But it didn't hit me until that night when one of the twins was having trouble falling asleep that I asked them if they would like to listen to a cassette I had with the voice of the man who played the White Rabbit.

As time went by one of the twins would ask every now and then for another tape to listen to. And she was having as much fun as I did in matching the Disney voices such as the Flora from *Sleeping Beauty* and the Door Knob from *Alice in Wonderland* with those we'd hear in the radio programs. And my daughter has a better ear than I do when it comes to recognizing all the different characters Bill Thompson has played in both the cartoons and in radio.

While my children aren't as yet asking for me to list my radio collecting in their name in my will, they have in a small way began inheriting my love for old-time radio shows. Besides, I'm too young (for now) to even be thinking about what to leave for whom.

And for those of you who would like the answer to who played the voice of Baloo the bear, Little John, or Thomas O'Malley, I suggest you gather up your children or grandchildren, pop in a Disney video, and *listen* for the answers together. Who knows, maybe you may help keep our hobby from having to make out it's own will.



FROM

## FRANK BRESEE

Radio historian Frank Bresee is heard on his "GOLDEN DAYS OF RADIO" broadcast in the United States and Canada over the YESTERDAY USA SATELLITE NETWORK. Frank has a long and distinguished career as a radio performer and producer. He has worked with many greats of fantasy films.

-----

The month of October 1978 was a sad one for all of us because of one of the radio personalities we lost. Bret Morrison was a close personal friend and over several years we had appeared together on many radio and television shows.

A week before his passing we were together at Knott's Berry Farm in Anaheim, California for a special Salute to Radio. The "live" stage show included Andy Russell, comedians Loman & Barkley, radio personality Marvin Miller (The Whistler & TV's Millionaire), Rhoda Williams who played Margo, Bret, and myself. The sketch we did was actually a parody of the Shadow program, using exaggerated sound effects, and comedy lines which kept the audience in stitches.

Between shows we talked about the old radio days and his long involvement in radio. A week later, on October 23rd, Bret Morrison finished recording a Heartbeat Theatre program, left the studio and passed away a few minutes later while parked in his automobile near Sunset and Vine. That Heartbeat Theatre program was heard in most parts of the country two months later.

Bret Morrison was the most famous Shadow of all time, having played the role from 1944 until it left the air on December 26, 1956.

During an interview in 1975 on my "Golden Days of Radio" radio program, he explained how he became the voice of the Shadow. "I arrived at the audition about two minutes before they lost the studio. You see I was on another show and didn't get off the air until about a quarter of the hour and I had to go clear across town in New York. I finally made it about two minutes of and they said, 'just read the opening and closing.' Well, I picked up the script and it was the opening and closing of the Shadow. My show, 'First Nighter,' followed the Shadow, so I remembered the way it was done, and I just read it the way I had always heard it...and I thought, well that's the end of that. A couple of weeks later I got a call which said, you're it! It was quite a surprise. The program was on the air every Sunday at five o'clock...it was on so long. I became known as the 5 o'clock



Bret Morrison, Frank Bresee, January 1977

Shadow!" Bret Morrison is missed by radio fans all over the country and by his many friends in the radio business.

On the day of his memorial service at Mount Sinai Cemetery in Burbank, I read the following eulogy:

A whisk of wind, and the life of a friend is in the balance. Within a few minutes, a son Edward, close friends, and a legion of fans are broken hearted.

Bret Morrison will be remembered for the countless hours of entertainment he gave to millions. Beginning in Southern California, his career took him to Chicago and New York—for such programs as, "The First Nighter," "Chicago Theatre of the Air," "The Greatest Story Ever Told," and "The Light of the World." In New York, there was "The Road of Life" and "The Romance of Helen Trent"—and, of course—the most famous Lamont Cranston of all time.

He was happiest doing what he loved best—radio—and he did that to the end, finishing a "Heartbeat Theatre" just an hour before he left us.

Bret Morrison was more than an actor. He was a lovely man... a friend to all of us. The tears that must fall from the eyes of the many who miss him already cannot be halted by the spoken word. No, the word will not take the place of his being.

I am proud to have known him, to have been part of his time, and to have taken inspiration from him. He once signed a photograph to me with the salutation, "May I be the only Shadow in your life." My shadows, and yours, will never be longer than on this day—and as these days wind into weeks and months, we will have fond memories of the man we pay homage to.

"Baruch Ata Adonay" Praise be the Lord.



Wireless  
Wanderings



JIM SNYDER

## WHO IS FRANK BRESEE?

At one of the fall conventions, one of our East Coast "celebrities" asked me, "Who is Frank Bresee?" Well, Frank was raised in California and always worked there, so he never really got to know any of the radio people in either New York or Chicago. Any of our readers who served in the military overseas after 1966 certainly know who he is from listening to his regular *GOLDEN DAYS OF RADIO* broadcasts on Armed Forces Radio. Over the years Frank has told us much of what we know about the performers of radio's "golden age" both through his broadcasts and through his writings. For those of you who may not know much about this man, I think it's time to fill you in.

He started in radio as a juvenile actor on three network shows. The first was playing Little Alvin on *MAJOR HOOPLE*. Arthur Q. Bryan was the star and Mel Blanc and Patsy Moran were others on the show. This was a live broadcast every Monday at 4:05 in the afternoon, coast to coast on the Blue Network. Frank mentioned that he has his scripts but not a single recording of the show.

Next, he played Little Beaver on *RED RYDER*, although none of my reference books give him credit for this part. Frank explained that in 1942, when they were casting the program, Paul Franklin, who wrote and directed all the shows, had an audition. There were thirty or forty kids who tried out for the Little Beaver part and Franklin decided on Tommy Cook and Frank Bresee because their voices sounded almost identical. Franklin then spoke to Arch Oboler. Tommy had worked for Arch back in 1940 and Arch thought that he was the most talented young performer that he had ever seen. So, Tommy got the job, but by then he was pretty much finished with radio. He wanted to do movies and was getting parts in them. That meant that he couldn't always come back from the movie set for *RED RYDER*, so Frank said that he prayed that Tommy would get lots of movie roles so that Frank could be Little Beaver as often as possible. The show was on six days a week. It was



Frank Bresee  
presents  
*RADIO'S GOLDEN  
DAYS*



Frank Bresee with George Burns

on Don Lee-Mutual on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. This was from the Don Lee studios. Then Frank saved his script to do the same show on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday on the Blue Network from the NBC studios.

Then around 1943 or 1944 he did *I LOVE A MYSTERY* on CBS. Here again Frank was switching places back and forth with Tommy Cook because their voices were so very similar. Frank said that he didn't like doing *I LOVE A MYSTERY* because Carlton E. Morse scared him to death. Frank said, "He was a big guy and was semi-bald and he seemed kind of

gruff, although he was a pussy-cat and a nice guy when I had him on my show five or six years ago. I told him, 'You always scared me.'" And he said, "Well I always tried to scare everybody."

Frank told me that the only show that he hadn't done that he wished he had was *ONE MAN'S FAMILY*. He said that everybody in the world did *ONE MAN'S FAMILY*, but he didn't because of Carlton E. Morse. "He just scared me."

Frank started his adult broadcasting career in 1949 on KSCI on Catalina Island. In those days, when you were on a local station, you did everything. That was also when he started his *GOLDEN DAYS OF RADIO* show. In 1950 the show went on Liberty Broadcasting for about three years as a Saturday night feature. It then went to Mutual for a year and also ran on a number of Los Angeles stations. In 1966, when he was passing through Germany, Frank met an Armed Forces Network staff member who was familiar with the *GOLDEN DAYS OF RADIO*. He asked Frank to do the show for AFN (Armed Forces Radio in Frankfurt). That series began in September of 1966, and after about a month and a half he received a letter from Washington. They mentioned how good the show was and asked if he would do it for the full network. So then, he was doing two shows a week, one for AFN and one for AFRTS. After 26 weeks he finished up the AFN series and the Frankfurt station then started using the AFRTS shows. The program was then heard on over 400 stations around the world for almost 29 years, ending in 1995. It was the first old time radio show heard around the world. It was the longest running show on Armed Forces Radio, and probably the longest running show with a single host of all time.

*GOLDEN DAYS OF RADIO* started as a half hour show, once a week. After a few years Frank told them that he had more time and could go to five days a week if they needed it. They said that they would think it over. A

couple of weeks later, when he came in to do his show, his producer said, "You know, next week your show starts five days a week." That was all the warning he had. So, it then went to the five day schedule for several years and then switched to an hour long format for the last 15 years.

All together there were 2,739 Armed Forces *GOLDEN DAYS OF RADIO* broadcasts, and all were originals, no re-runs. In addition to that, there were 260 syndicated five minute shows. Then, a little over three years ago, *GOLDEN DAYS* started on the Yesterday USA Satelite Network. Here Frank provides a new show every other week, that is played several times in the two week span. Last fall this became a 90 minute show.

Finally, Frank did an hour long special for CBS called *THE GOLDEN DAYS OF RADIO TELEVISION SPECIAL*. His announcer was Bill Baldwin and his guests were Rudy Vallee, Milton Berle, Johnny Mathis, and Bret Morrison with whom they did a *SHADOW* sketch. It was a great show and since he owns the rights he plans to bring it out again sometime in the future.

Other radio credits for Frank include an NBC show called *I WANTED WINGS* which was broadcast in the early war years. He also did some local shows such as *PORTRAITS FROM LITERATURE* and *PAGING THE PAST*. He wrote for radio as well as producing and directing shows. When RFI celebrated their 25th

anniversary, 25 years ago, he wrote and produced a twelve hour special. RFI was the NBC station in Los Angeles and they asked him what he had in mind. Frank suggested that they get every star who was ever on NBC to do a half hour. They said that was impossible, but they didn't know what Frank Bresee was capable of doing. First, he called Jack Benny and told him that he would like to have Jack narrate a bit of his life on NBC and that Frank would put in excerpts. Benny quickly agreed. Then because of that he got George Burns. Frank said that he wrote a lot of stuff for him but that George re-wrote every word, but he was the only one to do so. Then he got Hal Perry, Rudy Vallee, and a number of others until he had eleven hours filled. He then decided he would like to call this special "RFI: This Is Your Life." He called Ralph Edwards, who he had worked for in the early 60's, and Ralph agreed to do the first and last half hours based on that theme.

Frank's career has gone beyond radio. He wrote and did voices on the *JIM HAWTHORNE COMEDY SHOW* on TV for several years. As mentioned above, he worked for Ralph Edwards on *TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES*. Frank said that he



Frank Bresee and Milton Berle

worked in the prize department "hustling" prizes that they gave away to contestants on the show. Because Bob Barker liked him, he also got to do parts on the show every once in a while. Because the prize business seemed to be a good one, he formed the first company to do merchandising for TV shows including *DATING GAME* and *NEWLYWED GAME*. He also created the home board games for both of those shows.



*Jack Benny and Frank Bresee*

Frank helped create the television game show *DOTTO*. He worked with a friend, Snag Werris, in putting the idea together. They did run-throughs and CBS liked it but said that they were going to do it from New York. When they started the selection of contestants Frank thought that this was kind a strange process. He began to feel that something was wrong. But, in a little over four months they became the number one show on the air. Then the quiz show scandals broke. *DOTTO* was the first to go, quickly followed by the \$64,000 *QUESTION* and *TWENTY-ONE*.

In 1980 he came up with what he thought was a pretty good game show. He had Alex Trebek as the host. Frank told his wife, Bobbie, that he needed a model for the show. She reminded him that she did movies, not television. So, a friend suggested a gal from the South who had just moved into the area and who wanted to be an actress and a model. Frank talked to her and told her that they were doing run-throughs in the theater twice a week to see if they could sell it. She said that was OK and so for twice a week for six months she was there, on time, and never complained. A part of her job was to turn cards around to show the prizes. They never sold the show, but Vanna White later got another job where she turned cards, to show the letters on *WHEEL OF FORTUNE*.

In 1962 Frank had an idea for a board game called "PASS-OUT." He printed up a thousand of them and those were quickly sold. So he printed another thousand and sold those. In 1964 a company asked to distribute them. It is now sold all over the United States and the rest of the world in stores such as Harrods in London. So far it has sold over two million pieces.

Frank has produced and directed one movie, which featured his wife Bobbie, and he has worked with John Carradine, Vincent Price, and other "fantasy" greats.

Frank has been a loyal supporter of NARA for many years, both with his writings and his financial support, but there is one other story that I think highlights his generosity. He had known Arthur Q. Bryan since they had done *MAJOR HOOPLE* together. In Bryan's later years he lived with his

aunt in Burbank and Frank used to go over to play cards once a week. By 1948 Bryan was pretty sick and had eye problems so Frank would take him to the doctor and so on. They lost touch with each other until in 1950 it was in *VARIETY* that Arthur had died at age 60. Frank went to the funeral and the services at the cemetery in Burbank. When he went back, six months later, he found that the grave had no headstone. So Frank purchased the stone, had it engraved and had it installed. It is there today.



*Frank Bresee with Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen*

Frank Bresee, thank you for all the great memories you have given us over the years. You are truly a friend to all of us in the hobby.



### **SOMETHING NEW**

If you know of members, or prospective members, who would benefit from this new service, please contact Don at P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, CA 92531. He can be reached by phone at (909) 244-5242.

## **NARA NEWS NOW AVAILABLE** **ON CASSETTE FOR** **THE BLIND**

We are pleased to be able to announce a new service for the blind. Bill Bright, a retired Canadian radio broadcaster, will be reading the material in each issue of the *NARA NEWS* and putting it on cassette to make it available to blind members. Don Aston, *NARA*'s secretary-treasurer, will duplicate the cassettes and put them in the mail to those who need this service.

## **Trivia**

Orson Welles said, "Ask not what you can do for your country. Ask what's for lunch?"



# UNIVERSITY OF RADIO: HOLLYWOOD

by

Ray Erlenborn, "DR" (Doctor of Radio)

*NARA member Ray Erlenborn was the sound effects artist for many radio and television programs, such as the Red Skelton Show, Big Town, and the Bickersons. Nowadays you can find him demonstrating his craft at the Newark and SPERDVAC conventions each year.*



There was no university diploma, just a lifetime in radio, after I left L.A. Polytechnic High School in my senior year. Fortunately however, the timing was right, as I was born at a perfect time to participate in the "golden age of radio," and in recent years receive a Doctorate of sorts for "achievement" from various old time radio organizations. Here is my story: My Dad, Al E. Erlenborn died in an oxygen tent in the Los Angeles County Hospital when I was 18 years old. (He rolled his own, a Bull Durham smoker.) This event motivated both my Mom and I to make a few changes in our future plans.

Mom rented an old two story house on 8th and Garfield streets just a few blocks from downtown Los Angeles for forty-five dollars a month. (Depression Era!) We took in five boarders who had jobs in the area. They resided in the four upstairs bedrooms (one married couple) and had their meals downstairs with Mom and me in a rather large dining room. The going board and room rate at that time was \$7.50 per person per week. As you can see, that came to roughly \$37.50 per month.

I had a Model A Ford, complete with jump seat in the rear, so, because I had a passable singing

voice, I began to make the rounds of the radio stations with my ukelele. I would also check in with Central Casting at about 4 p.m. each day, hoping to be given a call to report to a studio for a day's work as an extra or "bit player" for the stately sum of three dollars, or five dollars if the part called for five spoken lines or less. I was sort of a triple-dip teenage wage earner for several years, as I "moonlighted," working for a dollar a night in the independent gas station across the street from the house. My third source of income was Simonizing cars for three bucks a crack at the garage, a half block away on Garland Street. This was in addition to the casual jobs I was able to dig up in the movie and radio studios.

I was 22 when I was first hired at KNX/CBS as a staff sound effects technician. In the early days, before the shows in the East began to move to the West Coast, I had my mornings free so I enrolled at L.A. City College and studied Drama 84 with a great guy we called Mr. Turney. I also selected associated show business courses along with people like Alexis Smith, Donna Reed and other young Hollywood hopefuls. Soon, however, the overtime at the radio station began to proliferate and I quit school and quickly learned



A self-portrait by Ray Erlenborn, showing how hectic it could be for the sound effects artist.

what it was like to work 12 and up to 18 hours a day.

But what a magical world I had entered! A world of writers, directors, actors, actresses, musicians, and sound effects **ARTISTS**. I use the word **ARTISTS** advisedly, as I soon discovered that the young men I worked with at KNX/CBS Radio (6121 Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood), were

inadvertently learning to acquire the aptitude, timing and expertise of the musicians, the actors and actresses. I picked up a wealth of knowledge from this helpful and very friendly group.

In the sound effects department, there was another invaluable asset for learning. On any given day the sound effects artist was called upon to read three to six,

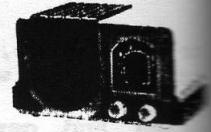
or even more, well written radio scripts from which we would set up the effects for news, comedy, drama and game shows. I recall that there were some days I arrived at the studio at 5 a.m. for the *Morning Hancock Gasoline News* program. (The opening of the show was a rooster crow. The crow was on their advertising logo.) During the day I might be scheduled to do other rehearsals and live broadcasts of shows like *The Newlyweds*, *Lum and Abner*, *Scattergood Bains*, *Blondie* . . . and then, perhaps at midnight, I'd be assigned to do *Nightcap Yarns* starring Frankie Graham. Sound effects guys like Clark Casey, Cliff Thorsness, George Dodge and our boss at that time, Lloyd Creekmore, were kept just as busy as I was, moving effects in and out of studios. We'd pass each other in the halls pushing loaded prop tables, turntables, doors and splash tanks from the sound effects department, or from one of the many studios to another. Our inventory of manual effects grew and grew, as did our 78 rpm recorded library. We were so busy, we would hardly have enough time for a lunch break. There was one advantage when many of the network shows moved out to the West Coast. We always got a long break for dinner between the East Coast and the West Coast repeat shows.

Another invaluable learning tool for sound effects personnel was the earphones we wore. We had the advantage of being able to hear all of the voices in the audio control booth which included the directions given to the musical director and the sound effects men, plus any comments made by the

director, the audio technician or even the agency people, who were invariably sitting in the booth. Sound effects personnel became sources for network maneuvering rumors. "A new show coming to the coast?" The actors were enlightened immediately so they could approach the new directors from New York and offer their services. Multiply one day's number of shows by up to 40 years or more in radio and you can see that a good deal of knowledge was assimilated through those little black audio devices cupped over the ears of the sound effects artists and others.

Another learning advantage of being in radio came with our association with some very intellectual actors, actresses, and directors. May I be so bold as to report there were some very interesting conversations at Brittinghams and Nickodels restaurants when people were present, like Hans Conried, Lurene Tuttle, True Boardman, Bill Goodwin, Glenhall Taylor, Jerry Hausner, Norman Corwin, Bill Baldwin, Verna Felton, Martha Wentworth, Sara Selby, Jacquelin DeWitt, Peter Leeds, John Dehner, Bill Conrad, etc. etc. I feel so privileged that as a member and board member of Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters I can still join my wonderful peers at Sportsmen's Lodge once a month during the period when a luncheon is given to honor the achievements of one of the stimulating personalities of radio, television and movies. All this plus the old time radio conventions, festivals, and cruises have been radio's fringe area benefits for a RIP-ROARIN' RETIREMENT!

# MORE WORDS FROM ANOTHER CURMUDGEON of "OTR-2000"



by Bob Burnham

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MARCH 15 is the date! Something tells me it was also at one time, the day the Internal Revenue Service expected to hear from us. For the benefit of our illustrious editor, it is one of the deadline dates for incoming columns for NARA News. *Trusty Bob* has started writing this column near the end of October to insure it'll be done on time (that'll be a first for this year!).

Yes, it has been a busy time for old-time radio with organizations and conventions growing at a weed-like rate. This past Newark Friends of Old time Radio convention had close to 70 dealer tables filled—an all-time record. After a period of stagnation, our hobby is showing some growth—if not overwhelming (compared to other collectibles), it at least gives some assurance that there's enough of us around that the tens of thousands of shows in existence aren't all going to wind up in a dumpster somewhere.

I mentioned the large number of vendors at the Newark convention. Contrast that to the next collectable show coming up in the spring Charlotte, NC, with 5,000 vendors. That's the right number of zeros—five thousand! With just the right amount of media coverage, we could probably get that big too, but it would take time.

This past convention was also the one I had originally planned to do a sound processing and clean up demonstration, and had actually assembled a small "road rack" with a few of my favorite pieces of gear to take on the plane. Due to the weight, however, I decided against it at the very last minute. That was a wise decision considering the hassles with the new "high tech" monorail at Newark International Airport. Here's **their** idea of high tech: You get to ride up and down three levels of escalators to take a six minute ride to somewhere we used to be able to walk to in less than 10 minutes. Nonetheless, the convention itself was a great show, and one that I don't plan on missing anytime in the near future.

At this point, it is a welcome relief that there are no simmering controversies in the hobby on the surface—perhaps a thing or two **beneath** the surface, but nothing that threatens the welfare of OTR. In fact, quite the opposite is going on: *A certain amount of unity seems to be in place among certain factions.*

I read the daily internet-distributed "**old.time.radio Digest**" which generally arrives twice a day in my e-mail box. Through this means, one can take the temperature of where the minds of many of the significant figures of old time radio are at—as well as hear the comments of thousands of "newbies" who have found us through technology (this is one of our hobby's major sources of growth). Yes, **we know** there are plenty of collectors out there who still look toward their trusty **Smith Corona, Remington or IBM Selectric** typewriters to convey their printed thoughts on paper. But **those** devices can't be hooked up to a telephone line to access other old-time radio people around the world. Trust me: If there was a way to do that, "**I**" would've been just the guy to tell you how to do it in this column! But there is no modem that can be addressed by a motor-driven mechanical device (with a bell that "dings" to remind you to pull the carriage return at the end of a line).

Even **Jay Hickerson**, OTR's long-established *guru* and premier source of OTR information and resources has compiled a list of collectors with their internet e-mail addresses. Jay himself can be reached at JayHick@aol.com or by *Snail Mail* (the official "*net*" term for the U.S. Postal Service) at the usual Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514.

Another of my long-time OTR friends said at the Newark convention that he was going to "tick" my e-mail box" with some new shows. Now **THAT** will be a real trick to see an actual cassette or a real emerge from my computer (in the spirit of Star Trekian beam-me-up technology) ! In reality, there **is** a way to hear your favorite old-time radio shows on the speaker built into your computer (assuming

you have one built in—I do; OF COURSE—in fact, there's a headphone jack on the back of mine as well).

How can you hear OTR on a computer? There's actually a few different ways.

Years ago, I had posted a bunch of excerpts from shows on a local bulletin board (an on-line service you call into with a computer), but they were all short clips, most lasting only a minute or less. With the slow modems of the era, to play a minute or less of audio, it might have taken five or more minutes for someone to download it to their computer (to replay it later). **That was in the old days.** More recently, other people have done a better job doing similar things using the World Wide Web. Perhaps even more interestingly, "live" audio broadcasts are now available for "tuning in" in real time with a computer. For example, up until recently, Bill Bragg's Yesterday USA Satellite Superstation (which transmits old time radio 24 hours a day) could only be heard on home satellite dishes and cable systems. Now, you can hear Bill and his prestigious group of old-time radio hosts live on a computer hooked up via modem to the Web. A similar service will soon be available from Collector's Radio Network, although this network is not a "pure" old-time radio network, it WILL feature weekly reports from some of the clubs in OTR, as well as other special old-time radio features. If you live within range of a major city, you should also be able to hear some or all of CRN's programming on a more traditional broadcast station.

How can you get connected to the Web? The simplest is a subscription to one of the online services such as CompuServe or America Online along with the appropriate equipment. A local telephone call links you up. The cost ranges from about \$9.95/month for the basic service to America Online's new \$19.95/month "unlimited hours" offer. Free software is readily available from CompuServe 800-336-6823 or America Online (a.k.a. "AOL") 800-827-6364. When you get that far, e-mail me at Platecap@aol.com if you need help finding the old-time radio resources.

What else is on my mind? When was the last time you operated the computer **inside** your cassette deck? That's right, **INSIDE**. If you press any function button on an average everyday household cassette deck (manufactured in this decade), to play, record or rewind a tape, you are operating a form of computerized circuitry. For those who are fearful about advancing technology, fear not. Technology is already surrounding you even if a traditional computer is not within miles of where you live. By replacing dozens and dozens of mechanical parts (that are noisy and tend to wear out) with a few integrated circuit chips, cost is generally reduced and reliability increased. The fewer the number of moving parts, the longer it'll last.

In the next installment, perhaps I'll unveil my latest list of selected shows I love to hate, and with any luck, won't see too much hate mail or fallout in other publications. And oh yes, that OTR vendor that some people **thought** I had a love affair with and was recommending, merely because I said he was comical and fun at a certain convention, seems to have dropped out of old-time radio for a while. **Darn the luck!** **Somebody** needs to stir up some trouble, *somewhere*. Ya know, I think it's also time our **beloved editor** start writing again about **the use of pointers at conventions** (I'm only half serious on that one). If none of this happens, maybe at the Cincinnati convention coming up this spring, I'll approach NARA's **beloved treasurer**, Don Aston, and say, "Hey, you're doing one **heck** of a good job with your show on Yesterday USA Superstation; I heard you on my **COMPUTER** last night..."

I'm not trying to name drop; only trying to make a very simple point: The old-time radio collecting hobby will never stand die, as long as we continue to have the high caliber of people involved in it that we do; those who call the shots as they seem them (like the many columnists in this publication), and those who pour so much of their lives and energy into preservation and promotion.

And on **that** note, in the words of broadcast legend, Paul Harvey... "Now you've heard *the rest of the story....I bid you....*

.....<pause>

<pause>

<pause>

<pause>

...good day!"

**NARA's  
25th  
ANNIVERSARY**

**MEMORIES OF ME  
AND NARA  
by Al Inkster**

(NARA's Vice President Emeritus)

I enlisted in NARA shortly after reading an article that published the organization's address ("Rip Van Ranger," *Time*, April 29, 1974, pp. 71-72). A query letter brought a quick response from Roger Hill, informing me of the benefits of membership. Even before submitting my dues, I received the organization's early publications: a 1932 *One Man's Family* script, a *Lone Ranger* script, and the Vol. II, No. 1 issue of the *NARA NEWS*. That copy of the *News* more than covered the expense of my \$10 membership fee. What a treasure trove its 85 crisply mimeographed pages offered to a fan of radio's past: interesting columns by Roger Hill and Paul Thompson; a synopsis of the soap *Those We Love* by its author, Agnes Ridgeway; a *Buck Rogers* script from Nov. 7, 1932; Steven Kadell's piece on the Mutual Broadcasting Company; listings of slides, magazines, scripts, books, and reel-to-reel tapes available for rental; reprints from *Radio Guide*, including logs from 1934 and 1943; and an entertaining discussion of Charlie McCarthy as a comedian, written by a young fellow who became a frequent contributor to NARA publications and eventually editor of *Through the Horn*, John Pellatt.

Subsequent issues of *NARA News* were much briefer, though still entertaining and informative, and President Hill became Editor Hill as well, and began to sound some ominous themes. In October, 1975 he noted that the membership was rising while the attrition of officers was horrendous. Editor Judy Breninger, Treasurer Wynn Hoskins, Tape Librarian Al Vesick, and Co-secretaries Mike and Saundra McAviney had all resigned (III:3). To keep the organization alive, Roger faced the necessity of doing all of the work by himself. A man of boundless energy, quick thinking and quick acting, he was able to pull it off, but in the *News* he issued pleas for assistance. The first issue of 1976 brought the comforting news that more than a dozen members had volunteered to help and that Sherill and Gayle Bland of Reno, Nevada had been selected to be the tape librarians. When Roger decided to ship out to the islands, he accepted my offer to be his successor as editor and suggested that I also assume the duties of the printed materials librarian.

In his departing column (IV:3; 1976) Roger commented on the evolution of the *News* through its first ten issues, taking the journal from a mimeographed 8½ by 11 inch one sided page format to the offset 7 by 8½ duplex format that it still uses today. In a "From the New Editor" piece, after Roger's communique, I defined what I hoped future issues would become. I suggested goals for the publication (to keep the memory of radio's past; to identify what was of exceptional value in radio's past; to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas from those interested in the history of radio; to suggest means for imparting knowledge of and

appreciation for radio's past to present and future generations and asked that readers submit the following kinds of articles:

memory pieces about one's own experiences during the time when radio was the most popular medium in the country

articles about favorite radio programs

articles about the history of radio networks or stations

synopses of radio series

articles about revivals of Golden Age radio programs

reviews or appreciations of programs on NARA tapes

reviews of books about radio, those in the NARA Library or from other sources

articles on gaining a wider audience for old-time radio

After announcing my desire for content, I kicked back and awaited a deluge of materials from members. Alas, the rain of written contributions did not arrive, and I supplied most of the writing. With succeeding issues the *News* began to have a stable of writers: Tom Price, John Pellatt, Sherill and Gayle Bland, Mickey C. Smith, Mike Gerrard, Gene Larson, Charles Stumpf, and, most often, Roger Hill and Jack French. A number of one time contributors--Gerry Lieber-Mackay, John J. Sheridan, George E. Steiner, Rex Miller, Steve Nordstrom, Sheldon Gloger, David Reznick, Brenda Bland, and Tom Garcia among them--and dozens of letters from readers also helped fill the *News* with interesting content.

Producing the quarterly journal was a time-consuming responsibility, which I enjoyed, and, had science advanced the use of cloning so that I could have become two, I would still be doing it. A typical 60-page issue required upwards from 100 hours of time: reading and editing submissions, corresponding with contributors, writing, typing camera-ready copy for offset printing, preparing the finished journals for bulk mailing, making trips to the print shop, graphic shop, and post office, and dealing with postal clerks who slapped my hand with a ruler when I violated a bulk mailing regulation by committing violations such as stating that the weight of a single copy was 3.75 ounces rather than 3.75792. During those years I was also custodian of the Printed Materials Library and unofficial corresponding secretary, since other newsletters and a guide to organizations had listed my address as NARA headquarters. I needed a clone to serve NARA while I continued to fulfill my other obligations. No such scientific miracle being available, I asked to be relieved of the editorship.

Issue VII:3 concluded my time as editor. I had produced twelve issues, catalogs for both the Printed Materials Library and Tape Library, and a couple of recruitment brochures. Among the characteristics of the *News* that evolved during those years were the following: the reduction of

8½ by 11 camera-ready pages to 7 by 8½ Newssized pages, allowing an increase in content; a generally well-organized publication; the use of tables of contents; the insertion of subheads in articles to direct readers and to provide white space that gives the page a less cluttered look; headlines (produced by a variety of unusual methods); suggested guidelines for those who attempted to do much-appreciated, camera-ready copy; an increase in the number of original articles and a corresponding decrease of reprints; more pictures and more of them that were directly related to articles; use of card stock for the cover; a centerfold which featured a double-page picture or cartoon; the "From Other Publications" regular feature which summarized items from newsletters of other organizations; extensive, informative reviews that were not simply notices; and annotated bibliographies for the Printed Materials Library additions.

Though I was no longer the editor, I continued as Printed Materials Librarian until the fall of 1988. During that time the materials available for borrowing expanded from 62 to 364 books, from 22 to 196 scripts, and from 74 to 208 magazines. The number of borrowers also increased. The credit for the increase in the number of items belongs to those who generously donated some of their treasures so that others could also enjoy them. If a building housed the collection and its parts honored those who contributed the most during the first few years it might well be named the Roger Hill Library of Vintage Radio and have a Tom Price Wing and a Jack French Wing. A room each would go to Jackie Thompson, Larry Slavens, Charles Ordowski, John Pellatt, Joe Webb, Lora Palmer, Gene Larson, Jerry Nadel, and James Greenwood.

In addition to the circulated items the library also included clippings, slides, scrapbooks, xerox copies of magazines and magazine articles, a few 16 mm films and videocassettes, logs, and magazines too fragile to be circulated. Indeed, the piles of NARA items and my own horde of books, magazines, tapes, file drawers filled with minutiae, and records had threatened to crowd Norma and me right out of our modest abode. She had suggested we move to a larger house; I, having glanced at the newspaper's real estate section and having therewith fainted from the realization of how much prices had increased from 1974 to 1988, had panicked and suggested that I might be able to dispose of something. The NARA Printed Materials Library had to go. The News of XVI:1 (1988) carried a help wanted item, listing duties (to package and mail materials requested from the library, to organize and catalog existing materials, to repair and preserve fragile materials, and to augment the collection by seeking donations), stating necessary requirements (time and energy to accomplish the tasks and a secure place to house the materials, which required 14 cubic feet and 72 feet of shelf space of varying depths), and offering remuneration (satisfaction of providing a service for fellow vintage radio fans, opportunity to peruse fascinating books, magazines, and other materials, and the chance to communicate with those sharing a similar interest).

Since fall, 1988 when I mailed the library in several large boxes to Misty Dawn Lane in San Francisco, there have been four keepers of the trove. Misty resigned less than a year later and passed the collection to



Tom Watson of Coursegold, California, who turned it over to Scott Jones in Fresno, California. The present librarian, Bob Sabon, in Phoenix, took it over in early 1995.

The most worthwhile service that I provided for NARA was helping to bring three productive people into the inner sanctum of workers. Gene Larson sent me a copy of his magnificent "Radio's Remembrance" poster and upon my request allowed the News to reproduce it as the centerfold of VI:2 (Summer, 1978). I began to call on him for line art to accompany articles; no matter how challenging the assignment he came through, and issue VII:1 (Spring 1979) carried the welcome news that he had agreed to be the NARA News staff artist. Harold Widdison telephoned me a few times during the days when I was the organization's chief correspondent. I was impressed by what he told me about his efforts to preserve radio's past on tape, and when the Blands resigned, I recommended to President Steve Ham that Harold be offered the position of reel-to-reel librarian. He accepted and immediately changed the philosophy upon which the archives was based (from seeking a representative collection to a more comprehensive one) and greatly increased the holdings of the reel-to-reel library. From issue VI:1 (Spring, 1977) on, Jack French was a continuous contributor of interesting articles, current newspaper items worthy of reprinting, and comments in the "From the Readers" section. When Roger Hill resigned after briefly reassuming the editorship, I knew whom to recommend to President Ham. Jack accepted the position and produced outstanding issues for five years. I like to think that my recommendations kept MARA on a productive course for several years.

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*AL INKSTER has been a member of NARA for 24 years. He was editor of the NARA NEWS from 1976 to 1979, served as our printed materials librarian from 1976 to 1988, held the position of vice president from 1981 to 1984, and has been our vice president emeritus from 1984 to the present. This is the way his picture has appeared in the NARA NEWS over the years.*



1977



1983



1995

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### News of the weird

In January, 1997, the owners of KZZC, an FM radio station in Tipton, California, ended 18 consecutive months of playing various versions of the song "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" all day, seven days a week (except once, when it played the Eagles' "New Kid in Town" for a weekend). The station was pending sale, and the owner needed to keep the frequency occupied, but the deal went on longer than expected.

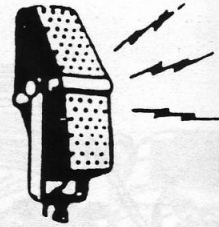
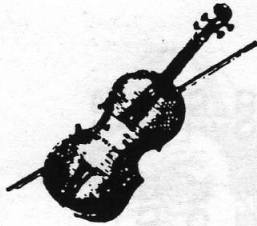


Can you name the personalities and prog



ns depicted in this drawing?

Our centerfold was drawn by NARA member Bob Beckett. Bob is the television graphics designer for the NBC station in Philadelphia. If you are stuck trying to identify any of the names in this drawing, please turn to page 28.



FROM  
**JACK PALMER**

MEXICAN BORDER RADIO

After my article about country music on border radio appeared, several people voiced an interest in more information about the border radio stations. So, as a slight departure from my regular series, here is a brief overview of the life and times of the Mexican border radio stations.

As mentioned in a previous article, most OTR enthusiasts in the United States don't really consider the border radio broadcasts as part of Old Time Radio, yet they were a huge presence across most of the North American continent for many years. And though most of the programs they broadcast, with their almost continuous commercials, did not meet the standards of the US networks, they certainly offered alternative programming for both artists and listeners in many years.

The stations were all based in Mexico just below the US border and were scattered from California to the Gulf. At various times there were anywhere from 3 to 5 stations in operation from any of seven locations along the border. The locations in Mexico were: Tijuana, across from San Diego, California; Nogales, across from Nogales, Arizona; Ciudad Juarez, across from El Paso, Texas; Ciudad Acuna, across from Del Rio, Texas; Piedras Negras, across from Eagle Pass, Texas; Nuevo Laredo, across from Laredo, Texas; and Reynosa, across from McAllen, Texas. Some of the stations seemed to change their call letters every time there was a change in ownership, and often the same call letters were used in more than one location, which makes it difficult to tell exactly which station broadcast which program. Transcriptions, and even some live programs, were also often broadcast from more than one station.

Due to the skip effect and the enormous power (one station had 1½ million watts for a short time!) of these AM stations, they were often heard as far away as Europe and Australia and they completely blanketed North America.

The Mexican border stations happened because of the early attempts by the United States to stabilize station channels. In the late 1920's and the early 1930's the United States consulted with Canada in the allocation of available wave lengths and the assignment of clear channels for certain stations. All this was done without ever discussing any of this with the third major country of North America, Mexico. The Mexican government felt it was slighted and when people began to approach them about building stations along the border, they were very receptive to it. Not only would it give them a big boost to their own broadcasting industry but they could get back at "the Gringos."

The first and the best known Americans involved in setting up border stations were Drs. Brinkley and Baker (see previous article on Dr. Baker written by Jim Snyder). Both had owned stations in the US and had lost their licenses due to the combined efforts of the FCC and the AMA. Both then headed for the border and made arrangements with the Mexican officials to build a high powered station to broadcast across the border. Dr. Brinkley built the first border station, XER, in Villa Acuna. Construction was started in early 1931 and the station was on the air by October with 75,000 watts of power. By August 1932, that had been upgraded to 500,000 watts! Dr. Baker headed to Laredo in 1932 and started construction of XENT late that year. It was on the air with 150,000 watts by December 1933. Others appeared in the next few years.

Both Baker and Brinkley featured programs very similar to what they had broadcast in the States. Long talks on health which were really commercials for all the services they could offer. Everything from cancer cures to vitamins. To fill in between the "infomercials" the stations offered music and entertainment similar to the stations in the USA. But soon country music became their mainstay. The merchandisers who used border radio had discovered that

country music attracted the audiences who seemed to respond best to their commercial offerings, and they packed the airwaves with country artists. Many of the biggest names in country music of the 1930's broadcast from border radio with most of the programs done by transcription. Although many of the artists moved to Texas and lived just across the border, few actually broadcast live. The use of transcriptions allowed recorded programs to be broadcast repeatedly and on more than one station. It also eliminated the problem of crossing back and forth across the border.

However by 1937 Mexico had begun putting pressure on the border stations. A new law required a certain portion of the broadcasting day to be in Spanish, along with other restrictions on length and number of commercials. This law was further strengthened in 1938. By 1939 the United States and Mexico were beginning to work on the problems of channel allocation. Finally in March, 1941 an agreement was reached. Mexico was allocated six clear broadcast channels and they agreed to close the border stations. By the end of 1941, the border stations were gone. But not for good! For some reason the agreement was only binding for 5 years.

In 1947, two of Dr. Brinkley's former associates decided to get back into border radio and with the help of a Del Rio lawyer managed to negotiate an agreement with the Mexican government. Before the end of the year, the station, now known as XERF, was broadcasting with a brand new 50,000 watt transmitter. Its first program was HILLBILLY ROUND UP TIME! Within five years border stations were blasting away all along the border with extended commercials and country music.

I personally am most familiar with XELO across from El Paso, with their continuous message to send all mail to Clint, Texas, "That's C-L-I-N-T, Clint, Texas!" I listened to them for several years while stationed in the southwest. Like all the stations the announcers used a hard sell and sounded like they were talking to a bunch of idiots. But they always had great country music and I could pick them up after dark anywhere I happened to be in the western part of the United States.

By the late 1950's though, most of the border stations were moving into rhythm and blues which eventually phased into early rock and roll. The stations still remained popular, however, since this was the music of young America, which, at that time, was almost totally ignored by US stations.

In 1986, a firm agreement was reached with Canada, the United States and Mexico, which signaled the end of the border blasters. The three nation pact allowed low-powered local stations to broadcast on the clear-channel frequencies. This meant that a local radio station could drown out the signal of the powerful border station within the local station's area. By effectively blocking the stations from much of their market, they began to fade away. Later the same year the Mexican government banned all religious broadcasting, which reduced both programs and income drastically. Today the stations that still operate have Mexican owners and operators and broadcast almost entirely in Spanish.



Were you able to identify all those faces on pages 25 and 26? If you were stumped on some of them, here's the list: Ed Wynn, William Bendix (Life of Riley), Judy Canova, Ed Gardner (Duffy's Tavern), Amos & Andy, Hal Peary (Great Gildersleeve), Jack Benny, Sherlock Holmes, Groucho Marx, Fanny Brice (Baby Snooks), Eddie Cantor, Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy, Fred Allen, Lone Ranger, Shadow, Ezra Stone (Aldrich Family), Bing Crosby, Eve Arden (Our Miss Brooks), Bob Hope, Abbott & Costello, Burns & Allen, Fibber McGee & Molly, Bickersons, Lum & Abner, and Sam Spade.

## **BOBBY BENSON: RADIO'S COWBOY KID** by Jack French ©1996

The BOBBY BENSON radio series, in its two versions a decade apart, is unique in broadcast history since it straddled both the origin and the demise of the Golden Age of Radio.

When the show debuted in 1932 the only other juvenile shows on network radio were LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE, LONE WOLF TRIBE, and THE SINGING LADY. So the first BOBBY BENSON series predated TOM MIX, THE LONE RANGER, OG, SON OF FIRE, and JACK ARMSTRONG.

The second version of BOBBY BENSON, began in 1949 and aired until June 1955, thus virtually outlasting every other kids' dramatic series, including SUPERMAN, CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT, GREEN HORNET, STRAIGHT ARROW and SKY KING.

The creation of this remarkable Western series rests in the genius of a British citizen in Buffalo, NY who had never been west of Chicago. Herbert C. Rice, an energetic immigrant from England, had been working since 1928 at what he termed "the American BBC" (Buffalo Broadcasting Corporation consisting of WGR, WFBL, WKEN, and WKBW, all under one roof in the Rand Building.)

Rice was a radio director, writer, and actor of amazing versatility; he was the first to pair "Budd and Stoopnagle" and he discovered the talents of an 11 year old who would grow up to be "Buffalo Bob" on HOWDY DOODY. Prior to BOBBY BENSON, Rice had created dozens of local dramatic series, including POLICE STORY, THE GREEN ROSE, FEARBOUND, CLOUD TRAIL, and THE COBRA.

In 1932 the Hecker H-O Company of Buffalo approached Rice and offered to sponsor a radio series to promote their cereal products. The "H-O" in the title suggested a cattle brand to Rice and he quickly drew up a story about an orphan named Bobby Benson who inherits the H-Bar-O Ranch in Texas. Rice not only sold his idea to the Hecker people, he also convinced CBS to give the new show a network slot.

This new series, THE H-BAR-O RANGERS, began on October 17, 1932 at WGR with a cast of Buffalo actors. Richard Wanamaker, 11 year old son of a local attorney, played Bobby Benson while Rice, in addition to writing and directing the show, also played Buck Mason, the foreman, and Wong Lee, the cook. Others in the cast were Fred Dampier and Lorraine Pankow (whom Rice had married the previous year.)

The success of the series was nothing short of phenomenal. Within months, the Hecker Company had to assign twelve women full-time to answer the

fan mail and process the box-tops of H-O Oats that were arriving daily in exchange for premiums advertised on the show: Bobby Benson code book, cereal bowls, maps, drinking glasses, card games, etc.

Locally Rice promoted the show through many personal appearances by Wanamaker, dressed in a cowboy costume and riding a pony named "Silver Spot." The youngster, who was doing three radio shows a week, appeared with Ben Turpin and Snub Pollard at Shea's Buffalo Theater, and then with Monte Blue when he visited Buffalo. Wanamaker was also part of the contingent who welcomed Santa Claus to the Buffalo Airport.

When the first season of 78 episodes ended in March 1933, the series was so popular that CBS ordered the production moved to New York City where they re-cast the program. When it resumed that fall, 12 year old Billy Halop, later to achieve fame in the "Dead End Kids", took over the title role. The show was still officially THE H-BAR-O RANGERS, but most of the listeners (and the broadcasting publications) were calling it THE BOBBY BENSON SHOW.

Halop's sister, Florence, played Polly on the program. Buck Mason was changed to Tex Mason and the character of Sunny Jim (the sponsor's symbol) was gradually phased out and other characters, Diogenes Dodwaddle, Windy Wales, and Harka the Indian, were introduced.

The identity of the director in Manhattan is unknown but a prominent author, Peter Dixon, who was writing for several network shows including SKIPPY, was hired to do the scripts. Craig McDonnell played Harka and other roles, including youngsters in a falsetto voice. Woodward "Tex" Ritter, then 28 years old, who was on other radio shows including COWBOY TOM'S CAMPFIRE, LONE STAR RANGERS, and MAVERICK JIM, got to play occasional roles on BOBBY BENSON, but it's unlikely he played Tex Mason, as some sources claim.

Billy Halop was given even more star treatment than Wanamaker; photos of Halop were distributed in several radio premiums and he toured summers with the W. T. Johnson Circus Rodeo.

This 15 minute show enjoyed substantial success and logged over 700 episodes before it went off the air in December 1936. However, not one recording from this 30s series is known to exist today.

It would be thirteen years before the program was resurrected. In 1949 Rice, now a U.S. citizen and Vice President with Mutual in New York City,

brought "The "Cowboy Kid" back to network radio. With no sponsor, the ranch was re-named the B-Bar-B and the regular cast was pared down to five roles: Bobby, Tex, Windy, Harka and Irish. The versatile McDonnell was again in the cast, playing both Harka and Irish with completely different voices characterizations.

Don Knotts, then in his mid-20s, got the part of the old geezer, Windy. Ivan Cury, a talented 12 year old with over two years in radio acting, beat out several auditionees to win the title role. Rounding out the cast was veteran Charlie Irving as Tex.

A young director, Bob Novak, was in charge and Peter Dixon returned to write the scripts. However his age and illnesses prevented him from keeping pace with this series, which sometimes required five 30 minute scripts a week. Dixon's son helped a little, but the problem was not solved until Jim Shean was hired. A young man fresh out of the military, he quickly took over the bulk of the script writing responsibilities.

The series would remain on the air for about six years, and it was a sustaining show for all but one season when Kraft Foods paid the bills. The modest budget gradually shrunk, i.e. three live musicians were reduced to one organist and then merely transcribed music.

Herb Rice always pushed the personal appearances of his young star. So when he wasn't on the air, Ivan was showing up at parades, rodeos and festivals throughout the East coast, accompanied by his parents. But when Rice tried to send "Bobby Benson" overseas (the show was also popular on AFRS), Ivan's father put his foot down and refused permission.

So Rice corralled a young singer, Bobby McKnight, dressed him up as "Bobby Benson" and sent him on a ten day tour of Europe. Thereafter, McKnight handled most of the public appearances while Cury had all the microphone duties. Later, Rice designated his executive assistant, Mary Jane Williams, to be the "Bobby Benson" chaperone.

In early 1951 Ivan left the B-Bar-B for a role on "Portia Faces Life" and more free lance work. McKnight was pressed into service as the new Bobby Benson but he lacked radio experience and, as his voice was starting to squeak into maturity, a replacement was sought.

Among those considered for the title role was a 10 year old lad born in Surrey, England, whose family had just immigrated to the U.S. in October 1950. Clive Rice, a nephew of Herb's, auditioned under the name of Clyde Campbell so the decision of the WOR executives would not be influenced

unfairly. Clive won the role, and after some quick diction lessons at the Alfred Dixon School to "Americanize" his dialect, he joined the cast in the WOR studios in April 1951.

Jim Goode was the sound effects man, with occasional assistance of Barney Beck. Frank Milano did all the animal voices and other regulars on the show were Bill Zuckert, Earl George, Gil Mack, Ross Martin, Jim Boles, and his wife Athena Lord. The announcer was Carl Warren. In the summer of 1951 Bob Haig took over the role of Tex from Charlie Irving.

"Bobby Benson" was once played by a girl! Clive's sister, Rosemary Rice (not the actress with the same name) was in the studio to observe his rehearsal and a live performance. Just before the "On The Air" sign lit up, Clive developed a profuse nosebleed. As others tried to stop the bleeding, Rosemary took his script, raced to the microphone and delivered his lines until he recovered. Since her voice sounded the same as her brother's, no one in the vast radio audience noticed the switch.

There were two BOBBY BENSON television shows WOR produced for local airing. With Ivan Cury and the rest of his radio cast (except that Al Hodge played Tex Mason) one series was shot live in the New Amsterdam Theater, but later moved to Channel 9 Studio on West 66th. This TV series was sponsored by Foxes "U-Bet" Chocolate Syrup and they gave away a live pony to contest winners.

A second series was shot in the mid-1950s with Clive Rice, also at Channel 9 Studio. The set, adjacent to that of "The Merry Mailman", was a tiny bunkhouse. The cast consisted of only three people: Clive, Tex Fletcher (real name Jerry Biscaglia) who was a cowboy singer from Harrison, NY, and a comedian named Paul Brown. This series was sponsored by Wilrich's Grape Drink.

The radio show lasted to mid-1955, totaling over 350 episodes. Besides the radio and TV duties, Clive was kept busy touring the country with Mary Jane Williams; they literally went coast to coast promoting the series and related "Cowboy Kid" merchandise. And starting in 1950, there were 20 issues of a Bobby Benson comic book published, the last in 1953.

In addition to the comic books, merchandise from both series (including one Big-Little Book) our legacy from this popular program includes 16 half-hour episodes and 5 of the five-minute shows from the 1949-55 series, which are currently being traded among the BOBBY BENSON fans today.





## THOUGHTS OF A COLLECTOR

by

Henry R. Hinkel

This past summer as I sat down to listen to some OTR tapes in my collection, I pulled out a reel of tape that I had picked up nearly 20 years ago when I first started collecting OTR. As I sat there listening with headphones on, I thought, "Boy after all these years the sound is still beautiful on these tapes". There isn't any reason why they shouldn't be good. They have been stored on the shelves after being properly rewound and not abused in any way. I had just listened to two Eddie Cantor shows and was about 10 minutes into the third, when I became distracted by this odd whistling sound that was slowly getting louder. "What is she doing now?", I asked myself as I looked around to see what my wife was doing to make this very annoying sound. I couldn't see her in the next room, so I took off my headphones to call out to her when I noticed this annoying noise had a different sound to it. I thought for a second, put the headphones back on, then took them off again. I then realized that the annoying noise was not only in the room, but also in my headphones. I reached over and shut off my tape player and that annoying noise stopped. "Oh, no".....I thought, as I sat there in disbelief. "I have just been hit by The Black Plague of OTR collecting.....squeaky tape".

But this can't be. This is not the black backed tape. This is a gray tape with beautiful sound. But a squeak is still a squeak no matter what color the tape. Next came the ritual. First we stare at the tape on the player. I don't know what this does, it's like raising the hood on your car and staring at the motor when your car won't start. If the problem is inside the engine you can look all you want, you still won't see anything. This problem is inside the tape. Next we turn on the tape deck and watch the tape as it plays. Everything seems normal. Maybe if we hand turn the reel just a little further so this tape will have a little slack in it. Aha.....with a half turn of the reel this tape goes up the other side of the reel instead of "hanging loose" from it. The tape is sticking. Maybe if I put a pencil against the tape and pull it away from the reel slowly, I can help it to "unstick". No.....that's not working.....that only makes the tape peel the backing off the next layer. Now I not only have squeaky tape, I also have drop outs in the sound that is there.

The third thing to try is a little lubricant. Apply a little silicone to a Q-tip, place it on the running tape.....whoops.....this only makes the tape stop dead in its tracks when the lubricant hits the heads. Next.....clean the whole machine again. We now have to try a whole new approach.....let me see.....someone once told me they soaked their reels in a pail of water overnight, then played them the next day. They claimed it worked but for some reason I just can't picture a reel dripping water all over my desk and tape deck being the solution to this problem. I think I'll pass on this method. What about baking? I remember reading and hearing that baking tapes does work. Let me see.....what was the instructions.....bake at 350 degrees for a 1/2 hour, or was it 3 hours? I heard and read about this many times, now that I wanted to try it, I can't remember the instructions. Preheat....I do remember that you should preheat the oven a few minutes before putting the tape in. Well, lets see what happens. I put the oven on, got my reel of tape, put it in an old metal pie dish, waited a few minutes for the oven to warm up, then put it in to bake. I'll leave it in for 2 hours and then try it and see if this



method works. With that, I went to the sink, got a drink of water.....yes, I said water.....and when I was leaving the kitchen I stopped dead in my tracks. Do I smell plastic???? I ran to the oven.....opened the door, and there in the metal pie dish was a big gray mushroom. Yow..... must be the oven was too hot. I retrieved the dish.....ouch.....ouch.....ouch.....and pondered my next move. Hmmm.....the tape looked good but the plastic reel was a mess. If I can salvage this tape, I can try again.

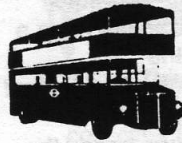
It took about an hour to cut away the overhanging plastic and slowly rewind the tape, but I did finally manage to salvage the tape. Now we have to re-think this process. This time I used a metal reel, set the temperature for as low as it would go, put a thermometer in the oven to try and keep track of the temperature so I know how hot it may get if there is another problem. If this doesn't work, then I don't know what to do next. Then a scary thought struck me sending chills up and down my spine. How many other reels are there in the collection with this problem? If we can't correct the squeaky tape, what happens to all of these reels? Brrr.....do we throw them away or do we save them in the hope that someone will come up with a solution to this problem? Its bad enough to have to lose these reels, but what is even worse, is that many of the shows are low generation in very good and excellent sound. They were obtained nearly 20 years ago from the original or close to the original source. If I have to replace these reels, where do I go to get them? Many of those collectors from 20 years ago are no longer available to the hobby and neither are their collections with tapes of good sound. It looks like this could be a real big problem in the future.

I have noticed in some tapes that I have picked up in the last couple of years there are sound problems. More so than when I first started collecting. Some of these tapes were obviously just poorly recorded but many others just had the sound flattened down. I don't know if this is because of poor recording techniques or because more people are using Dolby. There is nothing wrong in listening with Dolby, but I don't believe it should be used to record with, especially among collectors who trade. I had to use my equalizer to restore some of the highs to the sound. I was able to restore the sound to some of the shows but the sound on some of the others was too flat to bring back. If the hobby is active 20 years from now, collectors may have to start finding original disks again and start a new run of first generation material.

Now as for my original problem of squeaky tape, I let the tape bake for about 6 hours. I would check it about every half hour to make sure no other mushrooms or other objects developed in the pie dish and then took it out and let it cool. Everything looked okay. Now the big test, will it work? I placed this tape on the deck, put on the headphones, and pushed the play button. The sound was beautiful, just like it was 20 years ago. Baking it had worked. The next step of course is to make a duplicate just in case, and make sure it doesn't squeak before it is completed. That night I put another tape in the oven before I went to bed and retrieved it the next morning. Success again. This method does work. I guess the instructions simply are: use a metal reel, set the temperature for about 120 degrees, and bake for about six hours. I understand that this is not a permanent solution and the tapes will revert back to squeaking. But at least it will give you time to salvage some of your favorite shows. I must also tell you that in the course of all this squeaky tape business I did manage to damage two reels that I wound up throwing in the outdoor fireplace. The only satisfaction I got out of that was knowing that those reels went up in smoke in the outdoor fireplace and not in the kitchen oven.

Just some thoughts of a collector

# FROM ACROSS THE POND



by Ray Smith



## UK SEASIDE RADIO

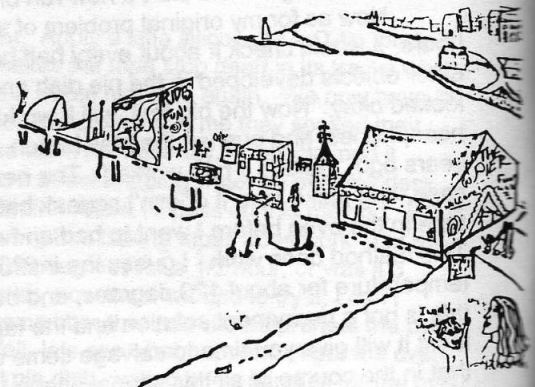
Some of you remember that popular saying, "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away!" Apply it to a columnist like yours truly and it becomes, "Old, rejected columns never get shredded. They re-emerge in a different magazine, under a totally revised headline, with only 6 words of the original text, altered."

Going through some old notebooks the other day, I came across one such column I'd submitted to 3 or 4 showbiz magazines without success. The story was geared to old time radio fans. But upon re-reading it, I discovered to my abject horror (and no doubt to yours) that I referred to 'radio shows' once in my usual 1500 words. Now, before I incur the wrath of wireless enthusiasts from Alaska to Albuquerque, let me beg your forgiveness. After all, I had a deprived childhood. Wasn't I the only NARA NEWS columnist who DIDN'T grow up, listening to the Great Gildersleeve, Lum and Abner or Fibber McGee and Molly?

Mind you I could probably obtain my BA (Honours) in American Radio Arts by proving that I was the UK's biggest fan of transplanted Hollywood legends, Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyon. Since I was knee-high to haggis (a Scottish mealtime delicacy whose ingredients defy description in a 'family' magazine) I listened to every episode of Life With the Lyons produced by the BBC. Furthermore, I roared at the antics of the Lyon's 'cook' Aggie MacDonald, alias Scottish comedienne, Molly Weir. Little did I realize, 30 years after Life With The Lyons, that 'fate' would bring Molly and I together. For several years now, I've written a periodic column, for one of North America's popular "ethnic" newspapers, *The Scottish Banner*, out of Lewiston NY. This great wee paper is available on news stands from Texas to Tasmania (those little Tasmanian Devils notwithstanding!). For the past 20 years *The Banner's* favourite columnist has been dear Molly Weir. She's affectionately known to hordes of North American-Scots, as "Oor

(our) Molly." They refer to me as, "the wee bald-headed man wha canna spell!" It's all because of that deprived childhood!

But getting back to the rejected column, originally submitted under the headline, 'Wireless transmissions of concert parties emanating from the end of an English pier.' (Exciting, huh?) "They'll never understand it in a million years!" declaimed my American cousin, "unless you provide a free copy of Webster's dictionary of 'British English' with every magazine." So finally I reworked the headline. It became, "Radio (wireless) from the Boardwalks (wooden or concrete sea-side piers) of England (former colonial ruler of the US!)." And what about 'concert parties'? These were the merry bands of vaudeville entertainers who spent a lucrative 15 to 20 weeks each summer, entertaining holidaymakers in those sadly disappearing, summer theatres that dotted the British coastline. These pleasure-palaces were built 'at the end of the pier,' farthest from terra firma, jutting out, over and above, the frigid waters of the Atlantic.



"THE SEA-SIDE PIER"  
by artist Heather Smith

BBC radio archives contain numerous references to radio shows of bygone years, broadcast from seaside theatres with such intriguing names as the Sparrows Nest, Lowestoft; the Winter Gardens, Eastbourne; and the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea. Even after all these years, the radio program, "Concert Party" (few examples survive) conjures up memories of kinder gentler times. Wilby Lunn's "Bouquets," Clarson Rose's "Twinkle" and Clifford Hensley's "Gaiety At Eight," were just a few of the seaside productions whose corny but 'komical kapers', were typical of radio concert party broadcasts enjoyed by listeners to the BBC Light Programme.



*Clifford Hensley (behind the mike) and his BBC Concert Party troupe.*

The biggest and most popular seaside vacation resort in the UK, is Blackpool, located in the north, not far from Liverpool (home of the Beatles) and just down the road from Britain's 4th city, Manchester. This is the part of Britain, Americans associate with the longest running "TV" soap opera in the world, Coronation Street (now in its 37th year). "The Street's" earthy, ordinary characters with their thick regional accents and irreverent humour are the antitheses of 'synthetic soaps' like Days of Our Lives. Blackpool means miles of golden sands, ocean piers jam-packed with family entertainment, its famous Autumn "illuminations" (out-door light shows) and the legendary Blackpool Tower which is 2nd only in European popularity, to the Eiffel in Paris. It can truly be described as Britain's vacation mecca, the UK's answer to Atlantic City.

Back on the 22nd of June 1948, listeners were taken 'live' to the Jubilee Theatre, Blackpool for the first edition of an hour-long vaudeville show which

became the flagship summer series on the BBC and ran into the 1960's. From its unique opening until it ended 60 minutes later, "Blackpool Night" enabled listeners from crofts (farmsteads) in the remote Scottish Highlands, to the drab and dreary cities of the industrial Midlands, to cast their troubles to the winds. They could picture themselves mingling with the happy throngs who strolled along the 'pleasure promenades' of Britain's most glamorous seaside town. Ah, the magic of radio. Where else could your imaginations run wild?

The scene was set when the original compere (host)/producer, David Southwood marched up to the microphone. A hush of anticipation fell over the audience. I remember the introduction as if it was yesterday. "Come, where the stars are always bright...be-gone dull care...tis Blackpool Night!" Upon which, the orchestra led by Oscar Naylor and a chorus known as The Sea Siders, burst into that rollicking chorus, "Beside The Seaside." I'm sure you remember this ditty which includes couplets like, "I do like to stroll along the prom..prom..prom, where the brass bands play, tiddly om..pom..pom?" On that breezy June evening in 1948, the entertainers who delighted Blackpool Night audiences included several UK favourites. Galway Bay and I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen, were sung by the Irish tenor, Cavan O'Connor, known as The Strolling Vagabond. Cavan continued to perform into his 90's and passed away a few months ago. Preceding Cavan during the broadcast, was much-loved pianist Charlie Kunz. His unique way of playing 'pop piano medleys' has never been equalled. And the headline act was the sometimes controversial comedian Frank Randle.

By the mid 50's, for production reasons, Blackpool Night had moved from the seaside to industrial Manchester. The programs were recorded at a BBC radio variety theatre. With Jack Watson as a truly splendid master-of-ceremonies, the Augmented BBC Northern Variety Orchestra, was under its long-time musical director Alyn Ainsworth. In later years this BBC band led by another maestro, became known as "Bernard Herrman and the N.D.O. (Northern Dance Orchestra) the band with the beat that's reet!" (reet is "right" in Yorkshire). And yes, this was the highly regarded Bernard Herrman of American radio! But change of recording venue, new host and new orchestra notwithstanding, Blackpool Night continued to provide the finest evening of sparkling seaside entertainment, anywhere on the wireless!

The headline entertainers on the Blackpool Night broadcast of August 24, 1954 were the internationally acclaimed husband-and-wife singing duo, Anne Ziegler and Webster Booth. American listeners might have found their style reminiscent of Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald. Their material ranged from the comical Hippopotamus Song to the nostalgic Ivor Novello ballad, We'll Gather Lilacs in the Spring Again (and walk together down an English lane). The supporting acts were a "who's who" of 1950's and 60's British radio. Popeyed comedian Ted Lune (who later became a star of Granada TV's Army Game) read another of those hilarious, "letters from me ma'am," pint-sized Welsh comedienne Gladys Morgan, (a firm favourite on the BBC's 'ventriloquist show' Educating Archie), cackled her way through a 7 minute patter routine, and Lancashire favourite "Witty Willy" alias Bill Waddington, entertained in George Formby style. A much older Bill Waddington is known these days to TV fans around the globe, as "old misery guts 'imself", Percy Sugden of Coronation Street! And every Blackpool Night broadcast of the 40's, 50's and 60's, culminated with a visit to Blackpool's Tower Ballroom, to hear a thrilling solo on the giant pipe-organ, played by the beloved organist-in-residence, Reginald Dixon, known far and wide as "Mr. Blackpool!"

You can still mingle with happy holidaymakers, enjoy Blackpools "Golden Mile" of entertainment, paddle your feet in the briny, suck on a delicious baton-sized stick of Blackpool Rock (hard candy) and go dancing at the Tower Ballroom. But unfortunately, you can no longer find Ronnie Taylor's slick and polished production of the BBC's Blackpool Night (or anything similar) on UK radio.

**Reginald  
Dixon**

**"Mr.  
Blackpool"**



Ah well, thanks to such fondly remembered radio favourites as "Concert Party" and "Blackpool Night," I was able, quite legitimately this time, to take you for a breezy walk along the boardwalks of England to describe the part played by radio, in bringing seaside entertainment into the homes of millions of listeners. Unfortunately, I had to do a major re-write jobbie on my original, much-rejected article, but what the heck. It was all because of that deprived childhood.

Cheerio for now!

## NARA'S LIBRARY CATALOGS

*To obtain catalogs of what is available to members from the various club libraries, please write to the librarians listed below and enclose the price of the catalog.*

### CASSETTE CATALOG:

PLEASE SEE PAGE 5.

### REEL-TO-REEL CATALOG:

PLEASE SEE PAGE 6.

### SCANFAX CATALOG:

A list of the various program series that are available in our new SCANFAX cassette library is available for \$1.00 and a self addressed stamped envelope. You can then request program titles for those series that are of interest to you. Send your requests to Don Aston, P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, CA 92531.

### PRINTED MATERIALS CATALOG:

The printed materials library currently has three catalogs: the book catalog (407 books), the script catalog (228 scripts), and the catalog of logs (29 logs). To receive all three of these, please send ten 32 cent stamps to Bob Sabon, 308 West Oraibi Drive, Phoenix, AZ 85027.

## BOOK by Hal Stephenson SHELF

*The Roy Rogers Book* by David Rothel  
Empire Publishing, Inc. Route 3, Madison, NC 27025  
223 pages, some color and many BW photographs.  
ISBN softcover 0-944019-01-3, hardcover 0-944019-00-5



This is a very thorough reference, trivia, and scrapbook by a lifelong fan. It begins with a transcript of a conversation between the author and Roy. It includes chapters on trivia, little-known facts about a well-known cowboy, wit and wisdom of RR, RR on the record, the films of RR, collecting RR memorabilia, and a RR t---v----- show log. The back-of-the-book appendices are a bibliography, a discography index--two alphabetical listings of recordings by the Sons of the Pioneers and by RR, and a filmography index.

The unique picture shown below is from the 1941 movie *Jesse James at Bay*. Jesse James (clean shaven right character) is held at gunpoint by a lesser-known outlaw named Clint Burns (the unshaven left character). Roy is playing both characters in this trick photography in the movie.



# THE GREAT RADIO PANIC

by

Paul Everett

As an OTR fan, one radio event fascinates me - "The Great Radio Panic of 1938," as done by Orson Welles. Never before, nor since, in North American broadcasting has such an event occurred, and that includes television! Americans all across the country were ready to run, to hide, to fight, even to die, because of the panic.

Rumor has it that the little rascal Charlie McCarthy had a great deal to do with that panic, indirectly! Charlie was on the air over NBC at the same time Orson Welles' *Mercury Theater on the Air* was on CBS. In 1938 Charlie's show was one of the most popular on radio.

So, on that fateful Sunday evening, 30 October 1938, at 8:00 p.m., more Americans were tuned to Charlie on NBC than were tuned to Orson on CBS. Those McCarthy fans missed the formal opening of the show on CBS which plainly stated it was all just a play!

Rumor has it that when a certain singer came on the McCarthy show, many fans tuned away momentarily. Others say it was a commercial that caused the McCarthy fans to tune away. In any case, many of the dial twisters reached a CBS station where the "War of the Worlds" was going great guns, fueled by fake newscasts and remote broadcasts! It was staged so realistically that it sounded real, and real terrible! The longer they listened the worse it got, and panic set in.

Presumably some NARA members actually experienced the panic. It would be fascinating if those members would be kind enough to share their feelings and actions during the panic with other NARA members via the *NARA NEWS*.

Of special interest would be:

1. Did they tune to the "War of the Worlds" at its start?
2. Did they tune to the McCarthy show FIRST and tune away later for some reason?
3. If so, was the reason a singer, commercial, or what?

Our *NARA NEWS* editor has agreed to display NARA member response on this subject.

# FIBBER MCGEE & MOLLY

by

Roger Smith

This is the second time around for me, and I consider myself most fortunate. My love for radio shows is bone deep now, as it was many years ago. Thus, this article is my effort to show my love for the *FIBBER MCGEE & MOLLY* show.

## THE PRINCIPALS

Jim Jordan (Fibber McGee) was born in Peoria, Illinois, in 1896 and died in 1988. Marian Driscoll Jordan (Molly McGee), also from Peoria, was born the following year; she died April 7, 1961. The two were husband and wife in real life as well as in their fictional roles, having eloped in 1918. That was some six years earlier than one would have guessed, based on the re-enactment staged in their program of September 12, 1939.

Jim and Marian served their apprenticeships on the tank town vaudeville circuits. Vaudeville, to them, was a struggle. For years they traveled the old Gus Sun Times circuit with a group of players known as the Metropolitan Entertainers (the group played a dulcimer, musical bells, a piano, and a musical saw, and all sang harmony). Though they were constantly on the road, playing split weeks of two and three day stands, they never made enough money to have any in their pockets--ten dollars earned was a big night.

But, during these times, Jim and Marian never lost their sense of humor. They were heard to brag that--of all the world's vaudeville acts--theirs was the only one that never played the Palace. Jim once said, "If all

the vaudevillians who claimed to have played there really did, the Palace would have been full of performers every night!"

The Jordans broke into radio in 1925. They auditioned on station WJBO in Chicago and were immediately signed for a sponsored local show. By 1927 they were wired into radio, never to be out of work as long as radio was alive and well. In 1931, with Don Quinn (a Grand Rapids, Michigan cartoonist), they created a series called *SMACKOUTS*, which consisted of comedy and tall tales. The characters of Fibber McGee and Molly were introduced on this show and skyrocketed to popularity. They were invited to New York for their first radio broadcast of *FIBBER MCGEE & MOLLY* in April of 1935. This was for Johnson's Wax on a coast-to-coast hook-up. The volume of fan mail, feelers from Hollywood, etc. soon indicated they had a potential hit on their hands. In order to build on that popularity and ensure its continuation, they were pressed into a heavy schedule of personal appearances, interviews, and benefits--all between rehearsals and broadcasts.

Gradually the pace had its effect on Marian. She grew increasingly tired and nervous. Finally Jim put his foot down on further activities of that type after they returned home from making their first movie, "This Way Please." But it was too late. Marian collapsed in October 1937 and entered a Wisconsin sanitarium the following month. Jim, with his writers and cast, carried on alone until Marian returned to the show on April 18, 1939. Incidentally, it doesn't appear that Jim ever

missed a single show--at least in the January 31, 1939 through May 23, 1950 period; however, I have some in which he had dandy colds.

Their show was dropped as a weekly half-hour program after the show of June 30, 1953. In October they returned with a 15 minute show five days a week. This lasted until sometime in 1957. This lovable pair could still be heard as a five minute sketch on NBC's MONITOR series well into the late fifties.

#### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Prior to January 15, 1946, Bill Thompson, who joined the show in 1936, was the only supporting actor identified at the beginning of each program, unless one counts announcer Harlow Wilcox. In rare exceptions, however, actors with independently established reputations (Ransom Sherman and Zazu Pitts) had been identified at the end of programs in which they appeared. But coincident with Thompson's return from service in the Navy on the date mentioned, the practice of identifying all members of the cast was adopted.

Most, if not all, of the actors doubled in brass, taking the lines of minor characters in addition to those of their primary roles. In many cases it is extremely difficult to determine which actor is reading the lines for one of these minor parts; in others the voice is easily identifiable.

A number of the characters were ethnic stereotypes: Nick Depopolis, Greek restaurant owner; Beulah, black domestic; Ole, Swedish janitor and handyman; Uncle Dennis, Irish alcoholic; plus many Jewish shopkeepers, and even more Irish cops. For some unknown, or maybe there was a reason, the number of such roles was rapidly declining by the late forties.

Fibber and Molly lived at 79 Wistful Vista in the city of Wistful Vista. They won their home in a raffle on August 26, 1935 (as revealed in the show of September 13, 1949). They paid \$2.00 for the raffle ticket (which was explained by Fibber in the November 22, 1949 show).

Marian regularly played two roles on almost every program: Molly and the little girl who lived across the street. Very likely Jim did the voices of some minor, one-time parts. I consider myself an expert on identification of radio personality voices but Jim has kept me in left field. In his case I can't really be too sure. On the October 16, 1945 program he demonstrates a facility with a number of dialects/accents as he attempts to arrange train reservations for Mrs. Carstairs.

Although the McGees were depicted as just an average American family of modest financial means, there was never an effort to explain a source of income. Fibber's only jobs in this eleven year span were two in number: the proprietor of an unsuccessful hamburger parlor (March 7, 1939), and a temporary substitute mailman (April 11, 1939).

#### THE SUPPORTING ACTORS

The inclusive dates given for each actor's tenure with the series are approximations only. It appears that many did various bit parts for a time before being written into a continuing role. Also keep in mind that I am only covering the period from January 31, 1939 through May 23, 1950. When either of these dates are given, it represents the limit of my information.

CLIFF ARQUETTE: 1949 - 5/23/50. Cliff played a wide variety of one-time roles, in addition to six appearances as the Old Timer's girlfriend, Bessie (November/December 1949).



BUD STEPHAN: 4/5/49 - 1/31/50. Bud first played the part of Milton, the druggist's nephew, until October 1949. Later he took on the role of Herbert Appel.

BILL THOMPSON: 1936 - 5/23/50. Bill did a number of regular roles, often in the same program: Nick Depopolis, Horatio K. Boomer, the Old Timer, and Wallace Wimple, and half of the Irish cops in Wistful Vista. Bill served in the U.S. Navy from mid-1943 until the 15th of January 1946, during which time his characters were written out of the scripts.

ELVIA ULLMAN: January and February 1950. Elvia may have been around after these dates. During these months she appeared several times in the role of Mrs. Clammer who lived across the street.

HARLOW WILCOX: 1/31/39 - 5/23/50. Wilcox was the program's announcer, whose Johnson's Wax commercials were worked into the story line of the shows. He was frequently worked into other bits between commercials, as well. Harlow, who was called "Waxy" by Fibber, missed only one program in my span of shows. He lost his voice in another.

#### THE CHARACTERS (CONTINUING ROLES)

This list includes characters with speaking roles in consecutive or near consecutive programs over a period of weeks, months, or years, as distinguished from one-time appearances.

HERBERT APPEL (Bud Stephan): Harware clerk. 12/49 - 1/50.

BESSIE (Cliff Arquette): Old Timer's girlfriend. 11 - 12/49.

BEULAH (Marlin Hurt): McGee's maid and cook. 1944-1945.

HORATIO K. BOOMER (Bill Thompson): Character patterned after W.C. Fields, appeared fairly regularly between 1939 and 1950, except for the years when Bill was in the military service.

MILLICENT CARSTAIRS (Bea Benadaret): Bea played the wealthy neighbor of the McGees. She lived, with her husband, at Wistful Vista and Oak Streets (3/26/46). The character was probably conceived in an effort to create a role similar to Mrs. Uppington. 1943-1946.

ALICE DARLING (Bea Benadaret): Young war plant worker who rented the McGee's spare room. Took a job as clerk at the Bon Ton after the war ended, but was written out of the script shortly thereafter. 1943-45.

NICK DEPOPOLIS (Bill Thompson): Proprietor of a candy kitchen and restaurant who appeared fairly regularly up until WWII, but less frequently after Thompson's return from Service. 1939 - ?

UNCLE DENNIS DRISCOLL (Ransom Sherman): Molly's uncle. Also mentioned frequently throughout the series. 10 - 11/43.

DR. GEORGE GAMBLE (Arthur Q. Bryan): Lived on Wistful Vista, a couple of doors from the McGees. He was the rival of Mayor Latrivia for the affections of actress Fifi Tremaine, whose nickname for Doc was "Willie." Appeared regularly from 1943 through May of 1950.

THROCKMORTON P. GILDERSLEEVE (Harold Peary): Lived next door to the McGees at 83 Wistful Vista (5/27/41). Gildy's middle name was Philharmonic (10/22/40). He was the manager of the Bon Ton Department Store (12/5/39). Owned "Gildersleeve's Girlish Girdles" factory (1/23/40). 1939-1941.

MAYOR LATRIVIA (Gale Gordon): This character was introduced shortly after the departure of Hal Peary and his Gildersleeve role. A running comedy situation was written around the Mayor's inability to control his exasperation when the McGees deliberately misinterpreted his words. Latrivia appeared regularly from 1941 through the 23rd of May in 1950, except for the 1947/48 season, when Foggy Williams character was substituted, and during Gordon's military service, 12/42 - 10/45.

LENA (NEVER HEARD THE LAST NAME) (Jean Carrol): Lena was the McGees' cook and maid. Evidently Lena was a short, unsuccessful attempt to reintroduce the Beulah role as a non-black. It may have been stimulated by the departure of Bea Benadaret at the end of December 1946, which left no female roles except Molly's. Lena had been "Miss Shaker Heights of 1926." 2 - 5/47.

ELSIE MERKLE (Bea Benadaret): She was a beauty operator patronized by Molly, and appeared in several shows between October and December 1946.

MILTON (Bud Stephan): The nephew of Ed Kramer. Worked in his uncle's drugstore as the soda jerk and delivery boy (4/12/49). Made a number of appearances through the rest of that season. 1949.

OLD TIMER (Bill Thompson): Ancient greybeard and teller of tall tales. Stated his real name was Rupert Blasingame (1/29/46). Appeared regularly throughout the series, except when Bill was in the service. 1939 - 5/23/50.

OLE (Dick Legrand): Ole was a Swedish character, Elks Club janitor (3/15/49). He appeared regularly after joining the cast. 1949 - 5/23/50.

TEENIE (Marian Jordan): Teenie was the little girl who lived across the street from the McGees and appeared regularly except during Marian's illness. Prior to May 2, 1944, she was addressed only as "Sis" or "Little Girl." On that date, she explains her father had given her the nickname as a baby, because like a martini, she was never dry enough to suit him. Her given name was Elizabeth (12/21/48). Her last name was never revealed. Teenie's little boyfriend was Willie Toops. Her pet dog (male) was named Margaret. 1939 - 5/23/50.

MRS. ABIGAIL UPPINGTON (Isabelle Randolph): Wealthy widow, society matron, and neighbor of the McGees. She lived at 97 Wistful Vista (1/23/40). "Uppy" appeared regularly until her departure from the series in the spring of 1943. 1939 - 1945.

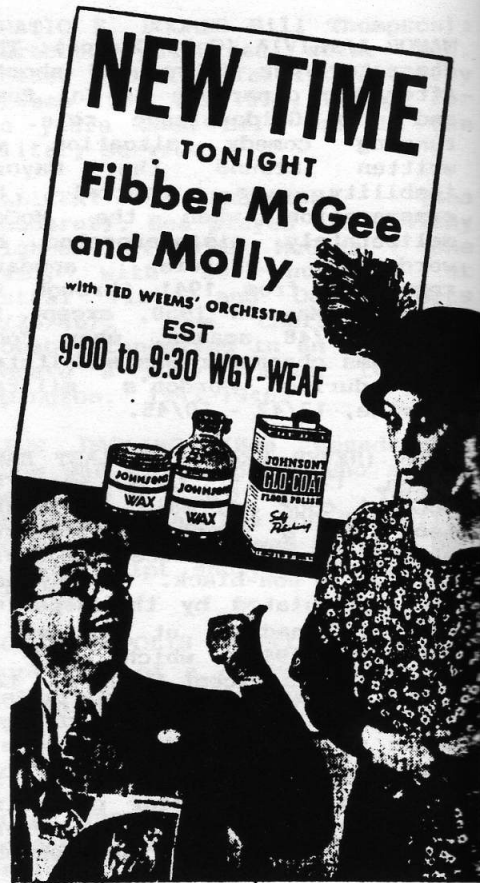
SIGMUND WELLINGTON (Ransom Sherman): Became a regular during WWII while Gale Gordon and Bill Thompson were in the military service. Wellington was the manager of the Bijou Theatre and also an official of the Elks Club. 1943 - 1945.

F. OGDEN "FOGGY" WILLIAMS (Gale Gordon): "Foggy" was the weather forecaster who lived next door to the McGees. The role replaced that of Mayor Latrivia during the October 1947 - June 1948 season. The switch was reversed the following season.

WALLACE WIMPLE (Bill Thompson): "Wimp" was the henpecked milquetoast, bird watcher, and writer of greeting card verses who lived at 1345 Oak Street (4/15/41). His first appearance was also on 4/15/41. He appeared regularly thereafter, except for the years that he served in the Navy. He always referred to his wife as "Sweetie Face." 1941 - 5/23/50.

**NON-SPEAKING CHARACTERS AND PLACE NAMES:** These are frequently mentioned non-speaking characters and place names given throughout the run. AUNT SARAH DRISCOLL, Molly's aunt; MISS FIDITCH, Fibber's old school teacher; MRS. KLADDAHATCH, wife of one of Doc Gamble's patients (name spelled with a "K" - 10/18/49), called Doc at the McGees' frequently, setting up a Myrt/Fibber type of gag; MARGARET, Teenie's male doag; MYRT, telephone operator; FRED NITNEY, Fibber's old vaudeville partner; "SWEETIE FACE," Mrs. Wimple; MORT TOOPS, friend and neighbor of McGees; WILLIE TOOPS, Mort and Mable's son, Teenie's boyfriend; FIFI TREMAINE, actress, object of rivalry between Latrivia and Doc Gamble; CORNELIA WIMPLE, Mrs. Wallace Wimple; BON TON DEPARTMENT STORE, vicinity of 14th and Oak; DUGAN'S LAKE, recreational area; KRAMER'S DRUG STORE, 14th and Oak; and WISTFUL VISTA GAZETTE, evening newspaper.

This ends my labor of love for FIBBER MCGEE AND MOLLY. It's been fun but in no way should be considered a bible of such. RADIO IS A WORLD THAT HAS TO BE BELIEVED TO BE SEEN.



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## NARA NEWS COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING RATES

**ONE ISSUE:**

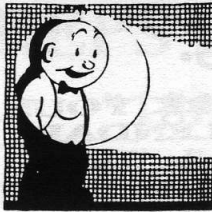
Full page - \$ 50.00

Half page - 25.00

Quarter page - 15.00

**FOUR ISSUES:**

25% off above rates



## SPOTLIGHTING OTHER CLUBS

This page gives OTR clubs and organizations, outside of NARA, a chance to tell us about their program. This service is free, and full details can be obtained from the editor.

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### The "One Man's Family" Family

P. O. Box 723 / Bothell, WA 98041 / 206-488-9518  
(FAX 206-402-6988...e mail- hrrmikes@aol.com)

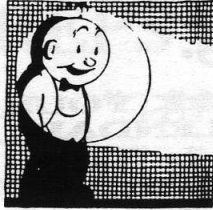
## "Yes, Yes." NEW CLUB ENJOYED SUCCESSFUL FIRST YEAR!

It was just January 1996 when The "One Man's Family" Family began as a special interest OTR club. Says co-founder Mike Sprague, "OMIT was established to become the sought-out source or connection of complete and accurate information about One Man's Family." He added "It is essential that someone be about the business of preserving and protecting the wonderful heritage of OMF in every way possible."

The group looks back on year one with a sense of accomplishment, and an awareness of how much more needs to be done. Some of the steps from 1996:

- **Connecting fans and performers** who worked on One Man's Family. To date the club has been in touch with 26 actors, many of whom have responded positively to the purpose of the new group.
- **53 dues paying members** in one year. Not huge, but a good start. Sprague commented "There are so many people who enjoyed and enjoy One Man's Family. It is frustrating not to be able to just reach out and find them."
- **Family Reunion**, the first one done in November in conjunction with the highly cooperative SPERDVAC gang in Los Angeles. 10 actors came to perform and share in a very well received event. More such gatherings will be planned, as possible, to be part of other OTR gatherings.
- **Family Ties** newsletter has been issued on a quarterly basis, with news from the show's history, along with reflections of the performers and fans.
- **Definitive Log and History**. One of the OMFF members had developed a masterful work on a log and history of OMF. With encouragement, he made this 40 page effort available to OMFF members. He is in the continual process of adding and correcting information from his research.
- **Articles**. OMFF recently published a portion of a detailed article by Dr. Walter Sheppard on OMF Premiums. The balance of the article was offered as a "premium" to OMFF members. There will be other detailed pieces done as time goes by.
- **Cassette Library**, not yet in place. Currently, the club refers members to dealers with good collections and links major member collectors to each other. But, there is a willing and experienced volunteer ready to take on the task of running a library. OMFF must have more funds to accomplish this start up endeavor.

There is much to be done and lots of people with incredible knowledge of, and/or enthusiasm for One Man's Family. Each and every one is invited to contact The "One Man's Family" Family in any of the ways listed at the top of this page.



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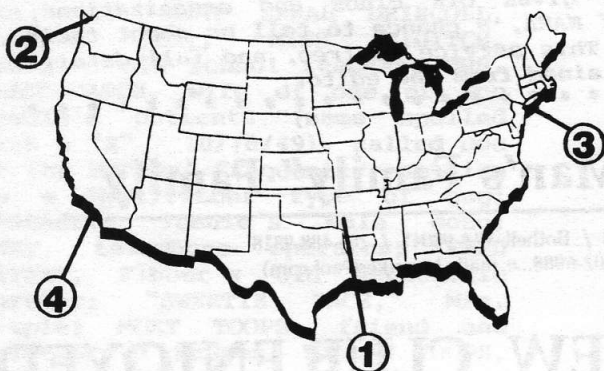
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# CONVENTIONS:



## 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 13TH ANNUAL LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY CONVENTION** will be held on June 20 and 21, 1997 in Mena, Arkansas at the Best Western Lime Tree Inn. This event is normally held on the 4th Saturday in June each year. For information please contact Tim Hollis, #81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, Alabama 35062. Phone is (205) 648-6110.

② **THE REPS RADIO SHOWCASE V** will be June 27 and 28, 1997 in Seattle, Washington. This convention is held on the last weekend in June each year. Contact person is Mike Sprague, P.O. Box 723, Bothell, Washington 98041. Phone is (206) 488-9518.

③ **THE FRIENDS OF OLD TIME RADIO CONVENTION** is held at the Holiday Inn North at the Newark, New Jersey airport. The hotel provides free shuttle service back and forth to the airport. Contact person is Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, Connecticut 06514. Jay can be reached by phone at (203) 248-2887. Future convention dates are:

- 22nd Annual Convention - October 23 thru 25, 1997
- 23rd Annual Convention - October 22 thru 24, 1998
- 24th Annual Convention - October 21 thru 23, 1999

④ **THE SPERDVAC CONVENTION** is held each year at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza Hotel at the Los Angeles International Airport. A free shuttle service is provided for those flying. The person to contact for information is Larry Gassman, Box 1163, Whittier, California 90603. He can be reached by phone at (310) 947-9800. Future dates:

- 14th Annual Convention - November 7 thru 9, 1997
- 15th Annual Convention - November 13 thru 15, 1998

# REPS RADIO SHOWCASE V

## "180 DAYS 'TIL CHRISTMAS!"

The Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound-Seattle

**JUNE 27-28, 1997**  
**SEATTLE**  
**REPS RADIO SHOWCASE V**

### CHRISTMAS?

Each year, REPS has sought to have a focus, a creative theme. Though in late June, this event will feature re-creations from Christmas shows of the past. Attendees will notice other seasonal touches as well.

### THIS WILL BE YEAR #5!

For the past four years, the Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound (REPS) have sponsored the Radio Showcase OTR convention. We've been on the receiving end of so much kindness, talent, history and education. And...we've made so many friends! Ask anyone who has been there: there is something special about the chemistry generated at this gathering!

This is a convention where you really get to know the stars. They love the intimacy too! The Showcase will be a premier event for those who love both Old Time Radio and the best of new radio drama as well.

### THE PROGRAM

#### Friday evening

KIRO Mystery Playhouse-Jim French will present two new radio dramas specifically written around the voices and talents of our special guests. These will be aired later on KIRO and around the country.

#### Saturday

Ethel & Albert meet Vic & Sade? Turns out, in our show, they're now next door neighbors. This will be a riot!

There will be at least two more re-creations and two panels. Duffy's Tavern is on tap with more to be announced. And we'll do the highly popular, get-acquainted-with-the-stars feature we call "Just Sittin' Around and Visiting." Lunch time will offer breakout sessions for those who wish to participate.

Many of the guests from the past have indicated that they will be with us, and first time guests include Larry Dobkin, Sandra Gould, Bob Hastings, Peg Lynch and ?

### SITE AND HOTEL

Once again, we'll be meeting at the Overlake Hospital Conference Center in Bellevue. The hotel is still the West Coast Bellevue. The Showcase rate is \$79 per room including tax. Model A shuttle service will again be provided. For hotel reservations call 1-206-455-9444 and mention Radio Showcase.

### SPECIAL GUESTS DURING THE FIRST 4 YEARS-A number of them coming this year too!

\*Arthur Anderson \*John Archer \*Parley Baer  
\*Harry Bartell \*Dick Beals \*Frank Bresee  
\*Frank Buxton \*Colby Chester \*Lon Clark  
\*Stewart Conway \*Sam Edwards \*Herb Ellis  
\*Ray Erlenborn \*Fred Foy \*Jim French  
\*Esther Geddes \*Page Gilman \*Art Gilmore  
\*Jack Kruschen \*Peter Leeds \*Jay Livingston  
\*Merrill Mael \*Gale Storm Masterson \*Paul Masterson \*Tyler McVey \*Shirley Mitchell  
\*Bill Murtough \*Jeanette Nolan \*Kevin O'Morrison  
\*David Ossman \*Gil Stratton, Jr. \*Ginny Tyler  
\*Willard Waterman \*Anne Whitfield Phillips  
\*Peggy Webber \*Rhoda Williams \*Douglas Young

#### 1987 first time guests include

Larry Dobkin, Sandra Gould, Bob Hastings, Peg Lynch+

### REGISTRATION

#### EARLY REGISTRATION BONUS

#### Tapes of all Showcase Re-creations

The first 30 to register will be entered in a drawing to win cassettes of all re-creations done at the Showcase. There will be 3 winners! Your acknowledgment will tell you if you're in this group.

#### DISCOUNTS FOR REPS MEMBERS

REPS members and their guests will receive a discount, as reflected on the pricing below.

	Member	Non member	Total
Fri. only	___@\$10	___@\$12	\$___
Sat. day	___@\$29	___@\$33	\$___
Sat. PM	___@\$34	___@\$39	\$___
Everything	___@\$63	___@\$72	\$___

Saturday includes continental breakfast and refreshments throughout the day, plus beverages at the social hour. The banquet is included for Saturday evening and Entire program registrations.

Membership # \_\_\_\_\_ OR send me info. \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Please list ALL names for name badge purposes.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Showcase, PO Box 723, Bothell, WA 98041

**Hit's A-Comin'!**

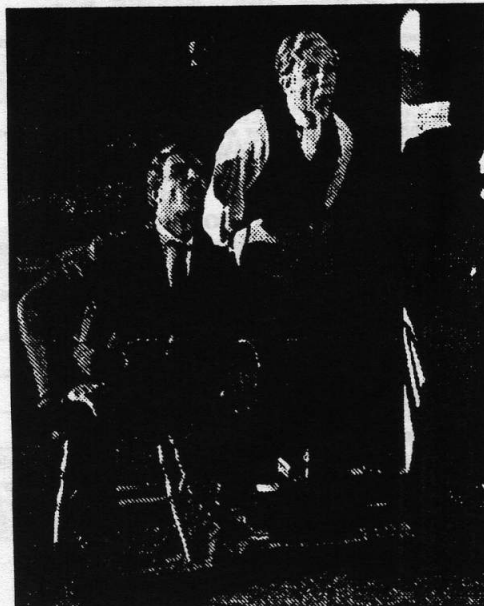
**THE 1997**

**NATIONAL LUM & ABNER<sup>®</sup> SOCIETY**

**CONVENTION**

**JUNE 20-21**

**MENA, ARKANSAS**



**FEATURING  
NEWLY-DISCOVERED  
AND  
NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN  
LUM & ABNER FILM  
APPEARANCES!**

**SPECIAL GUESTS TO BE ANNOUNCED AT A LATER DATE**

**CONTACT Tim Hollis, #81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, AL 35062**



# BUY SELL TRADE

NARA CLASSIFIEDS

*Non-commercial ads are free to all members. Your ad will be placed in one issue, but you can resubmit it as often as you like.*

The OTR SOURCE LIST (1997 edition) is six pages containing over 150 entries of clubs, dealers, archives, publications, and even web sites. Each entry contains name, address, telephone number and e-mail address, if available. Even if you already have one, you should get an updated version. (To break the "year code," if yours is printed on gold paper it's the 1994 one. The purple one is 1995 and the green one is 1996. Any on white paper is at least five years old. Our 1997 edition is printed on orange paper.) Cost is only \$2 to NARA members and \$3 to everyone else. Send money in stamps or cash please to Jack French, 5137 Richardson Drive, Fairfax, VA 22032-2810. PLEASE no checks (this item cannot justify a trip to the bank and the post office), and send stamps in a usable denomination....seven 32¢ ones would be about right. All profits go to NARA so please be generous. Orders filled same day and returned via first class mail. Get yours now!

\*\*\*\*\*

WANTED: "Luella Parsons Show" for April 9, 1950 AND "Easter Seal Parade of Stars" broadcast of March 8, 1956 over NBC. Contact Clyde Smith, 11 Buena Vista Road, Belle Terre, NY 11777-1206.

\*\*\*\*\*

I would like to communicate with TOM CORBETT collectors with knowledge of radio/TV show (synopses), scripts, and/or fan fiction. Geoffrey Tolle, 1040 Madison Ave., Columbus, OH 43205, gtolle@infinet.com.

\*\*\*\*\*

WANTED: Open reel or cassettes of the old Steve Allen radio show, "Smile Time," which was a local California program. Also a copy of the instruction booklet (not repair manual) for a Sony Model TC-355 open reel deck. C. Huck, 4 So. 230 River Rd., Warrenville, IL 60555-3813. Fax: 630/393-9925. E-mail: huck\_enterprises.msn.com

\*\*\*\*\*

WANTED: Cassette copies of Rudy Vallee's radio program, "The Villa Vallee." Carlos Lozano, P.O. Box 77231, Tucson, AZ 85703, or call toll-free 1-800-772-3785.

\*\*\*\*\*

I AM LOOKING for a program called "Reuben Reuben." According to Jay Hickerson's Radio Log Book it was broadcast from 12/6/52 to 3/21/53 on NBC. I believe it originated from an NBC station in Texas, possibly from San Antonio. I'm looking for any copies anyone may have. Henry Hinkel, 254 Florida Ave., Amsterdam, NY 12010.

\*\*\*\*\*

WANTED: (1) Paper and photographic memorabilia pertaining to Louise Massey and the Westerners. (2) Source of radio shows featuring Louise Massey and the Westerners. These would include "Plantation Party," NBC 1940-1942; "Reveille Roundup," NBC 1941-1945; "National Barn Dance," NBC; and perhaps others that I don't know about. (3) Name, address and/or telephone numbers of descendants of Louise Massey Mabie and her brothers Alan and Curt Massey. (4) Quiz Kids memorabilia. Wayne W. Daniel, 2943 Appling Drive, Chamblee, GA 30341-5113. (404) 651-4065 (office) and (770) 455-9348 (home). FAX: (404) 651-3498. INTERNET: qmdwwd@gsusgi2.gsu.edu



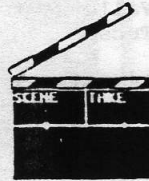
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# A TIP OF THE ATWATER DIAL TO....

David Richardson of Berkeley, California for a very generous financial donation to NARA.

Our retiring librarians: Scott Jones who has been our reel-to-reel librarian for the past six years. Prior to that he was our printed materials librarian for three years. Also to Barry and Marilyn Hill for handling the cassette library for the past two years. We greatly appreciate the efforts of these three people.

Albert W. Smith for a donation to the reel-to-reel library.

Bill Bright for taking on the task of taping each issue of the *NARA NEWS* for our blind members. He started this program with our winter issue. Your editor listened to that first presentation and can tell you that Bill does an absolutely magnificent job with this. Also, thanks to Don Aston for taking care of the copying and mailing of each "audio edition." Please turn to page 15 for further information on this new program.

Jim Cox and B.J. George who have both agreed to become regular columnists in the *NARA NEWS*. You have seen B.J.'s writings in the last several issues, and Jim will make his debut for us in the summer issue.

Bob Beckett for this issue's centerfold.

Roger Hill for a bundle of clippings and articles.

Keith Sexton for his efforts in trying to interest young people in old time radio. Please see page 4.

Our columnists in this issue: Frank Bresee, Bob Burnham, Ray Erlenborn, Paul Everett, Jack French (2 articles), B.J. George, Henry Hinkel, Al Inkster, Jack Palmer, Ray Smith, Roger Smith, Ron Staley, and Hal Stephenson.

Those who have already sent in columns for future issues: Barney Beck, Frank Bresee (7 articles), Bob Burnham, Al Inkster, Gene Larson (4 articles), Bob Mott, Jack Palmer, Ray Smith, Hal Stephenson (3 articles), and Ken Weigel.

Roger Hill and *NOTHING'S NEW* for the paid advertisement found on page 49.

*Thanks to you all!!!*

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## DEADLINES:

June 15 for the summer issue.

September 15 for the fall issue.