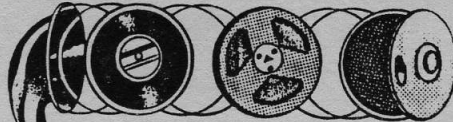
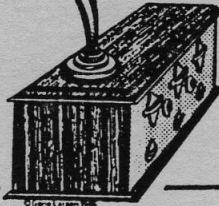


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A JOURNAL OF VINTAGE RADIO

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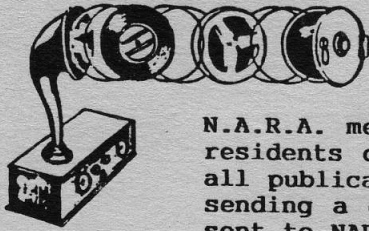
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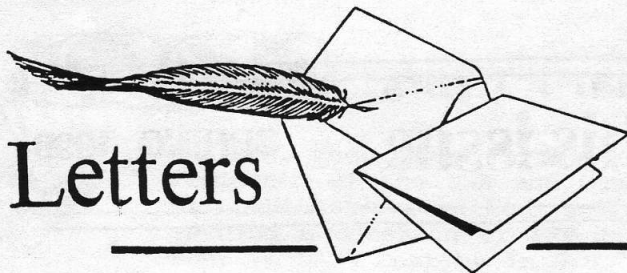
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Letters



from our readers

In preparing my "radio collector's cards" for each issue of the *NARA News* [EDITOR'S NOTE: see pages 47 & 48] it would be very helpful if I could get some information from some of the stars who are still living, or their agents. I know that some stars don't want to give out their address, but perhaps there is a NARA member with these addresses who would be willing to forward my letters to the stars or to the star's agency. I'd like to do some cards honoring these people, and any help our members could give me would be greatly appreciated.

B.J. George
2177 South 62nd Street
West Allis, WI 53219
BJGeorge39@aol.com

I have just received the color poster drawn by Gene Larson [EDITOR'S NOTE: Gene is NARA's staff artist] and I wanted to let you know how very pleased I am with it. It is beautiful.

Richard Richter
Pierre, South Dakota

Gene Larson's "color poster" is really terrific. The colors are really great, and I'm delighted that I was able to get one that he had autographed. Thank you very much.

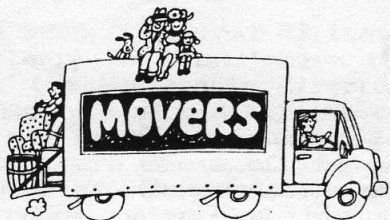
Marie Belinsky
Shallotte, North Carolina

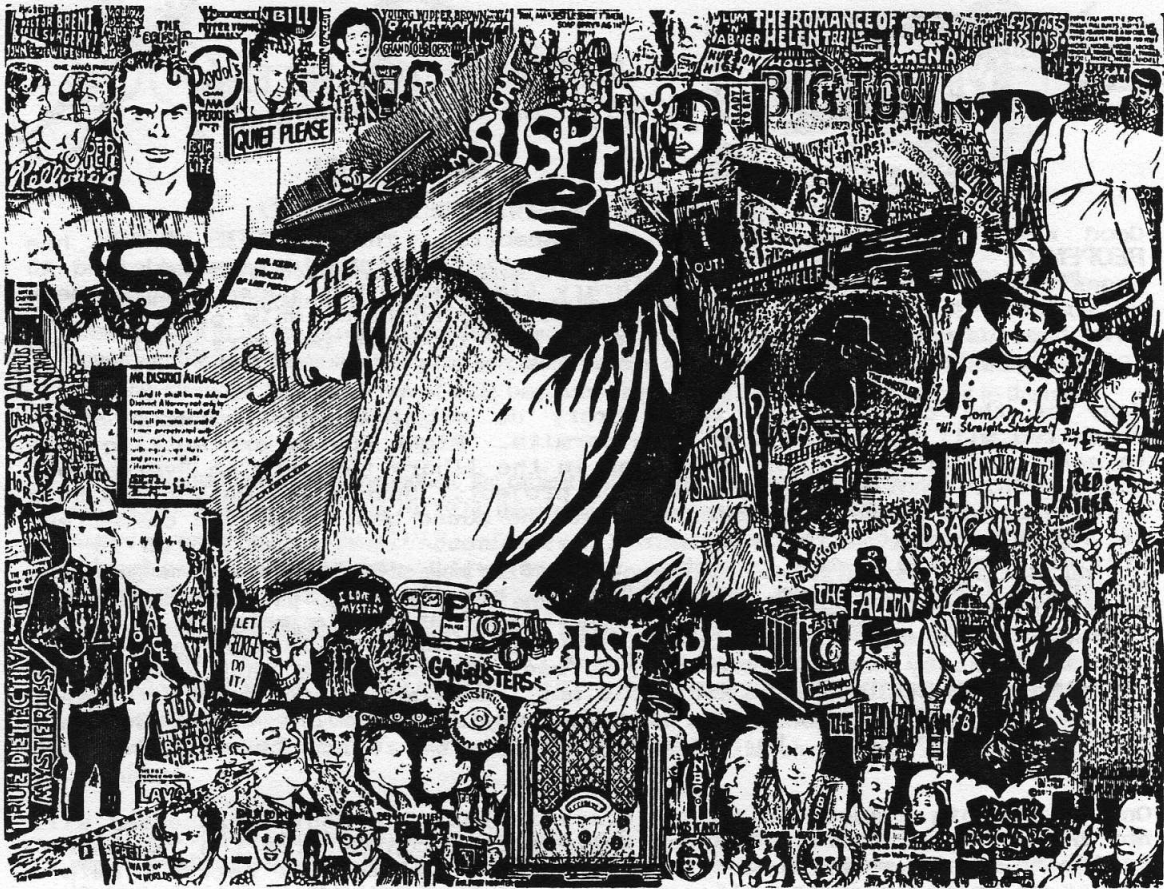
EDITOR'S REPLY: We appreciate the kind words from both of these letter writers about Gene Larson's poster. They are still available (see page 4), and we still have some that have been signed by the artist. And while we're at it, we would like to express NARA's thanks to some other individuals and publications for helping to promote this project: Jay Hickerson, editor of *HELLO AGAIN*; Jack French, editor of *RADIO RECALL* (the publication of the Washington, D.C. club); Ken Krug, editor of the *ILLUSTRATED PRESS* (the publication of the Buffalo, New York club); and Barbara Watkins, columnist for the *SPERDVAC RADIOGRAM*. We certainly appreciate the efforts of these fine people.

ADDRESS CHANGE?

If you are going to be changing your address please let NARA know! Send **BOTH** your old address **AND** your new address to our membership director:

Janis DeMoss
134 Vincewood Drive
Nicholasville, KY 40356





FULL COLOR POSTER AVAILABLE

Back in 1972, the year NARA was founded, staff artist Gene Larson drew the above full color poster about old time radio. It features extremely fine detail that simply doesn't show up in the above black and white reduction. Gene is very kindly permitting us to again make these available to you with all proceeds going to NARA. This full color picture, ideal for framing, measures 10 inches by 14 inches. It is surrounded by a wide white margin, and comes on high quality card stock. It will be sent to you in flat packaging, not folded or rolled, and will be shipped by first class mail. The first 40 ordered will be personally signed by the artist.

Price, including the shipping, is \$15.00 (U.S. funds) for one poster. If you order two or more at the same time, going to the same address, the price will be \$13.00 each. Checks should be made out to N.A.R.A. Send your order to:

Jim Snyder
2929 East Main Street #149
Mesa, AZ 85213



THE LIBRARIES

The Latest Reports

by

Don ASTON

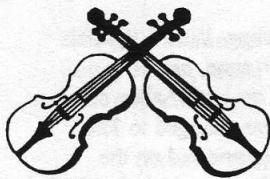
Good news! The best news for all members! The CASSETTE LIBRARY has REOPENED. By the time you read this, most of you should have received 20 pages of the *Temporary Cassette Library Listings*. More pages will be sent as soon as possible. This *Temporary Listing* contains only programs that have been listened to and the sound quality found to be "very good." Bad sound should not appear in these cassettes.

Many of the cassettes in the library do not have good sound. These cassettes will be replaced as time permits. Right now we are working hard to make available only the cassettes in the library that are in "very good" sound. This is a very time consuming project. Several in California have volunteered to listen to and comment on the sound quality of the cassettes. We are not changing the number on the cassette as it was listed in the previous catalog. The cassette numbers will remain the same in the *Temporary List*. When we have weeded out all the bad sounding cassettes, NARA will replace and improve the listing of available material from the library. A member can still use the old Cassette Library Catalog and request shows by cassette number. It must be understood that many of the cassettes will no longer be available until they can be replaced with "very good" sound. This will take time and may be done only when they are requested. Hopefully, this reorganization will never have to be done again.

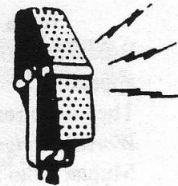
One of the big changes in this library is that the MASTER cassettes will not be sent to members. Members will receive copies from the "masters." No longer should members have to wait for a cassette to be returned before it may be borrowed again. If a cassette is damaged or lost, a new one can be made from the master cassette.

Here is another "by the time you read this article" item. The Reel-to-Reel library has been transferred to Southern California. There were several reasons why this library was closed. Members seemed to have quit using it. Maintenance costs were not being met by members usage. This library has been stored and the programs will be integrated into the Cassette Library. At this time there are no plans to reopen the Reel-to-Reel Library. If enough members want to have the Reel-to-Reel Library reopened, let me know. Use the information inside the front cover to contact me.

I must urge each member to continue to support NARA. All of this change and improvement is costly in money and time. Member support is very important. As I have said before, this improvement is a formidable task. Many members seem to want instant gratification and get disgruntled when their requests are not immediately met. Membership dues and other donations provide the resources for this cassette library reorganization and other vintage radio preservation projects. By improving the content of the Archive, NARA is improving its credibility. Improving credibility will allow NARA to be the recipient of further acquisitions in the vintage radio field. Remember, NARA is working for you!



From
JACK PALMER



COUNTRY MUSIC BARN DANCE SHOWS ON THE RADIO

I have mentioned several times in these articles about the country music barn dance type shows that proliferated throughout the United States as radio stations became more widespread and needed more material to fill the increasing broadcast time. Eventually almost any town of a decent size had a country music barn dance show of some sort, utilizing local talent and almost always broadcasting on Saturday evenings. Here are a few of these barn dance type shows that managed to make it to the radio networks for various periods of time.

As I have previously mentioned, the earliest show of this type was *The National Barn Dance* out of Chicago. Beginning on April 19, 1924, the program was broadcast from WLS until 1960. It then moved to station WGN as the *WGN Barn Dance* (WLS retained the title to *The National Barn Dance* although it has never used it). The show was broadcast on the NBC network from 1933 until 1946, first as a one hour program; later as a 30 minute program. It later went to the ABC network for 2 additional years. Since I have discussed this show at length before, I will not repeat myself here. (See my article in NARA News, Volume 23, No. 2, Spring 1995.) According to Jay Hickerson's *ULTIMATE HISTORY OF NETWORK RADIO PROGRAMMING AND GUIDE TO ALL CIRCULATING SHOWS*, there are 14 shows available. Considering the long run of the show on the network, I would think there are additional shows somewhere. I would be interested in hearing from anyone who may have any shows available.

The second barn dance type show began as the *WSM Barn Dance*, but two years later the name was changed to the more familiar *Grand Old Opry*. The show was produced and announced by George Hay, who had just arrived in Nashville from Chicago, where he had been involved in the *National Barn Dance*. The show began broadcasting from WSM, Nashville, Tennessee on November 28, 1925. It is still being broadcast over the same station every week. A half hour portion of the Saturday night show was heard over the NBC network beginning in 1939 and continuing until 1957. The show has also been presented on TV at various times, beginning in 1955. Although few of the very early country music stars ever broadcast on *The Grand Old Opry*, (exceptions were The Carter Family and Bradley Kincaid, both appearing late in their careers) it eventually became known as the "Home Of Country Music". Today the show is only broadcast locally on WSM, but it is still considered a major step in a country artist's career to become a member of *The Grand Ole Opry*. Among the many stars who were on this show for much of their careers were Minnie Pearl, Hank Williams, Roy Acuff, Grandpa Jones, Hank Snow, Patsy Cline and many others. As mentioned above, the show is still broadcast every week from the stage of The Grand Old Opry auditorium designed and built just for this radio (and later TV) show. Although now only a local broadcast, clear channel WSM, with its 50,000 watt transmitter, still covers a large portion of the United States and the show continues to draw large crowds from across the country. In fact, its popularity is still great enough to require two broadcasts on Saturday nights and an additional one on Friday evenings during the summer months just to handle the crowds. Jay Hickerson indicates over 240 shows are available with 170 of them from either the network broadcasts or the AFRS version of it. The other shows are from the later Pet Milk transcribed shows of 1959-1961.

Just a year later, in 1926, *The WWVA Jamboree* went on the air from Wheeling, West Virginia. Broadcast from WWVA on Saturday nights, it later became a CBS show for a short time, only appearing every third Saturday on the radio network. In 1943, live audiences were no longer allowed. They were resumed in 1946 after the end of World War II. Later the show's title was changed to *The World's Original WWVA Jamboree* and then became just *Jamboree U.S.A.* when it appeared on the Mutual radio network in 1975. Some of the stars appearing on this show through the years included Red Allen, Elton Britt, Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper, Don Gibson, Billy Grammer, Hawkshaw Hawkins, Grandpa Jones, Lone Pine, George Morgan and Hank Snow. Jay Hickerson shows 8 shows from the 1975 Mutual broadcasts.

One of the members of *The National Barn Dance* was John Lair. He had a dream of building and broadcasting from an actual rural area in Kentucky. He began signing up artists from *The National Barn Dance* for his project and in 1937 he, and his group, withdrew from Chicago and began broadcasting out of Cincinnati, Ohio on WLW as *The Renfro Valley Barn Dance*. In 1938, the program appeared on Mutual for a few months. By 1939, the Renfro Valley project was complete and all the programs now originated from Renfro Valley. The Saturday night broadcast was carried over WHAS, Louisville, Kentucky and also by the NBC network in the 1940-41 season. When it left NBC at the end of 1941, the program was moved from WHAS to WCKY, Cincinnati. In 1942, Lair originated another program out of Renfro Valley titled *The Renfro Valley Gathering* which was also broadcast from WHAS, Louisville. Later Renfro Valley shows included *Renfro Valley Folks* and *Renfro Valley Country Store*. The *Renfro Valley* programs were carried on CBS under several different names, at different times and with different sponsors from 1942 until 1949. In 1946-47 one of the shows also appeared on the Mutual network. Some of the stars who appeared on these programs over the years included Jerry Byrd, Martha Carson, Coon Creek Girls, Red Foley, Whitey Ford and Homer and Jethro. Jay Hickerson indicates there are 14 shows available under various Renfro Valley titles.

In 1938, when John Lair transferred his show from WLW, the station replaced the missing program with *The Boone County Jamboree*. The new program utilized the few remaining members of the previous program who had not left with Lair, and added a few new personnel. It appeared on the Mutual Network for a very short time in 1939. Later the show was renamed *The Midwestern Hayride* and was broadcast for many years locally on both radio and TV. It also appeared on both ABC and NBC television at various times as a summer replacement, but was never again on network radio. By 1960 it was no longer on radio and appeared on TV only as *Country Hayride*. Some of the stars of the program were Browns Ferry Four, Cowboy Copas, Jimmy Dickens, Bradley Kincaid, Clayton McMichen, Hank Penny, Riley Puckett, Kenny Roberts and Merle Travis.

The Tennessee Barn Dance began broadcasting in January 1942 over WNOX, Knoxville, Tennessee. It was also on CBS radio for a short time. Some of the stars from this show were Chet Atkins, Carl Butler, Archie Campbell, Cowboy Copas, Eddie Hill, Mollie O'Day, Carl Smith and Kitty Wells.

Sometime prior to 1946, *The Old Dominion Barn Dance* was started in Richmond, Virginia. It broadcast every Saturday night from station WRVA in Richmond. It also was on CBS radio for a short time. In 1957, the name was changed to *The New Dominion Barn Dance* when Carleton Haney took over the show. Some of the stars were Flatt and Scruggs, Joe Maphis, Don Reno, Sunshine Sue and Mac Wiseman.

The Lone Star Barn Dance, which later became *The Big D Jamboree*, was started in 1947. As indicated by the title, it was broadcast from Dallas, Texas on radio station KRLD. Another Saturday

show, it was also on CBS radio for a short time. Some of its stars were The Callahans, Darrell Glenn, Sonny James, Merle Kilgore, Hank Locklin, Carl Perkins, Ray Price, Billy Walker and Slim Willet. As to be expected many of these stars were from Texas.

(Sometime in the 1940's, CBS radio had a country music program, which broadcast three different shows on a rotating basis, one each week. I have been unable to find any information on this show, but I believe the series contained at least three of the following four shows: *WWVA Jamboree*, *The Tennessee Barn Dance*, *Old Dominion Barn Dance* and *The Lone Star Barn Dance*. Any information on the CBS program or on these individual shows would be greatly appreciated.)

The legendary *Louisiana Hayride* began April 3, 1948 in Shreveport, Louisiana and was broadcast over KWKH, still a strong country radio station today. The program was also carried over KTHS in Little Rock, Arkansas for a time. It appears that the program was carried on CBS for a short time in the 1950s. One of the earliest stars on the show was Hank Williams just before he left for *The Grand Ole Opry*. Other stars through the years were Elvis Presley, The Browns, Johnny Cash, Jimmy Davis, Goldie Hill, George Jones, Maddox Brothers and Rose, Webb Pierce, Jim Reeves, Slim Whitman and Faron Young. So many stars moved from *The Louisiana Hayride* to *The Grand Ole Opry* that they named the show, "the cradle of the stars." Jay Hickerson shows 2 of these shows are available. Another show where I think more copies must be floating around somewhere.

On July 17, 1954 *The Ozark Jubilee* was started on KWTO in Springfield, Missouri. Three weeks later it was also on the ABC radio network. By the following year it was off network radio for good. But by January of 1956 it was on the ABC television network. In 1957 the show's name was changed to *Country Music Jubilee* and then shortened the following year to *Jubilee U.S.A.*. Past performers include Eddy Arnold, Wanda Jackson, Norma Jean, Brenda Lee, Grady Martin, Jean Shepard, Porter Wagoner and The Willis Brothers. Jay Hickerson lists no available shows. By 1954, tape recorders were fairly common. Surely some of these shows exist on tape somewhere.

Although never on network radio there were at least two long time barn dance programs broadcast on the west coast. *Town Hall Party* began in 1951 as a radio barn dance broadcast on KFI, Compton, California. It became a local TV show in 1953 and was soon being fed weekly to both the NBC television network and to Armed Forces Television. Some of the stars of the show were Tex Ritter, Rex Allen, Buck Owens, Tex Williams, Lefty Frizzell and Merle Travis.

Another California show was *Home Town Jamboree*. This show was broadcast out of Pasadena, California on radio station KXLA. Later it became a TV show broadcast from KTLA-TV, Los Angeles. The artists on this show included Molly Bee, Tennessee Ernie Ford, Ferlin Huskey, Cliffie Stone and Speedy West.

I am sorry to say that the above has only scratched the surface on the radio barn dances. As I mentioned in the beginning, almost every city of any size in the United States (except possibly in the north east) had a local radio barn dance at some time in the period between 1930 and 1950. These I have listed (except the two from California) were all on network radio, even if for only a brief period. If anyone could add to my knowledge of any of these programs, or of any other network radio barn dance programs, I would be happy to hear from you.

THE END



THE FASCINATING FORTIES

by
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.

All in all, the fabulous 30's was an extraordinary decade, but only an overture as things turned out, for the "Golden Age" of radio that followed in the forties. It was a decade that brought the greatest galaxy of stars and programs ever assembled to the largest audience ever assembled, at least up to that time. It was an era of gagsters, glamour and goosebumps.

The laughs were led by Fanny Brice as the lovable Baby Snooks, Danny Thomas as the happy postman, Alan Young, who promised us to stay Young forever.

Red Skelton never failed to spend an extra hour, after his show, entertaining the studio audience with some of the classic routines that made him famous.

Bud Abbott and Lou Costello hit their stride, topping the charts after a short time on the air.

Bob Hope was broadcasting his Tuesday night Peposdent shows, by remote, from service camps all over the world. He was one of the first to bring a few laughs - and a bit of home - to our men in uniform overseas; and he was still at it 40 years later.

Fibber McGee and Molly (Jim and Marian Jordan) were number one week after week as audiences tuned in to hear his latest wisecrack, to which Molly would reply dryly, "Tain't funny, McGee." And we all echoed "Heavenly days!" when Fibber would open his closet door and everything stuffed inside would come tumbling noisily out.

Amos 'n Andy moved from a daily 15-minute format to a fancy half hour weekly show before a live audience, and became more popular than ever. It became the hottest ticket in town.

But in the forties, tickets to most of the big radio shows became as rare as World Series ducats. Families back East would even arrange their vacation schedules around the availability of tickets to their favorite shows in Hollywood.

By this time, the most glamorous stars of motion pictures were appearing each week on "Silver Theatre," "The Screen Guild Playhouse," and perhaps the longest-running and best-remembered, "Lux Radio Theatre," on CBS, hosted until 1945 by producer Cecil B. DeMille. Over

the years, just about everyone who was anyone had guested on the show. Fred MacMurray starred in no less than 25 radio plays, and Cary Grant and Claudette Colbert appeared 24 times each. There were only two major personalities, in fact, who never did appear on the program: Charlie Chaplin and Geta Garbo, who probably just "wanted to be alone." In the course of its run, Lever Brothers spent more than \$90 million on this weekly radio spectacular, which originated at the Lux Radio Theatre (now the Huntington Hartford) on Vine Street in Hollywood.

The forties was also a decade of chills on a spate of weekly thrillers.

Arch Oboler turned our "Lights Out" for shows that made our hair stand on end and our imaginations run riot at the thought of the ghastly deeds we thought we heard going on before our very ears. Strange tales hidden in the hearts of men and women who have stepped into the shadows, and the "Shadow" himself (played in the forties by Bret Morrison, taking

over for Orson Welles, who originated the role). Each show began with a menacing laugh and the ominous question, "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?"

There were also weekly episodes of "Escape" as William Conrad pushed aside the four walls of reality with a terrifying crunch.

But the most memorable sound of the decade was the silence that followed a line one evening when a fiddler from Waukegan was told to choose: "Your money or your life!" Listeners could almost see Jack Benny, who had carefully established a reputation for himself as a notorious skinflint, place a hand to his face, and stare thoughtfully off into space before answering, after a seemingly interminable pause, "I'm thinking it over!" A moment later the silence was filled with roars of laughter.

It was a "perfit" use of the medium - and a fitting finale for a historic decade of radio entertainment.

*This anecdote about the late Red Skelton is taken from Art Linkletter's autobiography **I Didn't Do It Alone**.*

Red Skelton tells a classic story of how he once braved a snowstorm to make a personal appearance in a small midwestern town. The storm was so bad that he was the only performer who made it to the theater. Without any music or supporting acts or wardrobe, he went on stage to find that there was only one person in the audience. Red's heart went out to that guy sitting in the front row and he gave the performance of his life--pratfalls, jokes, pantomime, the works. When he was through he walked to the edge of the stage, leaned over the lights, and thanked his solo audience for coming through the storm. The man got up, stretched, nodded, and said not to worry, he lived in the basement; he was the janitor and was just sitting there until Skelton was finished so he could clean up.

Submitted by Hal Stephenson



Just what is the best media for old-time radio?

(REVISITING THAT AGE-OLD TOPIC AS WE APPROACH THE YEAR 2,000)

Cassettes, reels, Digital Audio

Tape or Mini-Disk?

Technology is better than ever, and the costs are lower than ever, but there's some drawbacks

By Bob Burnham



"...your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to preserve as many of radio's best comedies and mysteries as possible, in the best sound quality possible at the least cost. Good luck Jim. This DAT will self-erase within a few years...!"

I KNOW, it's a 1960s television show and not radio, but after all, that's what I grew up with before classic radio became embedded in my soul. Nonetheless, I have always had this urge, this DESIRE to somehow insure that the tens of those of shows collectors have preserved don't "go away and vanish forever." Maybe that's why I am constantly re-mastering shows, but always SAVING the source master. Every few years, I also examine the aspects of the recording media we as old-time radio collectors are using. I try to figure out if we're using the most cost effective yet most durable means of recording available for what our specialized needs require. I also read what others are saying about archival methods of preservation of recordings in both professional and real-world environments.

For years, the debate was: "Do I use open reel tape, or do I use cassettes?"

For many years, reels were the preferred choice especially among those with larger collections of programs.

The problem for OTR fans was that technology pushed the performance envelope of regular cassettes to new levels. Why is this a PROBLEM!?? Well it REALLY ISN'T a problem as far as I'm concerned, but many die-hard reel to reel OTR fans think it is because of their tremendous investment of time and money into their open reel collections. The general public — the masses — who used home recording methods for music or other non-OTR

use embraced the convenience, superior quality and eventually lower cost of audio cassettes. The companies manufacturing consumer reel to reel equipment eventually ceased production of the consumer-grade open reel equipment and parts inventories gradually dried up on those now-obsolete reel decks.

Meantime, many OTR fans who had accumulated massive reel tape collections began a race against time: Would their old reel machines last long enough to transfer the shows to cassette? Or would they take the financial plunge and purchase a professional-grade reel to reel machine?

Some collectors began stockpiling "scrap" machines as sources for parts and did their own repairs. Others invested in professional machines. Still others with smaller collections scrapped their reel tapes and started new collections from scratch using audio cassettes.

Cassettes are now the most popular form for distribution and storage of OTR shows among most collectors, but that won't last forever either. One major dealer actually went to the expense of transferring his entire reel collection to digital audio tape (DAT) for archival purposes, then disposed of the reels. He ACTUALLY DISPOSED OF HIS SOURCE MASTERS! This was a very foolish mistake as will be explained in part later.

Just what are the recording formats available to collectors?

1. vinyl LP record (none of us have a record recording machine so the practicality of this means is nonexistent). Some collectors in the 1970's, however,

purchased vinyl LP re-releases that were commercially produced by various companies.

2. reel to reel (analog) tape... for many years, the "standard" and still in limited use in professional studios and broadcast stations. Consumer reel equipment has long been considered obsolete, but a handful of companies like Otari and Tascam are still producing professional grade open-reel tape equipment

3. Digital Audio Tape (DAT)... available in a few different styles. Equipment tends to be expensive, but far less expensive than a new pro reel to reel (analog) machine! The self-erase problem with DAT, however, is a very real one when the DATs are stored for some years. Also, the DAT recording media itself is prone to the same problems as regular analog reels and cassettes. Why someone would go to the expense and time to embrace this impractical format without a means of back-up is beyond my comprehension!

4. Recordable Compact Disk (CD)... available in a couple of different flavors. CD-R can only be recorded once, but the variety employing a gold dye are supposed to last 100 years. CD-RW can be recorded and played many times, but the cost of the blank disks is 6 times higher than CD-R. The machines and the blank disks in general are very expensive and not practical for large OTR collections. CD recorders HAVE, however, dropped dramatically in price, but still remain somewhat out of reach for the average collector. DVD is the newest flavor of CD and uses narrower bands, and a while a DVD-Audio format standard has been established, it hasn't yet been settled firmly. This format is several years from becoming readily available, although DVD-Video players are now available. This format, however, may never be practical or appropriate for storage of old time radio shows at the

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collector level. There are, however, some commercial CD releases available. Perhaps the best example of this is the outstanding series on CD of Eddie Cantor radio shows, produced by Brian Gari, Cantor's grandson. It should be noted that Gari also accommodates those who want only analog cassettes.

5. Mini Disk (MD)... This is a Sony invention that shows great promise. It is physically the smallest format. It uses a compression scheme to maximize efficiency that "throws away" more bytes of sound than the other digital formats. For this reason, purists don't take it as seriously as other available digital formats. To the average listener, however, the sound is excellent, and the format is cost effective. Each disk has its own housing with a sliding shutter similar to a computer floppy disk that protects the actual disk inside (unlike traditional CDs). There are several professional grade MD machines available, but the most popular is the basic consumer grade machine made by Sony which sells for between \$250 and \$300. The disks themselves have dropped in price and a "6 pack" can be had for a little over \$20. Each disk holds 74 minutes of recording in stereo or 148 minutes in mono. They can be recorded and played back several times over, editing is possible and over 200 "cuts" can be indexed and labeled (the cut titles actually appear on the small display on the machine whenever you pop the disk in). These machines are sold through major retail chains like Best Buy and Circuit City as well as mail order houses like Crutchfield. "Walkman" style portable MD players/recorders are also available. Perhaps the only negative for OTR collectors is the fact that a means to "high speed dub" MD is not available to consumers. Also, it has the built in anti-copy scheme, however, it is not activated if only the analog inputs and outputs are used (such as when coping programming from a standard cassette deck).

The biggest factor as to storage and stability of a recording over a long period of time is climate-related. Regular magnetic tape including analog reels and cassettes as well as digital tape are happiest at temperatures around 70 degrees and roughly 70% humidity. Some sources state the shelf life of magnetic tape is

only about 10 years, although there are widespread stories of collectors who have stored recordings well over 20 years with no physical degrading of the tape or the recording itself. CDs and MDs are said to be even more robust. Both are optical and completely immune to stray magnetic fields (which affect DAT and analog recordings very drastically). Recordable CDs may be affected by ultraviolet light, though MDs are relatively immune to light.

For the widest selection of OTR, the standard analog cassette appears to be the media of choice and will likely remain as such for several more years.

There is nothing wrong, however, with starting an archival collection of your top favorite shows on a format like Mini Disk. There is also nothing wrong with purchasing some of your favorite releases, where available (such as the Eddie Cantor releases) on regular Compact Disk.

I know there are collectors who have used more esoteric means to preserve shows. One such method is the use of the audio tracks of VHS videocassettes. Remember, however, that video tapes are also a MAGNETIC format. This method is essentially a highly sophisticated, yet at its root, an ANALOG means of laying the information on tape. This tape is also prone to the same troubles as conventional cassettes or reels. Also access to individual shows on a VHS tape is cumbersome at best, especially when recorded in 6-hour slow speed mode!

My final comment with regard to archival considerations is to realize that absolutely nothing can be made a totally permanent record. Nothing lasts forever, whether it be a recording, a piece of equipment or even a human body. Mechanical devices — given an unlimited maintenance budget and a highly skilled technician — can be given an extended life, but you reach a point of practicality when the cost of keeping the unit in service versus accepting new technology becomes a choice that only a fool would make a bad decision on. For example, if your faithful tape recorder wears out a rare part, you could probably get a machine shop to design and fabricate one for you from scratch for several hundred

dollars. Next find a technician that still knows how to service open reel equipment and plan to pay him a handsome fee. In the end, all you've accomplished is restoring certain functions of a machine with say, 25-year-old technology. For far less money, you could have purchased a professional or semi-professional cassette deck OR a Mini Disk recorder and ended up with 1990's sound and performance rather than something hissy from the analog era.

If you have a huge reel to reel collection, you'll have to think seriously about buying a professional machine if the equipment you have is failing. If you want new equipment, you'd better make sure your credit card has between \$3,000 and \$4,000 of credit available for one of these machines. On the used market, a 10-year-old pro grade reel to reel deck in good condition will cost \$1,800-2,000.

What do I use? A combination of all of the above. I use Mini Disk to a limited degree, but I also have Otari open reel machines primarily for playback of source masters, and also do a tremendous amount of re-mastering to cassettes. I also realize that one day, I'll end up copying them AGAIN to another perhaps yet-uninvented format using equipment to improve the sound that as yet hasn't been developed. This whole process, however, will help perpetuate the whole preservation cycle as long as there's a human around to help it along!

As always, if you have comments, they can be forwarded to me in care of this publication or sent to P.O. Box 510264, Livonia, MI 48151-6264.

Bob Burnham has been writing and publishing his thoughts on the technical aspects of classic radio and recording for over 20 years. He has also marketed and promoted classic radio programming through several outlets. Burnham is also a veteran broadcaster himself and for several years, has also been Chief Engineer at a radio station in one of the top five markets.

DAYTIME DIARY



She Did It Her Way

Of radio's three most prolific soap opera creators, Elaine Sterne Carrington was doubtlessly the most original. She alone spoke every word and, literally, acted out all the parts of the dramas bearing her name. Frank and Anne Hummert, with their assembly line methods, and Irna Phillips, with a modified approach to that tradition (in which she wrote part of it herself), had neither the time nor inclination to create every word of every episode in their vast serial arsenals. Instead, they used dozens of nameless underlings to write dialogue for the plots they created. In most cases they gave themselves sole credit for those scripts. But Carrington, with fewer shows, drew a line between their methods and her own, resulting in a clear distinction -- and often, better written serials than many of those offered by contemporaries.

She followed a pattern that worked well for many years. While some pretty notorious stories were told about Phillips producing lines of copy on a manual typewriter to be read by actors on the air within moments of being written, Carrington never bothered with a typewriter. She'd stretch out on a sofa at her Long Island Sound home and start dictating to recording equipment about mid-morning every Monday. Her efforts would be transcribed by clerical help into scripts for a trio of dramas. Her weekly volume exceeded 38,000 words -- more than two million words annually. At times, working around the clock, she talked past midnight. Unless unusual circumstances prevailed, she finished a week's work by Thursday night and recuperated for three days, usually relaxing with her family.

She didn't listen to playbacks of her dictation. Only rarely did she hear one of her own shows. Yet she loved to drop in on rehearsals unannounced. On such occasions she defended her dialogue to the wall against any alterations a cast member or director might request.

Her most durable serials, *Pepper Young's Family*, *Rosemary* and *When a Girl Marries*, lasted more than a decade. *Pepper* and three predecessors (*Red Adams*, *Red Davis* and *Forever Young*), out of which *Pepper's* story line grew, were on the air 27 years!

Like Phillips and the Hummerts, Carrington also had some casualties among her dramas by installment. *Trouble House* appeared as an open-ended serial in an omnibus 1936-37 bag called *The Heinz Magazine of the Air*, but it didn't make it beyond that year. Her only other washboard weeper, *Marriage for Two*, appeared briefly during the 1949-50 and 1951-52 radio seasons. The series simply never caught on with enough listeners.

Carrington was also unsuccessful in a single attempt at developing a televised serial. In 1953 she launched *Follow Your Heart*, a 15-minute adaptation of the early plot of *When a Girl Marries*, broadcast 14 years before that on radio. It, too, never caught on, disappearing five months

later. Nonetheless, some observers believed Carrington's talent was equal to that of Phillips, perhaps exceeding it. While her one attempt at television ended in failure and her serial volume output was no match to that of Phillips -- had Carrington not met an untimely death -- she certainly had the ability to influence drama on the small screen as much as Phillips ultimately did. Given a few more years of opportunity she might have done just that.

Literary critics confirmed the superiority of Carrington's serials. Radio historiographer Robert LaGuardia may have correctly termed her "the most literate of all soap writers." Another, Ray Stedman, noted that when she expanded the number of shows for which she was writing, the additions "did not appear to dilute the quality of her product." Yet another, Tom DeLong, classified her long-suffering *Pepper Young's Family* as "one of the best scripted soaps."

While drama-by-installment could seldom be classified as a literary masterpiece, *Pepper Young's Family* is one of the few to have achieved superlative quality. It realistically recounted a story that could be both understood and appreciated by mainstream middle class Americans of the first half of the twentieth century. Carrington's emphasis on character development while placing her figures in ordinary settings and responding to everyday factors set this and her other dramas apart from their peers.

Perhaps as a result of a highly publicized experience in which Phillips lost a precedent-setting legal battle over ownership of some of her scripts, Carrington retained ownership of all her serials. Thus she was credited on virtually every broadcast as a drama's author, becoming one of only a handful of daytime scribes whose name was well known by the radio audience. For instance, in its early days the epigraph on one of her shows announced: "Rosemary, written by Elaine Carrington, author of *Pepper Young's Family* and *When a Girl Marries*, is dedicated to all the women of today. Yes, Rosemary is your story -- this is you."

By the late 1940s Carrington's annual earnings were estimated at nearly a quarter of a million dollars. This figure reportedly made her the highest paid serials author. As a founder of the Radio Writers Guild, her celebrated status and wealth permitted her to buttress the positions of writers whose work commanded less notoriety, influence and income.

Carrington's success allowed her to maintain three homes -- a New York penthouse apartment, a waterfront estate on Long Island and another residence in Florida. Her high income, much of it from her efforts on Procter and Gamble shows (including *Pepper Young's Family* and *Rosemary*), entitled her to truthfully call her Bridgehampton waterfront retreat "the house that Camay built." For most of the years *Pepper* was on the air that program's commercials featured Camay, "the soap of beautiful women."

A silver-haired, full-bosomed woman with a gregarious personality, Carrington often dotted her writing with humor. Young characters routinely surfaced within her plots, another hallmark which gave her a basis for sprinkling her dialogue with colloquialisms. Her ability to contrive, alter, improvise and overcome virtually anything was believed to have mesmerized, perplexed and sometimes incensed those with whom she

worked. So relaxed was she that, on some public occasions, she showed up adorned in lace and old tennis shoes. She chain-smoked cigarettes, sustained a mischievous demeanor, enjoyed risqué tales and appeared oblivious to what anybody thought. She even slipped double entendres into her scripts, apparently to see if she could get away with them.

It wasn't unusual for the infamous author to unhesitatingly brush past studio warning signs flashing the cautious "On the Air" message. To no one in particular she would bellow: "Are you all on the air?" Mary Jane Higby, heroine of her long-running *When a Girl Marries*, observed: "She just didn't give a damn!"

While Carrington was required by an advertising agency to submit a proposed annual story outline, conveniently or otherwise she was usually unable to abide by her submissions. She preferred to see her characters grow in unrestrained ways from positions in which they found themselves, without pressure from preconceived notions.

She flaunted her ability to appall any agency or network brass that might attempt to limit or intimidate her. On one occasion the agency constructed an elaborate and very expensive papier-mâché model of Stanwood, the fictitious town in *When a Girl Marries*. Inviting Carrington in to view it, the executives pointed out that the model would help them know at once if any positional errors were occurring in her scripts. She gave tacit approval and moved on.

That wasn't the end of it, however. Within a few weeks Harry Davis, the show's masculine lead, purchased a farm in nearby Beechwood (a town without a papier-mâché layout). Ostensibly because he feared the social whirl of Stanwood would threaten his marriage due to a wide chasm between spousal backgrounds, Harry suddenly uprooted his wife and moved her to the Beechwood farm. Mission accomplished. Carrington wouldn't be intimidated by any who sought to put limits on her creative license.

A native New Yorker, she could be deemed a success by every measure. Well-educated, married to an attorney and the mother of two, she earned a noteworthy reputation as a magazine writer of obvious merit. Initially accumulating a sizable number of rejection slips for her short stories, when Carrington finally experienced a breakthrough with publishers she was able to sell her articles to many slick magazines: *Collier's*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Harper's*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *The Pictorial Review*, *Redbook*, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Woman's Home Companion*. Furthermore, she wrote a successful Broadway play, *Nightstick*, which enjoyed a fair run. The production was twice turned into screenplays, each time under the title *Alibi*.

Carrington's foray into serial writing at age 40 was something of a fluke, however. In 1932, driven by a rainstorm into the NBC building in New York, she waited for a break in the weather. There she struck up a conversation with the network's head of program continuity. He encouraged her to try writing a radio play. She returned a short time later with a sketch for a family drama. That catapulted her into writing *Red Adams* which debuted as a nighttime 30-minute serial on October 2, 1932.

Upon Carrington's untimely death on May 4, 1958 at the age of 66, the writing of *Pepper Young's Family* -- her only serial still on the air (which survived her by eight months) -- passed to her grown children, Bob and Patricia.

Carrington set lofty parameters. She took the time to dictate every single word while acting out all the parts, then clucked over her brood like a mother hen. Had her formula been taken in large doses by others in the industry, the quality of daytime drama might have been strikingly raised while the critics were offered a lot less to censure.

Next: *The Other Superwriters of Soap Opera*

INTERNET VIRUS WARNING

Many of NARA's members use the Internet so we wish to WARN them of the following information. Your editor has confirmed the accuracy of this information.

WARNING!!! If you receive e-mail entitled "JOIN THE CREW," DO NOT OPEN IT! It will erase EVERYTHING on your hard drive! This information was received from IBM.

Also, if you receive e-mail entitled "PENPAL GREETINGS!," please delete it WITHOUT READING IT! This message appears to be a friendly letter asking you if you are interested in a penpal, but by the time you read this letter it is too late. The Trojan horse virus will have already infected the boot sector of your hard drive, destroying all the data present. It is a self-replicating virus, and once the message is read, it will AUTOMATICALLY forward itself to anyone whose e-mail address is present in your mailbox. This

virus will destroy your hard drive and holds the potential to destroy the hard drive of everyone whose mail is in your inbox and in their own inbox and so on. If this virus keeps getting passed, it has the potential to do a great deal of damage to computer networks worldwide!

There is a new virus going around this winter. DO NOT open or even look at any mail that you get that says: "RETURNED OR UNABLE TO DELIVER." This virus will attach itself to your computer components and render them useless. Immediately delete any mail items that say returned, etc. This is a very dangerous virus and there is NO remedy for it at this time.

NARA NEWS ON TAPE FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED



Bill Bright, a retired Canadian broadcaster, records the material from each issue of the *NARA News* on cassette for the benefit of our members with vision problems. Don Aston duplicates the cassettes and sends them out to members who need this service. If you know of members, or prospective members, who might require this, please contact Don Aston at P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, CA 92531. He can be reached by phone at (909) 244-5242.

TRANSCRIBED FROM TORONTO

by John Pellatt

LEONARD MALTIN ANONYMOUS

I love Leonard Maltin's new book on vintage radio, *The Great American Broadcast*.

There.. I've said it, and I feel better.

I mean, it's not like it's a great scholarly work or that it doesn't have huge gaps in its subject matter or that it covers radically new ground.

But Leonard is obviously a fan. He loves OTR. And that positive enjoyment comes through on every page and makes it a pleasure to share it with him. In addition to Leonard's easy reading style, there are many excellent interviews with some of the key participants of OTR. This volume was over ten years in the making. Alas, many of them are now departed for other wavelengths so it is an added bonus that their words are preserved forever. Some terrific photos compliment the text to make it an easy book to dip in and out of at any point or to read in strictly chronological order.

An expensive publication by comparison to other books I've looked at lately, but one that I do not regret buying. Check it out at your local bookstore. You may be pleasantly surprised.

And congratulations to Mr. Maltin for such a noteworthy achievement. Here's hoping his unadulterated enthusiasm so well conveyed helps to bring in a whole new wave of vintage radio fans...

RADIO VENTRILOQUISM

A recent letter, (printed on January 24th, 1998) in Canada's national newspaper, *The Globe & Mail*, from Toronto resident George Dunbar shed a very public light on a unique aspect of vintage radio history:

Lisa Rotenberg, who asked, "What the heck is a radio ventriloquist?" (letter--Jan.22/98), is obviously too young to remember the heyday of radio when Edgar Bergen and his dummy, Charlie McCarthy, were the toasts of the airwaves. During the 1940's, the largest radio audience in North America tuned in weekly to hear the jokes of Charlie and his straight-man Bergen. At the time we thought nothing of the weird display of ventriloquism via radio.

His beginnings were in vaudeville but Edgar Bergen and the irreverent "timber wolf," Charlie, also enjoyed success in Hollywood films. After years of performing sight unseen on radio, the true talent for unmoving lips diminished and an attempt at TV was short-lived.

It seems that audiences enjoyed the radio ventriloquist far more than the visible one.

Back in 1987 I asked OTR radio star, the late Gale Gordon, for his analysis of the Bergen-McCarthy phenomenon. How could a ventriloquist possibly succeed on radio? How could a primarily visual act work on the sightless medium? Mr. Gordon replied:

A question everyone was asking. I saw Bergen perform at the Lamb's Club when I was living in New York before I went back to California. I saw him do his act on the night Rudy Vallee saw him and said "You must come on my show." That was the show that started his career on radio. It was a very funny act. Nobody had heard of him at that time. Vents were a dime a dozen in those days. But he was very funny and he had distinctive voices for his characters: Charlie, Mortimer Snerd and so on. But it was Vallee who gave him his first chance on radio. His material was so good, so funny. Then he did pictures and TV but that's how it started. A guest appearance at the Lamb's Club in New York.

Readers interested in the unique point of view of Charlie McCarthy's "sister" should read her autobiography, *Knock Wood*. Charlie's "sister"? Oh, today she's better known under her own name. She's Candice Bergen.

I asked Gale Gordon if he had any other memories of Edgar Bergen. He replied:

A charming man. Charming. I remember when I did the [Fibber] McGee picture. Edgar was in it with Charlie. The script called for Charlie to walk around and so forth. And so they hired a midget named Billy Curtis to do Charlie's part. They made him up to look like Charlie. It was a wonderful animation. Bergen did the voice when necessary but Billy did Charlie when he had to walk around. Aside from being a good actor and a handsome man, Billy was also a great horse gambler. He always had a racing form in his hand when he was waiting around to do a shot. One day, Bergen's mother came to visit us on the set, a dear Swedish lady, very nice. Charlie (Billy) was sitting on one of the canvas chairs reading his racing form. Bergen came in with his mother in between shots while everyone was sitting around relaxing. Bergen, being a perfect gentleman, introduced his mother to everyone on the set. Suddenly, he realized Billy was sitting there dressed up as Charlie, reading his form, and that he hadn't introduced him to his mother. So he said, "Mother, this is Billy Curtis." At that point Mrs. Bergen saw Charlie McCarthy get up out of his chair and stand up. She fainted. Passed out cold. Here was this dummy she'd seen all of her life suddenly walking around and coming to live. I saw that. I was there. It actually happened.

Much has been made of Bergen's sloppy technique, his moving lips. Even Charlie made frequent mention of the fact. But the fact is Bergen's magic was greater than mere flawed technical ventriloquial technique. He had created in Charlie a real personality, a true star, and that--combined with first rate script material and the debonair Bergen as "straightman"--created a radio comedy act unsurpassed by any, and long remembered by all--with great affection, warmth and admiration.

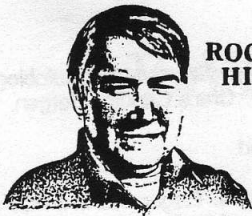
Oddly enough, in a parallel career, the British ventriloquist Peter Brough was having similar success on British radio airwaves. Another ventriloquist made a radio star! Light DOES strike twice. Who'd've thought it? Perhaps our resident British radio expert, Ray Smith, will help to explain Peter's success in a future column.

Our thanks to that newspaper letter writer for sharing with us his memories and for reminding us of a true giant of the vintage days of radio, Edgar Bergen. Our thanks also to the late great Gale Gordon, for sharing HIS memories of that wonderful magical long ago era when a talking wooden doll could become a nation's favourite unruly wise cracking juvenile star.

Just room to mention receiving the latest *Hello Again* from Jay Hickerson (\$15 a year every two months from P.O. Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514). Always a pleasure to read with the latest reviews, requests, traders' interests and FOTR Convention news. In the Jan-Feb issue, Jay announces FOTR 1997 audio and video tapes plus canvas bags, mugs, booklets, and pens now available--ideal souvenirs of THE east coast OTR annual convention!



*all good wishes
Edgar Bergen*



ROGER
HILL

THE OLD CURMUDGEON

We all really are just a little bit insane, you know. Not as nutty as those people who collect matchbook covers or soda can tab openers but insane nonetheless.

Here in the Bay Area we have a multitude of radio stations to select from. I could set the scanner and just jump all around the dial...first with am then with fm. But do I take advantage of this high technology and hard working announcers of every rhyme and persuasion? Nope! Instead, I make sure to have with me an album of a variety of old radio shows, then after fastening up the old seat belt, off I go, windows rolled up in this cold weather and lost to the world with Raymond Burr's character in FORT LARAMIE or a chuckle at Fred Allen's humor. When I'm really laughing out loud on occasion, other drivers are convinced I'm two stairs short of a landing....they give me much more room than usual and steal sideways glances to make sure I'm not about to swerve into their lane or pull out a pistol and aim it in their direction.

I find I've very little interest in what any contemporary radio station is playing. But let me listen as a voice says, "It's 8 pm, Bulova Watch Time" and then the strains of that Tschaiakowsky theme as an announcer intones "The MERCURY THEATER is on the Air". The miles zip by and I'm lost to the world just listening and imagining and in total enjoyment. Yes, we're all just a little insane....in a most pleasant way!

All of us have our favorite shows which we focus on acquiring and wanting to listen to again and again and again. There are other shows we'd just as soon not bother collecting except that if we sell or trade, we know some people out there will want these "personally unpopular" programs. And sometimes if we listen often enough to a radio program we

THINK we don't like, we might find ourselves rather enjoying it. This has happened to me occasionally and it got me to thinking about a few of these bits of 'ancient' entertainment recently.

I've always admired and greatly respected Red Skelton although I never considered his radio shows, tv shows, or movies as among my very favorites. But recently while transferring some of his Raleigh cigarette sponsored-programs from open reel to cassette, I listened more carefully and wondered what it was that didn't catch my fancy.

Let's take one of Red Skelton's Raleigh Program shows from March 5, 1946 with a theme of 'Local Theater', for example. It opens with announcer Rod O'Connell asking Red if Mr. Raleigh is still living at his house. Several witticisms later, after commenting on weather, stock market, and income tax forms ("Everyone should pay their income tax with a smile"... "I tried that but they want money!"), the first commercial for 'less nicotine, less irritating tars' as proven conclusively by eminent throat specialists (if you smoke Raleighs) is presented. A nice unmemorable song follows. Then Red introduces his Skeleton Scrapbook of Satire (chapter 95) dealing with going to the movies and how crowded the theaters are. Once inside, Red and his date find themselves in trouble with other patrons with seat mixups, spilled drinks, etc. Then the skit ends sort of abruptly.

Next Red takes on the character of Clem Kadiddlechopper after having disposed of the previous movie theater skit and continues satirizing movie-going ("What's playing at this theater?... Oh, it's Red Skelton and Bob Hope starring in the Life of Jack Kirkwood"). 'Clem' is told the admission price is 15c so he tries sneaking in by a back way. Then the commercial announces "Medical Science offers proof

positive that no other cigarette gives you less nicotine and less irritating tars (verified by a quote from Charles Boyer) and thus is safer to smoke".

Another musical interlude by Red's orchestra before Red launches into 'Chapter 97 At The Theaters', called "Saturday Matinee" with Junior, the Mean Widdle Kid. This skit involves grandma needing to have someone mind Junior while she's gone. The neighbor is enlisted and suggests a matinee movie. After paying 10c for two bags of popcorn (Wow!), Junior carries on monologues about pestering the heck out of other people and interacting with the movie screen, then finding grandma at the movies also.

The show closes with another tobacco commercial but for Sir Walter Raleigh pipe tobacco this time ("A favorite with men who appreciate the best in pipe smoking"). All through Red's humor skits is studio laughter so it must have been enjoyable and funny then. But I couldn't quite keep up with a lot of it and most of the humor just didn't seem that funny. Yet, according to Jay Hickerson's directory of radio shows, Red Skelton's programs were on from January 7, 1939 to May 26, 1953. Quite a run for a show I couldn't seem to find enjoyable.

It struck me that there were slight similarities with Milton Berle's radio shows which ran under various titles from September 6, 1936 to June 15, 1949. Let's listen in on "A Salute to Boxing" from December 9, 1947. Mr. Gallup, the announcer starts us out by proclaiming, "Make no mistake. Of all leading cigarettes, one and only one is recognized by leading nose and throat specialists as definitely less irritating. That one cigarette is Philip Morris." A fanfare follows and Mr. Gallup cries out, "Johnny presents....The Milton Berle Show!". (and this is a part I like) Johnny calls for Philip Morris as the background music of 'On The Trail' from Ferde Grofe's 'Grand Canyon Suite' plays. Mr. Gallup then reminds us that "If every smoker knew what Philip Morris smokers know, they'd all change to Philip Morris".

And then to the theme of "There's No Business Like Show Business", Mr. Gallup introduces the members of the show and in a manner reminiscent of Fred Allen's and Jack Benny's introductions, makes some barbed little witticism about Milton Berle. In this particular show Milton is said to have started out as a pugilist but ended up just being pu.

Milton and Mr. Gallup exchange comments about the Louis/Walcott fight with cute little jokes and lots of laughter. Milton says Louis was scared because if he won he'd have to fight John Garfield (an actor in a fight movie called "Body and Soul"). When Mr. Gallup explains he couldn't be at the fight because that was Rimsky-Korsakoff night at his club, Milty responds by saying, "That's Jazzy!" (I think you have to remember his manner and expression when he did this on his TV show for it to really be effective) More musical anecdotes follow.

Milton then announces a salute to prize-fighting and relates where the big battles take place: Madison Square Garden, Soldier's Field in Chicago and Ciro's in Hollywood. (pauses to explain joke and milk more laughter) A flashback skit is presented on how Milton got into boxing although he really wanted to get into radio. A skit with a sparring partner keeps repeating that the manager likes Berle. Later, Milton finds himself in the ring at Madison Square Garden where his manager assures him the crowd likes him. After a knockout and being encouraged to say a few words into the microphone, the manager reminds Milton he did finally get him on the radio because....(not that he likes Milton but that he hates radio!)

Mr. Gallup once again conveys assurance that Philip Morris is less irritating and all smokers should change to Philip Morris. Ray Block's orchestra does a short piece of music after which Milton tells him he's such a success on radio today not because he has rhythm, not because he has smoothness. He's a success because he has Petrillo. Mr. Gallup then introduces their weekly format of a forum...this one

being 'Prize Fight Forum Tonight'. The question, 'Should the next Louis/Walcott fight take place at the Roseland Ballroom?'

Milton talks with various stock characters and asks if they have questions to do with fighting. One individual (sounds like Arnold Stang) is so against fighting that he threatens to flatten Milton for asking him about fighting. Another standard character Milton encounters is Tallulah Feeney, a homemaker. She wants to stop her husband from being a fighter. She says he was itching to get into the ring. Milton asks if he had ring fever. She says, "No, ringworm!".

Milton then introduces another standard personality, Wallace Featherfield. Wallace always seems to be pooped! For example, when he tells Milton he picked up a Hershey bar on the way over and is told that a Hershey bar isn't heavy, he reminds Milton that this bar had nuts in it. Mr. Featherfield tells of his experiences in the ring such as Joe Louis tripping over him and being knocked out. Lots of studio laughter all along the way.

An interlude of music with a song ("How Soon") followed by more repartee between Mr. Gallup and Milton as a scene is set for a boxing skit involving Milton. The skit involves body building at a gym (chest measurements called out as they measure Milty, "Chest normal...18 inches; chest expanded...12 inches"). After his session, he heads back to New York to face up to the ruffians he had trouble with before.

Mr. Gallup closes out the program with one final commercial for Philip Morris "Made in America by Americans to please American tastes". (I've always loved the way Johnny called out that Philip Morris name with the music in the background. Very intriguing and kind of soothing).

Missing from this particular program was the usual man and wife skit in which the wife's only response is a big "Yes!" that changes from high to low tone or has other changes as the comments and questions change. Most of us remember Milton Berle from his Texaco TV Shows

and the crazy dresses, sideways shoes, slapped in the face with make up and all the wild and nutty things which made him popular on Tuesday nights. He also did make some movies and they're not bad at all.

Another two series I found myself comparing were FRONTIER TOWN and HAVE GUN, WILL TRAVEL. I know these may not be as well-known or as popular as GUNSMOKE, FORT LARAMIE, and THE SIX SHOOTER, but there are some of our customers who seem to enjoy them more than the longer running and better known other series. So I picked one of the FRONTIER TOWN shows with Jeff Chandler, later replaced by Reed Hadley (movie actor and known for his television series RACKET SQUAD).

This show starts out with the title, followed by "The Saga of the Roaring West" and a few gunshots as the announcer shouts "Frontier Town: El Paso, Cheyenne, Calgary, Tombstone" and continues with the set up, including some unlikely phraseology "crucibles for freedom" before the theme music comes in. The tune played on an organ is pleasant enough, then lawyer Chad Remington tells of his town, Dos Rios, and sets the scene, usually as a companion of Cherokee O'Bannon (who sounds an awfully lot like W.C. Fields' character).

A lot of narration continues the story set-up as Chad encounters some dispute and becomes involved in trying to resolve the difficulties without gunplay. The musical segments and sound effects are well done. Voices and characterizations are clear and distinctive but this is one series I just could not get very enthused about...even when listening to it and trying to discover what could be said for an article in NARA NEWS. Since it was only on from 1952 to 1953, perhaps others found it a little less than thrilling as well. Of course, these years were the excitement years of discovering that new medium, television.

The last series I would like to mention is HAVE GUN, WILL TRAVEL. This series never impressed me that much before on television or on radio until I began listening while dubbing some of these for a member. Each show starts out with a

pounding kind of percussive introduction and then Paladin says something that's a teaser to what's coming up in the story. For example, with the show from March 27, 1960 (#71) titled 'They Told Me You Were Dead', he says, "I can't believe I'm seeing you again...I buried our love 12 years ago when they told me you were dead."

Then that pounding music intro comes back and the announcer gives the opening title, introducing John Dehner as Paladin and providing the setting as 1875 in San Francisco at the Carleton Hotel. A few strums of the guitar and we're into the story, usually with Hey-Boy and Paladin (and maybe Miss Wong) in some discussion. Occasionally Hey-Boy speaks in Cantonese and Paladin seems to understand. There's a real interesting concern and friendliness for Hey-Boy. After this brief introductory scene, there's some announcement, if not a commercial product then a public service sort.

This particular episode involves Paladin going to an Indian Reservation to try and find someone special in his life. Paladin gets involved in saving the children and school house and making peace with Red Cloud so he will return to the reservation. The agent in charge of the reservation has been cheating the Indians. Paladin finds that the woman (Ellen) whom he'd thought died in a prison camp in Florida was really alive but now she's married to another. Her son has been taken by the Indians and Paladin vows to get him back.

Another public service announcement concerning the duties and responsibilities of men in the service encouraged the listener to consider how fighting men have kept our country free.

Back to the action! Paladin meets with the cavalry and finds the commander sympathetic to the plight of the Indians and their need for finding food. Sitting Bull and Crow Dog have joined forces. Paladin meets with the Indians and is told what will happen to the boy if things aren't improved for them.

Another announcement about defense of our nation.

The strength of acting as evidenced by voice portrayals and the sound effects are quite good. Music used is varied and yet doesn't overwhelm the dialogue and action sequences.

The outcome of this story is that Paladin's lost love must remain with her husband after her son is safe at home again. Paladin and Hey-Boy end the episode with a bit of philosophy which neatly ties up the program. Now all of this is quite nice and well done but it's the closing music sequences which really enthralled me. If you have a tape of HAVE GUN, WILL TRAVEL, listen carefully to the closing. There's some plucking of stringed instruments, a bit of strumming and then some phrasing with what might be counterpoint or some term in music that relates the high sing-song type notes which accompany part of the closing. It almost becomes addictive. Give it a listen. It really is beautiful and quite a ingenious piece of composing.

I suppose there's so much that could be written about each series. What appeals to me won't appeal to someone else and visa-versa. That makes for nice diversity, doesn't it! But one thing I've learned is that even if a whole series or a whole show from a series doesn't appeal to me, if I listen a bit more carefully, it's very likely I'll find something I didn't notice before and something that I really enjoy.

You know that because of the radio lending library here at Nothing's New, we receive a lot of comments about radio shows and find it enjoyable to listen to members tell of what they like or don't like. We're at 908 members and my guess is that about 10% of these indicate on their application form that they have an interest in vintage radio programs.

One inquiry from Clarksburg, West Virginia asked for anything on Buster Keaton. To my knowledge, he was not on any radio show...is this correct? Another member in Redwood City recently bought a large number of THE SAINT and GUNSMOKE radio shows. A Mr. Weber in Columbiana, Ohio wrote to ask about Sgt. Preston tapes. Our friend in England still seeks more radio show material involving Jeanette MacDonald. We did

manage to locate a Screen Guild Theater show of 2/19/39 "Song for Clotilda" with J/M but had to go to Germany to do so.

Ron Tremblay in Enfield, CT (a NARA member) sent a complimentary note along with request for membership information. Steve Kelez of Radio Showcase fame in Santa Rosa, CA had to cancel his booth at the San Mateo Antiques Fair where he usually does a landslide business in old radio shows, because of the real landslide threats as El Niño has been battering all of us here on the West Coast. Jim Snyder, your traveling editor, has been very good to keep me informed about activity in NARA and progress with the cassette library. Jim always seems to end his letters with, "where's your next column for the NEWS?". Friend Jim Stringham in Lansing, MI also corresponds frequently to tell of his recent acquisitions from BRC, SPERDVAC, Adventures in Cassette and other sources.

Just got a card recently from Lon Cseplo at 3603 Kent Rd. #2; Stow, Ohio 44224-4603 and he calls himself an 'amateur old-time radio collector'. Probably has a better collection and in better sound than we do here. He might appreciate hearing from other old radio fans.

By the way, if anyone needs paper sleeves for their 78's or 33 and 1/3 rpm records, I have a source in Sacramento area. They also have old cylinder records as well as lots of other odds and ends along these lines. We're getting in a studio turntable set for 78 rpm playing so we can plug in cables and record the 78's onto cassettes more conveniently than we've been doing.

Another person who wrote asking about lists of old radio shows was Craig Walker of 1101 Hemingway Lane in Traverse City, MI 49686. He likes the Christmas shows especially. Mr. Richard Broskie at 10 Reid Street; Amsterdam, NY 12010 is another writer asking about OTR lists.

One of our members is in Lodi, CA and has his own business selling vacuum cleaners. He can get you a good price if you need one and recommends the

Simplicity model 7200 which I had never heard of. Chuck Huck told me he did get a nice instruction book on the Sony TC 355 deck from Pat McCoy but now he's looking for a booklet for Allied Radio reel machine TR-1035.

I've got to thank Joel and Carolyn Senter (the specialists in all things Sherlockian) for continuing to refer people to us for videos of the Sherlock Holmes movies.

And Fred Westwood in England is still trying to obtain Bob Hope shows from 1942 and 1943. There don't seem to be many of these around although Jay Hickerson's directory indicates a few specific dates from these years which should be available.

We have some 63 programs of THE SHADOW but would like to find more. If anyone reading this would like to exchange lists, just send it to me. I've a friend in France who loves Shadow programs and have been trying to find as many as I can for him.

Harold Feinstein at 14050 Cedar Rd. #517; Cedar Heights, OH 44118 is seeking Lone Ranger episodes from 8/51, 9/51, 3/52, 1/53, and 2/53.

Progress towards a complete inventory of our radio library is moving slower than molasses in the Antarctic. So far, just section 'A', 'B', and part of 'C' of the 4-pack albums on the shelves here are completely inventoried and in a proper data base of the computer. Printouts available on request with a SASE (78c).

Another SASE (78c) will get you the latest movie supplement we have (as of March 10th, 1998) which contains over 700 additional movie titles. Some are kind of unique, like "Charley's Aunt" with Jack Benny -- but it has a small timing strip along the bottom.

There is one movie we just got from an older Beta tape (commercial release) which is an excellent film. It's "Death of a Scoundrel" with George Sanders, Victor Jory, Yvonne DeCarlo, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Nancy Gates, and Colleen Gray. Just a very fine story of a man's greed and how

it destroys what's really valuable in life. Highly recommended. Also just acquired recently the first Charlie Chan sound film in 1929. Wonderful print!

Along the radio lines, quite a few HAVE GUN, WILL TRAVEL, ROY ROGERS, GUNSMOKES and others have either been coming in from other sources or have come off the 7" open reels we have here. There are probably 150 or so more reels to transfer to cassette so if anyone would like to buy these open reels of radio shows after we transfer the shows, just let me know. Some recent transfers have included the MILTON BERLE SHOWS and U.S. STEEL HOUR THEATER GUILD ON THE AIR.

John Stanley... author, teacher, former radio and television personality ... has been coming by once a week or so and working on upgrading his own collection of Suspense, Escape, and Quiet Please shows. I think he may have a very complete collection in case anyone would like to contact him. Just drop your letter to us with note that it's for John Stanley. John and I also have had some very very

bad experiences with an individual back East and we both have decided that others should be warned about this person. John sent some of his books and never received payment much less a 'thank you' response. I sent nearly \$186 worth of videos and also received no response, no payment, no communication whatsoever even though a return receipt shows they were received. The individual is Mark Trahan at 132 Booram Ave. #6; Jersey City, NJ 07307. He works at MDM Copying in NYC on 32nd Street with Peter J. Golden and both of these people should be avoided if you ever receive any solicitations from them about radio, tv, or movie materials. It is a given that you will receive nothing if you send money and if you send radio, movies, or tv shows....also nothing in return. At the other end of the spectrum is Garry Papers in Ashland, OR. He's the one who has started "A Night At the Radio" and is doing pretty well since volume three is now out and more are planned. A great guy! Call: 1-888-723-4676. Mention my name. So long for now! Keep a-listenin' and share what you have with a young'un whenever the opportunity allows. Let them know the fun of vintage broadcasts.

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 LIBRARY:

The number of cassettes that have been "rechecked" and placed back in the cassette library is rapidly increasing. For current information please send a stamped-self-addressed envelope to Don Aston, P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, CA 92531.

SCANFAX CASSETTE CATALOG:

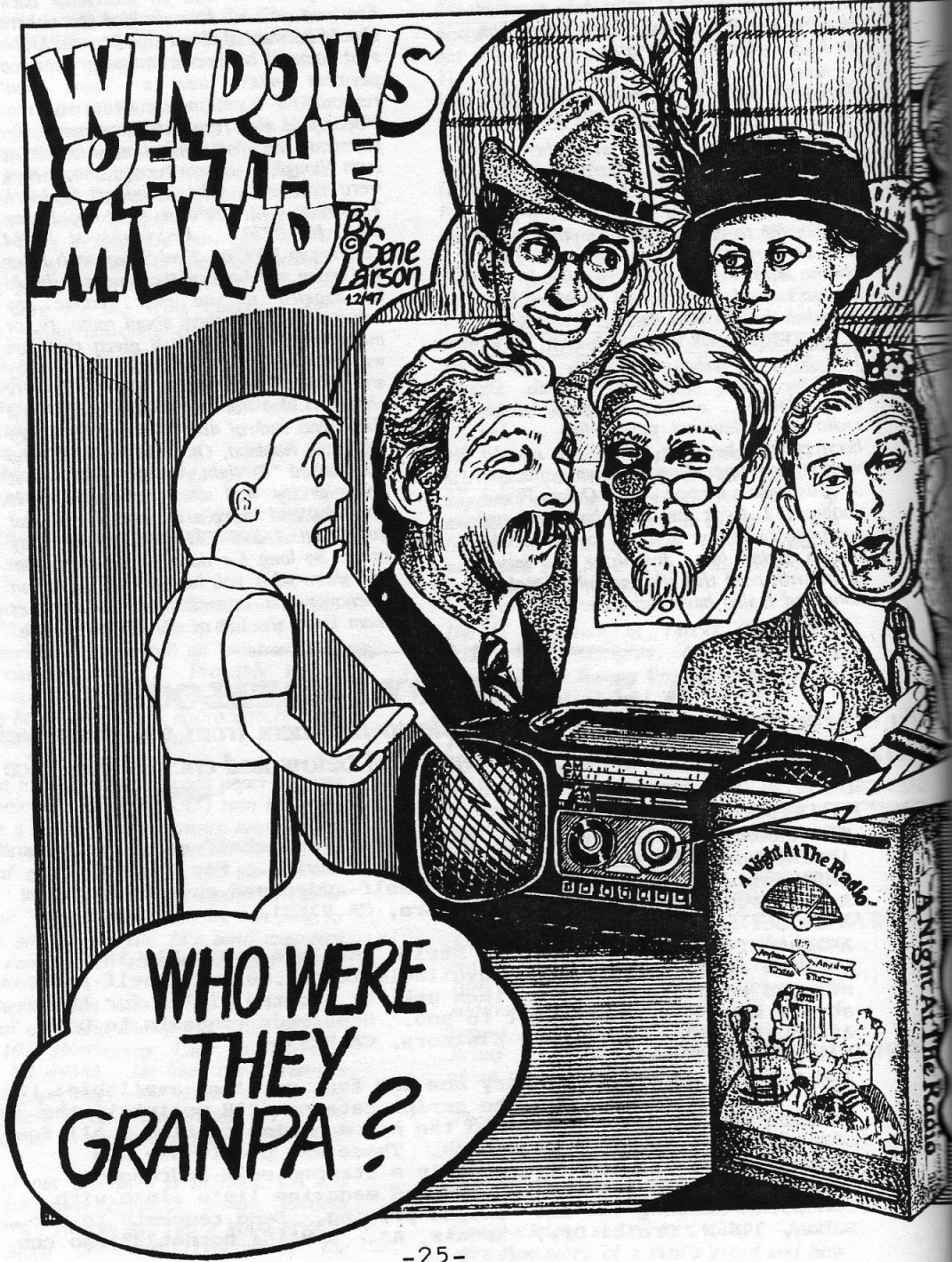
A list of the various program series that are available in our SCANFAX cassette library is available for \$1.00 and a self-addressed stamped envelope. You can then ask for program titles for those series that are of interest to you. Send your requests to Don Aston, P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, CA 92531.

PRINTED MATERIALS LIBRARY:

The printed materials library now has four catalogs available: the book catalog (407 books), the script catalog (228 scripts), the catalog of logs (45 logs), and the new magazine catalog. All four are available for ten 32¢ stamps. Those who previously had ordered these catalogs can send in a stamped-self-addressed envelope for the new updated log and magazine lists along with the forms showing the new reduced pricing. Send requests to Bob Sabon, 308 W. Oraibi Dr., Phoenix, AZ. E-MAIL: hornet29@juno.com

WINDOWS OF THE MIND

By Gene Larson
12/47



WHO WERE
THEY
GRANPA?



*Our centerfold was drawn for us this
time by NARA's staff artist, Gene
Larson.*

BOOK SHELF by Hal & Carol Stephenson

The Woman at the Well by Dale Evans Rogers

This 1970 autobiography includes Dale's experiences with radio programs before and after she wed Roy Rogers on December 31, 1947. She shares her thoughts about her son, his children, and their natural and adopted children. Dale testifies to her faith in Jesus. She explains how essential being a Christian is to her in tragedy. Roy's conversion to Christianity is described.



Those of us born in the early 1940's first knew Roy and Dale as a married couple in those great Republic Studio movies and through their radio programs. To us, they were a natural couple. When the studio didn't want them to appear together, ironically because they were married, we wrote a ton of letters asking that they be kept together in the movies. This is in spite of the fact that young boys then and now want the mushy love stuff kept out of their movies.



My incorrect assumption as a boy in 1950 was that Roy and Dale were married for a long time. In the 1980's, I was listening to Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy programs with Dale Evans by herself back in the early 1940's. I also noticed, on a cable channel Happy Trails Theater broadcast in the 1980's, a variety of leading ladies cast in Roy Rogers movies up to the mid-1940's and Dale was not yet billed as Queen of the West.

The Woman at the Well provides answers as if the reader were present with Dale and Roy, particularly in the 1940's. Several episodes gave me an understanding of what happened. They are shared with the reader by Dale on a friend-to-friend basis. One is the relief Dale felt when her "brother" was publicly acknowledged as her son. Another is what Roy said when he proposed to Dale.

Editor's Note:

For those piqued with curiosity (after reading the end of Hal Stephenson's Book Shelf column) about what Roy said to Dale when he proposed, here is the text from *The Woman at the Well* by Dale Evans Rogers:

We were sitting on our horses in the chutes of a rodeo at the Chicago Stadium late that fall of 1947, waiting to be announced, when Roy asked me, "What are you doing New Year's Eve?"

I had no plans for New Year's Eve--which was months away!

"Well, then, why don't we get married?"

And what do you think I said to that?

You're right. That's exactly what I said.



1940—the young staff singer at CBS during the hard days in Chicago. Below: Concerned about his future, but ready for it—son Tom at 5 months.



MEMORIES OF EARLY RADIO

EDITOR'S NOTE: Someone sent the following article to Roger Hill to have it published in the NARA NEWS. Unfortunately, we don't know who that someone is. If you are the author, please let us know so that we can give you proper credit.

We didn't think of it as early radio. That was what came on before bedtime. Late radio was better, but forbidden. I would try to stay awake in the dark room and hear the great stories of "I Love a Mystery" on my little plastic receiver, listening at the same time for the footsteps of my parents on the stairs.

In fact, my recollections are of the last years of radio drama. "Jack Armstrong" was not a favorite serial, but I was listening one day when Jack and the gang drove along a little-used road. A fence swung open like a gate, and they entered the headquarters of Vic Hardy. He had been a villain, but now, reformed, headed the new Scientific Bureau of Investigation. Jack joined that law enforcement unit, and finished the series as "Armstrong of the S.B.I." which became an adult role. I thought the new format was an improvement.

Horror and suspense stories were favorites. Somehow, though, my parents always disapproved of the best shows. We usually enjoyed "Suspense" together. One night, during a broadcast of "Sorry, Wrong Number," Dad suddenly decided that it was time for my bath. That was the quickest bath ever taken. When I rushed back, he announced that it was now bedtime. The next day, he told me that the woman's husband came home and saved her. I didn't hear the real ending until years later.

"Richard Lawless" ended just as abruptly for me. One episode had him hanging on the wall of a

castle as vultures tore at his flesh. Mom came by, realized what I was listening to, and the serial ended right there for me. I have yet to find the program, so, for all these years the hero has remained in that cliffhanger situation.

When an uncle listened to some of my tapes of "Chandu, the Magician," he recalled a similar experience. He had heard only one episode of the original series. His parents decided that it was just too scary for him.

There were some happier moments. Saturday mornings were "Let's Pretend" and other shows so tame that my parents paid little attention to what I heard. Then, I stumbled across a great story of "Escape." The program was so good that I kept it a secret from the rest of the family. They would surely have banned it. I did tell the other kids at school of this wonderful new show, and suspect that it found many loyal young fans, all worried that their parents might learn of it.

Radio was supposedly an innocent medium. Yet, the very sexy voices of Lauren Bacall and Alice Faye made an impression on a growing boy that has never faded. Later, there was the bonus of finding them and other favorite radio players in the movies. About that time, I discovered the movie serials, many based on radio adventure stories.

When the weather was just right, we could pick up "The Goon Show" from a Canadian station. It might fade out in mid-program, but

I loved every minute of its crazy humor. The rest of the family couldn't understand the English accents, so hated it. I had no trouble at all with them.

I finally realized that the great world which was just "the radio" to us was ending, while enjoying a broadcast of "The Amos and Andy Music Hall." By that time, the program was talk and

recorded music, with a slight plot to tie them together. One night Amos announced that this was their final show. The long running comedy had been cancelled due to a network policy against radio drama.

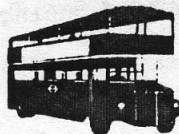
It took many years, and the appearance of the programs on audio tape, to bring that world back.

Volunteers

NARA is still reviewing each and every show in our cassette library. We still need volunteers who live in southern California, or nearby, to help with this project. Those willing to help will be sent a large box of approximately 265 cassettes which they would check for sound quality as quickly as possible. They would be free to make copies for themselves of any that they would like. They would then pay for the return shipping. If you would be willing to help with this please call Don Aston at (909) 244-5242, or you can write him at P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, CA 92531. His e-mail address is aston@cosmoaccess.net

The cassette library is open, but won't be back in FULL operation until this project is completed.

FROM ACROSS THE POND



by Ray Smith



THE GOON SHOW

Back in the days when I was knee-high to a hedgehog, I learnt about history. I discovered that B.C. meant "before Christ" and that A.D. referred to "the year of our Lord." I even got chastised for being the "teachers pet" when I raised my hand in class and smugly announced that the initials A.D. stood for "Anno Domini" in Latin! One piece of Latin I didn't learn at school was B.B. What could it mean? Big Bully? Better Butter? Billy Bunter? I discovered the truth quite recently. How about...Before Bean.

If you're a fan of the ugly-looking UK eccentric played by actor Rowan Atkinson, you might suggest there was nothing before Bean! But as North America's resident scribbler on all things British, I couldn't let another column go by without observing that during the past 6 months, American movie theatres have been "invaded by Bean," the movie version of the slapstick tv series *Mr. Bean*. Our local multi-screen movie theatre complex has been running simultaneous screenings of the Bean laugh-fest in no less than three of its theatres. So much for blockbusters like *7 Years in Tibet* starring the man my wife WISHED she'd married, American heart-throb Brad Pitt. Now who would choose Brad Pitt over Ray Smith? I ask you!

But getting back to Bean. During an interview with CBC morning announcer Avril Benoit, Rowan Atkinson admitted that Bean was partly inspired by some of the

great slapstick/visual comedians. He mentioned Laurel & Hardy, Benny Hill and Norman Wisdom. But although he's a master of slapstick, Atkinson has a strong wireless background and was



resident on BBC radio's *Not the 9 O'Clock News*. In a BBC interview, Mr. Bean revealed that other shows which influenced his zany character included Monty Python's *Flying Circus*, well known on American TV, and a classic BBC radio series of the 50's, *The Goon Show*. If your "follicly challenged" like me, you've been around long enough to believe there would have been no Mr. Bean without Monty Python and no Python without the Goons. And whether you like or loathe this brand of zany, off the wall, eccentric humour, don't take out your ire on John Cleese or Rowan Atkinson. Blame it on the Goons!.

And who were they, the eccentrics of radio's *Goon Show*? It began

back in the early 1950's. Most of the 200+ episodes were written by Spike Milligan, a brilliant but tortured genius who has suffered bouts of mental illness throughout his life. When the stress of writing the Goons became too much, Milligan turned for assistance to Eric Sykes, who became a radio and tv comedy star in his own right, and another writer, Larry Stephens. At least three BBC staff producers "survived" the *Goon Show*. These included Peter Eton, who also produced radio comedy for Liverpool funnyman Arthur Askey; Charles Chilton, known to American radio buffs as the man who wrote and produced the brilliant *Journey Into Space* series (a far cry from the *Goon Show!*): and John Browell, a veteran of light entertainment.

The series began on May 28, 1951 as "Crazy People." This caused some offence, even in those politically "in" correct times. It returned on June 22, 1952 as *The Goon Show*. The BBC and millions of radio listeners, didn't take offence at naming a show after enemy POW camp guards. At least that's where Milligan claims he discovered the word. The final *Goon Show* in its continual series, entitled "The Last Smoking Seagoon, was broadcast on January 28, 1960. However, in typical *Goon Show* fashion, it WASN'T the final *Goon Show*. That took place in 1972 after an absence from the airwaves of 12 years. The BBC celebrated its 50th anniversary with a special performance entitled "The Last Goon Show of All." It was recorded in front of an audience of 600 at the BBC's Camden Theatre. In the crowd were the Goons most distinguished fans, including most of the British Royal Family except their biggest Royal enthusiast, Prince Charles. He was involved in military duties.

If you stumbled upon a *Goon Show* while twiddling the radio dial, you might think you'd picked up a transmission from Mars. Program

titles like "Rommel's Treasure," the "Westlink Spy Enigma" and "The Terror of Bexhill-on-Sea" sound like action shows, instead of the master-pieces of zany "sendup" humour they were. An episode entitled, "Evils of Bushy Spon," dealt with the spine chilling happenings when the Busy Spon village council decides to import a concrete "lamppost" from darkest Africa and set it up in front of an old age pensioners cottage. And in "Jet-Propelled Guided NAAFI," the Goons poked fun at the guided missile crisis. What happens when an army base canteen (called a NAAFI in the UK) usually famed for "orrible nosh" is given jet power and takes off into the stratosphere complete with 82 staff, 10 NAAFI pianos, 60,000 gallons of tea and 12 tons of buttered crumpets. I think you've got the idea.

And helping things along was the regular cast of characters including a thickhead known as "The Famous Eccles," a little chap called Bluebottle, whose catchphrase was, "I hate yew, you dirty, rotten swine!" a sort of "ghostly" double-act known as Henry Crun & Minnie Bannister, usually recorded in "echo-chamber," the villainous Count Moriarty and a smooth-talking upper class con man, Hercules Gryll-Pype-Thynne. The "central Goon" around whom most of these idiotic adventures revolved was super-eccentric Neddy Seagoon, who had the most horrific "cackle" in Christendom.

Bringing these wonderful characters to life were 3 of the UK's most talented performers, Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe and the shows writer-creator, Spike Milligan. Another comedy eccentric, Michael Bentine dropped out after the 1st series. In those days Sellers was a struggling "impressionist" touring 3rd rate provincial vaudeville theatres and doing 7-minute guest "spots" on radio shows like *Variety Bandbox*. In the early days of the



LEFT TO RIGHT: Spike Milligan, Harry Secombe, Peter Sellers.

Goons, Sellers "did voices" in another famous radio show, *Rays A Laugh* starring quick-witted gagman, Ted Ray. Listening to these archival recordings, you can detect the origins of Inspector Clouseau on the *Pink Panther* movies, the Indian medical student who sang "Goodness Gracious...How Audacious" to Sophie Loren, and the dark comic genius of Doctor Strangelove.

Harry Secombe, or Ned of Wales as he is affectionately known in his native land, began his showbiz career doing army shows in WW2 and graduated into vaudeville with a hilarious routine called "The Shaving Act." He often appeared along with Sellers at London's infamous Windmill Theatre ("We Never Close"). A more befitting slogan might have been, "We never clothe." The comics, singers and acrobats were merely window-dressing for the main attraction, non-stop "nudes of the World!" Harry became one of the UK's most beloved comedy stars, headlining in long seasons at the London Palladium, starring in umpteen TV series including *Secombe 'Ere*, playing Mr. Bumble the pompous Beadle in the Oscar winning movie musical *Oliver* and portraying yet another Dickensian character, Mr. Pickwick in London theatres. Several years ago, he earned a knighthood for services to

entertainment. And nowadays, SIR Harry Secombe is host of the TV hymn-song show *Highway*, which is seen nightly on Canada's Vision TV and broadcast by satellite around the World. A terrific showcase for his operatic style voice.

Others in the regular *Goon Show* caste included harmonica-ace Max Geldray who retired to America, BBC announcers Andrew Timothy and Wallace Greenslade who put up with much good-natured ribbing, black singer Ray Ellington and his jazz quartet and musical director Wally Stott and his Boys (subsequently Angela Morley's Orchestra).

Sellers, Secombe and Milligan went on to acclaim in movies and tv and were accomplished "visual" performers in their own right. However, the two occasions when BBC TV attempted to capitalize on the Goons radio success, were doomed to failure. Watching three grown men attempt to portray those ridiculous but much-loved characters on the small screen, just wasn't radio. And in the early 60's, a series called *The Tele-goons*, which used jerkey wooden string puppets bouncing



Bluebottle

Neddy Seagoon

Puppets from the ill-fated Tele-Goons.

along to the original radio tapes, was equally unsuccessful. Not surprisingly, the 20 million radio listeners who adored the Goons had formed their own "mind pictures" (that's right, 20 million of them!) of what Eccles, Seagoon and Blue bottle looked like. No wonder a heavily disguised Peter Sellers, or an odd looking marionette, failed to recreate the original magic.

These days, when Sir Harry Secombe interviews the vicar of yet another ancient but impoverished Anglican

Parish Church on TV's *Highway* program, I can't help thinking of him in bygone days. And when he belts out "Onward Christian Soldiers" in that wonderful voice of his, I wish he'd forget himself for a moment, stop the hymn and let out that piercing, Neddy Seagoon cackle. The shows audience ratings would quadruple overnight. But it won't happen. Antics at the altar? Pandemonium in the pulpit? Shenanigans like those, were reserved for *The Goon Show*.

Cheerio for now!

A ROYAL VISIT TO CANADA

or

KING, KING, QUEEN, QUEEN, QUEEN

by

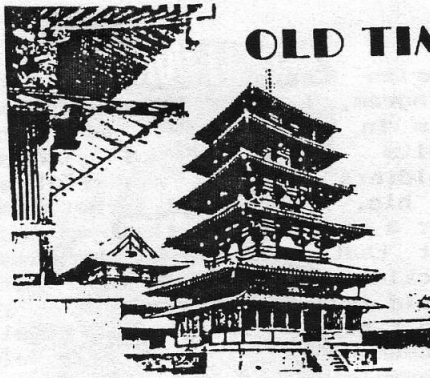
Clarence Runden

Covering the progress of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of England across Canada was a major broadcasting event back in 1939. Things went fairly smoothly until the royal couple arrived in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where they were greeted by MacKenzie King, the Canadian Prime Minister, and the city's mayor, whose name happened to be Queen, and whose wife was with him.

"Here comes the Royal Family now," the announcer narrated breathlessly on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio. "The automobile has now stopped. A member of the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) is opening the car door. Oh, there's the King. He's stepping out, followed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, nattily attired in a silver coat. Mr. King is now shaking hands with the King and introducing Mr. Queen to the King and Queen, and then Mrs. Queen to the Queen and King. They are now proceeding up the steps to the well-decorated City Hall, the King and Mr. King together, with the Queen being escorted by Mrs. Queen. The King has now stopped and said something to Mr. Queen and goes to Mrs. Queen and the Queen and Mr. King, and the Queen laughed jovially. the King leaves Mr. King and goes to Mrs. Queen, and the Queen and Mr. King follow behind. The King . . ."

Suddenly the announcer fell silent realizing that listeners might be getting a bit confused. When he came back on, he resumed with a new strategy: ". . . the Mayor and the King are now passing through the door of the City Hall followed by the queen and the Mayor's wife . . ."

Fortunately, MacKenzie King was a bachelor, and so there was no Mrs. King.



OLD TIME RADIO

IN

JAPAN

by

Yamashita Moriyuki

EDITOR'S NOTE: The author, Dr. Moriyuki, is currently the head of the Department of Audio-Visual Communications at the University of Tokyo. Since 1971 he has served as advisor to the Nippon Hoso Kyokai (J.B.C.) and is one of the foremost scholars of broadcasting in the Orient. Dr. Moriyuki has authored several books on the subject, including the textbook used throughout the Pacific. This article was first presented as an original paper at the Pan-Pacific Radio Symposium in San Francisco on April 16, 1988. It is being reprinted here with the permission of the author in the interest of expanding knowledge in a little-known area of old time radio.



The development of radio broadcasting in Japan did not have significant growth until the termination of World War I, as was true of most industrial countries in the Orient. Military use of wireless and radio-telephony was limited to imported British DeForest transmitters and German Telefunken, supplanted with some domestic equipment. Medium-frequency telephone broadcasting and shortwave telecommunication did dominate the decade 1920-1930 although the Japanese public demand for additional broadcasting service eventually caused manufacturers to build better electronic devices, circuits, and equipment.

By 1931, broadcasting studios, feeder networks, and overseas remote pick-ups, while not commonplace, were at least coming into their own. Better performance in transmitters stemmed in part from newer tubes of greater strength and efficiency, especially the copper-to-glass seal tube introduced in Japan in 1932.

Although several 50 kilowatt stations existed by the mid-1930's, the Japanese rulers limited the number of national networks to three, one of which was the Royal Network. While officially it was intended to serve as an audio platform for the Emperor and the Royal Family, it quickly became the province of the Japanese Ministry of Information, and as such, dispensed more propaganda than culture or entertainment.

The late 1930's marked a surge in commercial broadcasting throughout the Japanese Islands. All forms of radio shows became very popular as low-cost receivers became available throughout the country, including the isolated provinces in rural and mountainous areas. Despite the Japanese military successes in 1937, following their invasion of China, millions of citizens in the Land of the Rising Sun tried to seek the

solace and peace in radio programs which were denied them in the news broadcasts. The Royal Network was largely ignored by much of the Japanese populace in favor of commercial drama, mystery, music, adventure, and cultural programs, many of which originated "live" in radio stations in the larger cities.

It is not the purpose of this paper to enumerate or describe all of the programs produced in Japan during their "Golden Age of Radio," but rather to briefly mention examples of the different types that existed. Although the more popular ones will be emphasized, some of the lesser known shows will also be related. Whenever possible, similarities to, or differences from, U.S. radio programs will also be described.

JAPANESE "SOAP OPERAS"

While Japanese radio did not have "soap operas" as such, there were a number of dramatic serializations that were similar in tone, if not in content. However since they were primarily sponsored by various silk manufacturers, they were nicknamed "silks," rather than "soaps." Many of these programs were for and about women, but since Japanese custom (prior to the emancipation of women following World War II) rarely permitted women to appear on dramatic productions, most of the women's roles in the "silks" were filled by men. When Japan allied with the Axis powers of Germany and Italy in 1937, there was some consideration given to importing Italian castrati for these roles until it was learned that Italy had discontinued this method of producing feminine voices in the early 1800's.

Among the popular "silks" were: "Mama-san Perkins," "When a Geisha Marries," and "Our Gal Sake." The first of these told the poignant story of a woman who ran the Riceville Lumber Yard. Since she only stocked lumber from Bonsai trees, it was a small operation and she kept her entire inventory under her tea table. The second program, originating from Radio Station OYOU in Hiroshima, daily related the courageous efforts of Lotus McKirk, a 6 foot 2 inch geisha, to find a suitable (and sizeable) husband in the Land of Cherry Blossoms. "Our Gal Sake," with Kim Mono in the title role, consistently led its time slot in listener ratings. This endearing "silk" portrayed the trials and tribulations of a woman pearl diver in Ise Bay on Honshu Island who could find only worthless diamonds.

There were other "silks," which although they were still geared to female audiences, had stories of men in their main theme; "Just Plain Bamboo" and "Front Page Fuji-San" are but two examples. The latter was a dramatization of a Saipan silkworm farmer, trying to moon-light as a "cub-reporter" for the Tokyo Tribune. Fuji-San's romantic interests were his ex-wife, Ma-Jongg (played by Obiden Kinobee), his favorite geisha, Riceroni, and his violin instructor. "Just Plain Bamboo," a heartwarming saga of a furniture maker in Osaka, aired daily from 2:00 to 2:30 p.m. This poor craftsman tried to solve the problems of his small family, a son who repaired Pachinko machines, a daughter who explored nearly-extinct volcanoes, and an overweight niece who could not achieve her pink belt in karate.

Two other "silks," while they did not merit the popularity of those recounted above, could still boast a faithful, though smaller audience.

One was "Abie's Japanese Cherry Blossom" which delighted its listeners with the continuing confusion of Abie Mozzarella, a Sicilian sailor married to a Yokahama beauty operator whose daughter, Pagoda Patti, is trying to marry a Norwegian mercenary who is not yet divorced from his spouse in Bolivia who is an importer of imitation rose-petals.

The second show, "John's Other Rice," relayed to its listeners every Mon-Wed-Fri at 1:45 p.m. the sorrowful story of John Lennonaki, an unsuccessful Nagasaki restaurateur whose waitresses were always eating "other rice" from a fast food place next door. Love interest in this radio serial was supplied by his ex-wife, Su Sidi Su, and his faithless Indian companion (East Indian, not American Indian), Twon Tu, a lovely girl whose only weakness was an overwhelming desire to stow-away on a Japanese submarine.

SPORTS ANNOUNCERS

Historically, sportscasters were always popular in Japan and more than a few achieved a large following. The voice of ORATZ (Radio Kawasaki) was Harry Kari, a colorful commentator on the sumo wrestling matches throughout the Islands. His large number of fans and sparkling personality earned him a string of generous sponsors including: Matsudo Mackerel Ltd., Yokaichi Jute, Silk and Hemp Products, and the Fujuyama Flying Squid and Storm Door Company. With all of his popularity, it is hard to pinpoint the reason for his drop in appeal when after World War II he had to describe baseball games instead of wrestling matches. Unable, or perhaps unwilling, to make the switch, Kari fell lower and lower until he died in 1959. He was reduced to the role of desk-refurbisher at the Nippon Cultural Broadcasting Company in Tokyo.

Another fairly successful sports announcer, Nob Konso Dyn, got his start covering fishing tournaments off Hokkaido Island and later moved up to the skiing contests in the northern provinces. Through a stroke of good fortune (he saved the mayor's daughter from choking to death on a pearl in her oyster entree) Konso Dyn became the major sportscaster for OYAH at Osaka. Because of his near-sightedness (he frequently tripped over Bonsai trees) he occasionally made mistakes in reporting sports events, including confusing home runs with strikeouts, but his faithful audience forgave him. His private life is not well known outside Japan; he was married three times and fathered 23 children, none of whom ever listened to him on the radio.

ADVENTURE PROGRAMS

"Little Orf 'n Fani" was one of the best adventure shows for children and it told the tale of two Okinawa refugees growing up alone on the Tokyo waterfront. Little Orf, played by Pearl Arburr, was a tiny, thoughtful tyke who used her knowledge of kendo to stop evil-doers. Her companion, Fani, was content to torture villains by reciting haiku poetry for hours on end until they confessed. This program was sponsored by Chiyoda Cereals, who marketed Puffed Rice.

Another great childrens' show was "Judo Armstrong" which aired Mon-Fri from 5:30 to 6:00 p.m. on station OBOY in Hiroshima. This program dramatized the daily adventures of a teen-age crime-fighter, with Cy

Pan in the title role. He battled evil-doers throughout the Pacific, assisted by his modest female companion, Su Kiaki, and he triumphed over merciless cut-throats from Australia, Alaska, and Clintonville.

Every Thursday evening a large listening audience throughout the Japanese Islands tuned to a program whose success was sometimes difficult to explain: "Major E. Wojima and his Non-Original Amateur Hour." Each week the major would collect a group of amateur craftsmen who would describe, and sometimes demonstrate, their unique skills to the radio listeners. A typical night might include a silkworm trainer, a pagoda painter, a collector of Shogun cards, and perhaps a designer of sumo wrestling clothing. For some reason, Japanese mimes were particularly popular on this radio program. The show was taken off the air in 1946 when the major suffered a nervous breakdown and insisted on claiming to the American Occupying Forces that he was the real "Tokyo Rose."

One of the best of the detective genre was a Sunday night show, "Sam Murai, Private Eye," sponsored by the Mitsubishi Midget Submarine Company. It provided its listeners with the slam-bang action of the life of a Tokyo gum-shoe, who had a bottle of Sake in every desk drawer and a Geisha in every closet. The title role was played for years by Hum Free Bogi but after his fatal heart attack during a checkers game in the Polish Embassy, the part was given to Oki Finoki who retained the role until the series ended in 1949.

Two programs, which appealed to both children and adults, enjoyed excellent ratings in the World War II period. One of them was "Tony Won's Scrapbook," (which curiously bore no relation whatsoever to a U.S. program with the same name). In the title role was the pleasant voice of Yu Hu Foks, an elderly but serviceable retired kimono salesman. The program consisted of Tony taking scraps of cloth fabric from his sales book and describing the color, texture and origin of each piece of material. While this brief description of the show may fail to convey the excitement generated by it, nevertheless it kept most of the listeners on the edge of their seats. Some critics have claimed, however, that the show was a tribute to the patience of the Japanese listeners that such a program placed in the top five each year.

The second show which had an almost universal appeal for people of all ages was "The Little Theatre Off Tokyo Square." As the title implies, it provided a radio dramatization of works from Japanese theatre. Much of the material was drawn from the kabuki theater and Noh drama. Since both of these forms use highly stylized actors who mime and dance but seldom speak, long portions of silence would have to be endured by the audience were it not for a radio commentator who described the action. For reasons lost in historical antiquity, this commentator came to be called "Mr. First Nighter," although he was certainly present for the second and successive nights.

"Captain Kamakazi" was a children's show that featured the adventures of an Oriental pilot and his two juvenile companions, Yen-Nee and Nipper. The program was sponsored by Oval Bean Company, a firm that sold a non-alcoholic beverage made from oval shaped beans that were grown in Okinawa. With Noh-Tern-Bak in the title role, "Captain Kamakazi" was a fairly popular show, despite the severe limitations

placed on the show's writers. Each episode ended with the Captain crashing his airplane into an enemy ship, factory, or airplane and the program's writers were hard pressed to invent different ways for the hero in goggles to survive the crash so that he would be alive and well for the next day's adventure. That the writers were able to do so for any length of time is a tribute to the inventiveness of the Japanese culture.

Another successful kid's show was "The Green Hornet," and although it resembled vaguely a program with a similar name in the U.S., there were substantial differences in the two. The central character in the show was Bazuki Rhee, a wealthy Japanese importer of rare stamps by day, and a crime-fighting sumo wrestler by night. His favorite trick was to immobilize his evil opponents by sitting on them. The hero's Oriental assistant, named Datsun, was described as Filipino until Japan's brilliant victory at Pearl Harbor and at that time the writers changed his nationality to Japanese. At the same time, the name of the program was changed to "The Japanese Beetle" and thereafter it was always known by that title.

WORLD WAR TWO AND AFTER

Most Americans recall the WWII propagandist, "Tokyo Rose," who broadcast U.S. musical records and preached despair and surrender to Allied soldiers, sailors and marines in the Pacific. While there are too few recordings to confirm it, there is some evidence that the U.S. tried a similar ploy against the fighting forces of the Rising Sun. A few scattered recordings have been located by historians in the Orient which purport to be radio broadcasts by a woman calling herself "Pacific Patsy" and playing Japanese music. In her radio chatter she says that erupting volcanoes and enraged silkworms were destroying their Japanese homeland and the only honorable thing they could do is commit hari-kari. Whether or not these broadcasts had any effect on their listeners and what the exact source of these programs was is still being studied by Japanese radio historians who are working in a basement of a defunct Cadillac dealership in downtown Yokohama.

With the coming of the American Occupying Forces in Japan at the end of World War II, the Golden Age of Old Time Radio in Japan was at an end. The military authorities took over all phases of communication, including radio, and promoted democracy, baseball, nutrition, and Coca-Cola. It was "Sayonara" for all the wonderful programs, series, "silks" and all the rest which passed into history.

EDITOR'S NOTE: At some point in reading "Old Time Radio In Japan" you realized that this was a spoof. Its author is really one of our regular columnists, Jack French. Jack first had this in the summer 1984 edition of the NARA NEWS. It was so popular then, and so many of our readers were not with us then, that we decided to rerun it. This is so our newer members could enjoy it, and our older ones could remember it again.



JIM SNYDER

MARCH OF TIME

Nowadays there are many dramatized documentaries on television and in the movies. It's possible that this form of reporting really began with the radio version of the *March of Time* and the various broadcast efforts that led up to that program.

March of Time had the obvious hook up with *Time* magazine which published its first issue on March 2, 1923. But the story actually began a year before when radio station WLW went on the air in Cincinnati. In August of 1922 Fred Smith joined WLW as "station director," joining two parttime employees. Mr. Smith started having the station offer financial market news, weather, and farm market reports five times a week. It is also generally believed that he wrote the very first original radio drama ever broadcast. This was a play titled "When Love Wakens" which went out over the air on April 3, 1923.

In 1925 Mr. Smith had an idea for a new program at WLW to be called *Musical News*. Here he reported news items taken, without permission, from various newspapers and magazines, interspersed with organ music. After each news item an "appropriate" musical selection was played. A review of this program in *Popular Radio* magazine's September 1925 issue was probably a lot more interesting than the program itself. The magazine said:

WLW is using a novel method to present the daily news, and while it may not be very exciting, as excitement is measured in these days of petting parties and uncovered feminine knees, it is pretty good for so young and yet so mossy a thing as radio broadcasting.

In 1928 Fred Smith wrote to Roy Larson, vice-president and general manager of *Time* magazine, requesting a weekly advance copy of the magazine to use for a daily ten minute summary of the news. Larson agreed with the stipulation that *Time* be mentioned three times in each broadcast. *Time* also purchased an announcement in each news program for \$25.

In the spring of 1928 Smith moved to New York after being hired by *Time*. During that summer he traveled the Northeast visiting radio stations, signing up more than sixty of them, to carry a daily ten minute news summary provided by *Time*. The program began in October under the title of *NewsCasting*. From this program title we were given the terms "newscast" and "newscaster" that we use today.

Smith had come up with a new idea for dramatic programs based on history. *Great Moments in History* and *Biblical Dramas* were two five minute dramatic shows broadcast during the 1927-28 season. But he wanted to dramatize the news of the day which he considered "far more dramatic than history." He took his idea to Roy Larson who was rather doubtful of the legality of voice imitation, but Smith went ahead and worked out a format. In the fall

of 1929 he produced a five minute phonograph record of a "news drama" which he played for a number of stations under the title *NewsActing*. By December he had a crew of half a dozen actors producing a weekly five minute transcription which was syndicated to about twenty stations. Within a few months more than a hundred stations, coast to coast, were using this syndicated feature.

Smith's next step was to suggest to Larson that dramatized news be done as a network show. Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborne (BBD&O), with CBS, tried a fifteen minute version and then tried thirty minutes. On February 6, 1931, an experimental program was sent by telephone lines to Larson's home where it was listened to by a small group that included CBS president Willimam S. Paley. The title *March of Time* was suggested by the song chosen for the theme music, which came from Earl Carroll's "Vanities."

On March 6, 1931 the first performance of *March of Time* was broadcast over twenty CBS stations. Eighty other stations in the network chose not to carry it. It was aired at 10:30 p.m. (E.S.T.) and was sandwiched between the *Deutsch Orchestra* and the *Sissle Orchestra* programs. That first program was written by Fred Smith and carried the following dramatizations: the election of "Big Bill" Thompson as mayor of Chicago, the death of the *New York World* newspaper, French prisoners being sent to Devil's Island, the revolution in Spain, prison reform in Rumania, the auction of Czarist possessions in New York, and the closing of the 71st Congress. The entire show lasted just short of 27 minutes.

Ted Husing did the "voice of time" for the first thirteen weeks and was succeeded in the fall of 1931 by Harry Von Zell. Westbrook van Voorhis was the other announcer reading passages from *Time*. Special music was played by a 23-piece orchestra that included Andre Kostalanetz as first violin. Probably the most interesting feature of the program was the impersonation of a number of well known personalities. Each program was usually rehearsed from 12 to 14 hours a week and cost about \$6,000, which was high for that time. The *March of Time* ran for thirteen weeks before the summer break and was carried to Great Britain by the BBC. Except for one show, Fred Smith wrote all, or nearly all, of those scripts and continued to do so when the program started up again in the fall.

Time which sponsored the show to boost circulation of their magazine, cancelled it in late February 1932 saying that "further expenditure on radio at this time would not justify itself." But on September 8, 1932, *March of Time* returned to the air as a sustaining program over CBS. *Time* resumed its sponsorship in November. The following fall, after the summer break, the program came back under the co-sponsorship of *Time* and Remington-Rand. During the 1935-36 season the program was presented five times a week in a fifteen minute format, but the following year it returned to its original 30 minute once-a-week format.

In 1934 the White House, feeling that too many radio announcers were trying to imitate the style of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, asked that all such programming be stopped, and this included *March of Time*. However this ban, by the White House, was withdrawn in the fall of 1936 when the President was running for a second term.

On July 2, 1937 Amelia Earhart and her navigator, Fed Noonan, were lost somewhere in the Pacific Ocean when trying an around-the-world flight. On July 8 *March of Time* re-enacted the story of their flight. Mistaking the radio program for a shortwave S.O.S. a man at Inter-Island Airways in Hawaii notified officials that he had heard a conversation between the flyers and ships at sea. This buoyed up hope of finding the two still alive. This caused some unfavorable comments about this show but a little over a year later, Orson Welles who had been a *March of Time* actor, and who was admittedly influenced by this broadcast, would do his famous *Mercury Theatre "War of the Worlds."*

March of Time went off the air from the summer of 1939 to October 1941 because of restrictions imposed on broadcasters after war came to Europe. However in 1941, NBC (which was now carrying the show) issued a statement relaxing these restrictions, saying in part.

In general since the war began radio has provided news reports and news comments but broadcasters have barred all dramatizations of controversial subjects (including war and politics) and all impersonations of important people. Without these two things *March of Time* could not resume. But the National Broadcasting Company recognizing the importance and value of the program, and trusting in the journalistic responsibility of *Time's* editors, agreed to make a special exception for the *March of Time*. The National Broadcasting Company also relaxed its rule on recordings not only of sound effects (such as falling bombs) but of music, singing, and speaking voices where necessary.

In July 1942 the format was changed, and only one or two dramatic scenes were given. The rest of the half-hour was given over to on-the-spot news and remote reports. Also, a number of war songs, such as "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition" were added to the broadcasts. And for the first time a number of well-known people appeared in person for various appeals and war-time campaigns. Nearly all the dramatizations had to do with the war.

On April 12, 1945 (the program was now carried by ABC), just as the staff was completing the final rehearsal for their broadcast, word was received about the death of President Roosevelt. A new script was quickly prepared with dramatized highlights of Roosevelt's career, utilizing recordings of his former speeches. The program ended with the reading of Walt Whitman's eulogy to Lincoln, "O Captain! My Captain!" This was the thirteenth and last season for the *March of Time*. Few who worked on later programs would ever know of their debt to *Musical News, NewsCasting, NewsActing, and March of Time.*

STROMBERG-CARLSON presents:

MARCH OF TIME

TONIGHT
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8:00

CRUSADE
IN THE
PACIFIC

REPORT ON THE 1997 NEWARK CONVENTION

by Henry R. Hinkel

This is a report of the 1997 Friends Of Old Time Radio Convention held on October 23rd, 24th and 25th in Newark, New Jersey. The Convention started on Wednesday night with a wine and cheese get together for those who arrived early on October 22nd. About 30-40 people attended the informal affair and casually sat around, talked, renewed friendships and experiences. On Thursday, October 23rd the dealers room was open from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. The first workshop started with Bill Murtough, a former CBS radio engineer, sharing stories and answered questions concerning his career. Dave Siegal and Frank Bequaert gave a talk on radio books and magazines. Terry Solomonson covered three decades of collecting followed by Gary Yoggy talking about favorite holiday radio shows. The after dinner presentations were an original re-creation of "A Kiss From A Little Old Lady" by Edgar Russell III and a "One Man's Family" reunion.

On Friday morning, guest Frank "Junior" Coghlan conducted a talk on his career. Jack French followed with a discussion on Asians on Radio and Jim Widner, Roy Hill and Barry Hill hosted a panel on Science Fiction. Anthony Tollin started the afternoon with a panel on Superman followed by a panel discussion on CBC Radio and a salute to Walter Gibson. An author's panel was next featuring Bill Owen and Frank Buxton, Leonard Maltin, Tom DeLong, Frank Coghlan, and Anthony Tollin. The afternoon closed with the Dave Warren Players doing a presentation of Duffy's Tavern.

After the Friday evening dinner John Rayburn gave a presentation on sound effects with the help of Bob and Ray (Mott and Erlenborn) and a "special" appearance by Barney Beck. Who would have expected a "special" appearance by Barney Beck? The whole presentation was quite clever and made one wonder if the whole thing was rehearsed or "just happened". With everyone now in a "lighter" mood, the evening closed with re-creations of Zero Hour from X-Minus One and a story from Fort Laramie.

On Saturday morning, The Atlantic Radio Theater Company did "In The Hour Of The Wolf". The Boogie Woogie Girls performed next with a salute to the Andrews Sisters. Mitchell Weisberg did a discussion on Radio to TV Transitions followed by the Gotham Radio Players presentation of "The Adventures Of The Lady In White". The afternoon session started with a "Salute To The Big Bands" featuring a panel with Betty Johnson, Kitty Kallen, and Dolly Dawn. Next was a panel on the 60th Anniversary of the Hindenburg Disaster and the Herb Morrison Broadcast. Raymond Edward Johnson was next with a reading of "The End Of The Age". The afternoon then closed with a re-creation of "Meet Corliss Archer".

After dinner, awards were handed out and a presentation of "I Remember Mama" was given. The evening then closed with a re-creation of "The Cisco Kid".

A good time was had by all in attendance and you couldn't ask for a day with more activities. There were 400 people in attendance for Saturday nights dinner, more than at any of the previous conventions. Many familiar faces were not there this year, but attendance was still up indicating that more people are becoming aware of this

annual event. Outside of the problem with "over booking" at the hotel, the convention itself was another successful event. This year the hotel was under new management and had done some remodeling. On the downside, the hotel had removed all the chairs and couches from the lobby area, making it difficult to hang around and talk to friends or celebrities. This removed the "friendly feeling" and left the lobby feeling "cold and impersonal". Maybe next year the management will return the seating to the lobby and give it a more friendly feeling again. We shall see what next year will bring.

A tip of the hat to Jay Hickerson and all the committee for making the 1997 Friends Of Old Time Radio Convention a wonderful success.

SEATTLE OTR CONVENTION

June 19, 20, 1998

Theme "Radio Families"

The Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound (REPS) have announced details of their REPS RADIO SHOWCASE VI. The theme this year is "Radio Families" with re-creations and other programming all containing that flavor.

Actors confirmed at this point are

DICK BEALS...STEWART CONWAY...LARRY DOBKIN
SHARON DOUGLAS...SAM EDWARDS...RAY ERLNBORN
BARBARA FULLER...ART GILMORE...SANDRA GOULD
MERRILL MAEL...TYLER McVEY...NORMA JEAN NILSSON
GIL STRATTON, JR...GINNY TYLER...ANNE WHITFIELD PHILLIPS
JANET WALDO...RHODA WILLIAMS...DOUG YOUNG
Also hoped for are HARRY BARTELL and HERB ELLIS

The program will begin on Friday afternoon, June 19th, continuing until late evening. Saturday will be from 9 AM until 10 PM. Features this year will include:

- The One Man's Family Reunion, with Page Gilman (Jack), Barbara Fuller (Claudia) joined by other actors from this classic show. They'll do a completely new script, aged to the present time.
- There will be a Yic & Sade (with Merrill Mael as Uncle Fletcher, the role which he played briefly) and an Ellery Queen with Larry Dobkin. Several other possibilities are still being reviewed, ranging from The Life of Riley (with 2-3 original cast members) to The Second Mrs. Burton to Family Theater.
- Tribute to Parley Baer. This lovable, incredibly talented guy is still fighting back from his stroke. We don't know if he'll make it or not (he's been to 4 previous Showcases), but the Tribute will go on. It will be hosted by John and Larry Gassman, with many OTR friends participating. A video of this will be presented to Parley.
- REPS continues the highly popular segment "Just Sittin' Around and Visiting" with all special guests up front sharing and interacting.

The Radio Showcase has always had a warm, intimate feeling to it. This year will be no exception.

For information on registration or dealer tables, contact
Mike Sprague...Showcase...PO Box 723, Bothell, WA 98041
Phone 425-488-9518 FAX 425-402-6988
e mail hrrmikes@aol.com

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 12TH ANNUAL OLD TIME RADIO AND NOSTALGIA CONVENTION** is scheduled for May 28, 29, and 30, 1998 (PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE IN DATES FROM AN EARLIER ANNOUNCEMENT) at the Marriott Inn on the north side of Cincinnati, Ohio, just off I-75. The convention is now located in more spacious areas than in previous years. The contact person is Bob Burchette, 10280 Gunpowder Road, Florence, Kentucky 41042. The phone is (606) 282-0333.
- ② **THE REFS RADIO SHOWCASE VI** will be June 19 and 20, 1998 (NOTE THE CHANGE IN DATES FROM PREVIOUS ANNOUNCEMENTS) in Seattle, Washington. Contact person is Mike Sprague, P.O. Box 723, Bothell, Washington 98041. Phone is (425) 488-9518. e-mail is hrrmikes@aol.com
- ③ **THE 14TH ANNUAL LUM & ABNER SOCIETY CONVENTION** will be held June 26 and 27, 1998 in Mena, Arkansas at the Best Western Lime Tree Inn. For information please contact Tim Hollis, #81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, Alabama 35062. His phone is (205) 648-6110.
- ④ **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 or by e-mail at JayHick@aol.com
Future convention dates are:
23rd Annual Convention -- October 22 thru 24, 1998
24th Annual Convention -- October 21 thru 23, 1999
- ⑤ **THE 15TH ANNUAL SPERDVAC CONVENTION** is scheduled for November 13 thru 15, 1998 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 (562) 947-9800.

**CINCINNATI'S
12th ANNUAL**

**SPECIAL
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OLD TIME RADIO & NOSTALGIA CONVENTION

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ARCHIE ANDREWS
MCHALES NAVY

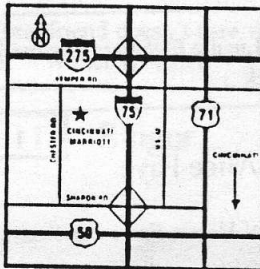
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ANNOUNCER ON THE
LONE RANGER, SERGEANT
PRESTON, GREEN HORNET

PEG LYNCH
ETHEL & ALBERT

BARNEY BECK
SOUND EFFECTS ARTIST
THE SHADOW · SUPERMAN
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8

Actress

Agnes Moorehead

born: December 6, 1906
Clinton, Massachusetts



Miss Moorehead first appeared on stage at the age of three, and at eleven she made her professional debut in the ballet and chorus of the St. Louis Opera. Agnes earned a Ph.D. at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. She appeared on Broadway in 1928 and soon moved to radio as a regular on *March of Time*, *Cavalcade of America*, and *Brenda Curtis*. After touring vaudeville with Phil Baker, Agnes joined Orson Welle's *Mercury Theater Company* and made her film debut in Welle's *Citizen Kane* in 1941. Miss Moorehead could play comedy (*Bringing Up Father* and *The Aldrich Family*), drama (*Bulldog Drummond*), and thriller roles (*Suspense*). On TV, Agnes played Endora on *Bewitched*. Miss Moorehead died on April 30, 1974.

"Sorry, Wrong Number" originally written for radio's *Suspense* by Lucille Fletcher, was made into a movie by Columbia Pictures in 1948 starring Barbara Stanwyck.

9

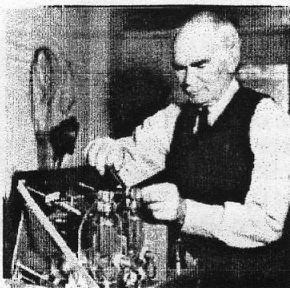
Show

Phil Harris-Alice Faye



The Rexall sponsorship of Harris-Faye was first heard on October 3, 1948. The real life married couple played themselves, a Hollywood movie star and a band leader. Their two children were played by Jeanine Roos as Little Alice and Anne Whitfield as Phyllis. Alice's brother Willie was played by Robert North. Elliott Lewis played Frankie Remley, a left-handed guitar player and Phil's best friend. Gale Gordon represented Rexall as Mr. Scott and Walter Tetley was Julius Abbruzio, the grocery boy. The show was written by Ray Singer and Dick Chevillat with music by Walter Scharf. The show's announcer was Bill Forman.

10 Inventor



Lee De Forest

born: August 26, 1873
Council Bluffs, Iowa

A self-proclaimed *father of radio*, De Forest was granted over 300 patents, including his famous introduction of a third electrode into the two-electrode *electron tube* or *diode*, creating the *triode*, which could amplify radio signals and generate oscillations. Lee attended Yale University, where he received his Ph.D. in 1899. He earned money by inventing improvements to the typewriter and compass. After Yale, Lee worked at Western Electric before forming the *De Forest Wireless Telegraph Company* in 1902. The photo at right shows De Forest with his *Dynatherm*, which induces artificial fever through the use of short-wave radio signals. Lee died June 30, 1961.

"A real friend doesn't care whether you're on top or on bottom - as long as he can be by your side." - Walter Winchell

11 Singer



Kate Smith

born: Kathryn Elizabeth Smith
May 1, 1909
Greenville, Virginia

Franklin Roosevelt once introduced Miss Smith by saying, "This is Kate Smith. And Kate Smith is America." Kate left a nursing career to make her Broadway debut on September 20, 1926 in *Hollywood Lane*. She made her radio debut with CBS on May 1, 1931 where she sang *When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain*. In 1938, Kate won exclusive rights to sing Irving Berlin's *God Bless America*. Oddly, Miss Smith never learned to read music. Kate's television debut came on September 25, 1950 with *The Kate Smith Hour*. Miss Smith died June 17, 1986.

BUY SELL TRADE

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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 1998 edition of the QTR SOURCE LIST is now available. This six-page compendium lists every OTR club, dealer, publication, archive, convention, web site and library in the U.S. and Canada, with over 140 separate listings. Each citation contains name, address, telephone and e-mail address, if available. If you have a prior edition, it may be time to update. These lists are color-coded to designate the year. The 1998 version is on yellow paper. Any copies printed on white paper are over six years old and the rest are as follows: gold (1994), purple (1995), green (1996), and orange (1997). Cost is only \$2.00 to NARA members and \$3.00 to anyone else. Send payment in stamps or cash to Jack French, 5137 Richardson Dr., Fairfax, VA 22032-2810. PLEASE no checks...our small profit margin cannot justify sending Jack to the bank and post office. And send stamps in some usable denomination...seven 32¢ ones would be about right. All profits go to NARA so be generous. Orders filled same day by return first class mail. (Please do not post this list on the Internet since it is a NARA fund-raiser.) Get your new copy soon!

I would like to obtain a cassette copy of the Fred Allen Show (radio), for Sunday, November 23, 1947 on NBC. Wallis Antuck, 3815 Waverly Hills Road, Lansing, MI 48917.

WANTED: Video tape of the animated sign-on and sign-off of the McClatchy bee "Teevy" which was used on KOVR-TV (Stockton/Sacramento) from 1967 to 1980. Also, two instructional TV programs produced by WVIZ-TV in Cleveland: "The Science Room" from 1965 and "Picture Book Park" from 1972. Brian Matthews, 2220 West Lodi Ave., Lodi, CA 95242.

NARA NEWS

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ONE ISSUE:

Full page	- \$50.00
Half page	- 25.00
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FOUR ISSUES:

25% off above rates

A TIP OF THE ATWATER DIAL TO....

The following for generous financial contributions to NARA:
John Reynolds of Dallas, Georgia
D.W. Richardson of Berkely, California
Rock Shadows RV Park, Apache Junction, Arizona

Those who have been reviewing boxes of cassettes for NARA's cassette library and the approximate number of cassettes they have checked:

Bob Chinello of Northridge, California - 265 cassettes
Bryan Grapentine of Phoenix, Arizona - 265 cassettes
Julie Kilner of Wishon, California - 530 cassettes
Carlos Lozano of Tucson, Arizona - 265 cassettes
Bobby Mayes of San Pablo, California - 800 cassettes
Jack Smith of Victorville, California - 265 cassettes
Janet Smith of Danville, California - 265 cassettes
Jim Snyder of Mesa, Arizona - 1,400 cassettes

We still need help with this project. Please see page 30 if you think you can help.

Jack French for continuing to make the *OTR SOURCE LIST* available to our members, and for turning all profits over to NARA. You'll find information on the new 1998 updated version on page 49.

Gene Larson, NARA's staff artist, for the centerfold in this issue. Also for several radio related reprints, and for the poster project found on page 4, for which he is turning all profits over to NARA.

Roger Hill for several magazine articles and similar material.

Hal Stephenson for the Red Skelton item found on page 10.

Two of NARA's columnists: Jim Cox who will have a new book on radio soap operas published by McFarland in 1999, and Jack Palmer who has been asked by a publisher to write a book on Vernon Dalhart. We'll give you further information on each of these as it becomes available.

Our columnists in this issue: Anonymous, Don Aston, Frank Bresee, Bob Burnham, Jim Cox, Jack French, B.J. George, Roger Hill, Henry Hinkel, Jack Palmer, John Pellatt, Clarence Runden, Ray Smith, Hal & Carol Stephenson.

Those who have already sent in articles for future issues: Frank Bresee (5 articles), Al Inkster, Gene Larson (3 articles), Ray Smith (2 articles), and Hal Stephenson (7 articles).

Your help is appreciated!!!

DEADLINES:

June 15 for the summer issue
September 15 for the fall issue