

# National Old-Time Radio Enthusiasts

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Mr. Les Paul visits Friends of Old-Time Radio, Oct 1999

# Don't fret: More from Les at 85

By *JESSE NASH*

**G**UITAR legend, producer and audio recording pioneer Les Paul turns 85 on Monday.

You wouldn't know it, though. Slim, agile and incredibly energetic, he looks more like a man in his 60s.

This Monday night, like every Monday night, he'll arrive for his regular gig at Iridium, at 64th Street and Broadway, with the enthusiasm of a child.

There are lines of fans who wait patiently before and after each show, eager for autographs and a chance to meet the man who designed the first solid-body electric guitar and changed the sound of music forever.

Music luminaries such as Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton, Robert Plant, Jeff Beck, Keith Richards and Stanley Jordon, to mention a few, often stop by to pay homage to Paul when they're in New York. And all are expected at Les' 85th-birthday performance Monday night.

Best known to the public for songs like "Vaya Con Dios" and "How High the Moon," part of the string of 1950s blockbuster hits he had with his wife, Mary Ford (who died in 1977), it's hard to believe Les Paul is still performing regularly today.

But each show is a challenge. Paul suffers from a guitarist's worst nightmare, severe arthritis in his hands — which he says has caused them to be "frozen" in

one position.

"It's in all the fingers," he says. "There's no movement. None. Can't bend them any more."

Paul is as colorful as ever, especially when discussing his physical limitations. "I'm confessing to you, I do get mad," he explains, during a break one evening.

"I get angry when I can't make it to my note. It's right there, but my fingers won't go there.

"I can't play hardly anything any more. My hands are so bad, it's almost a rebellion. A fight." A fight against the ravages of age.

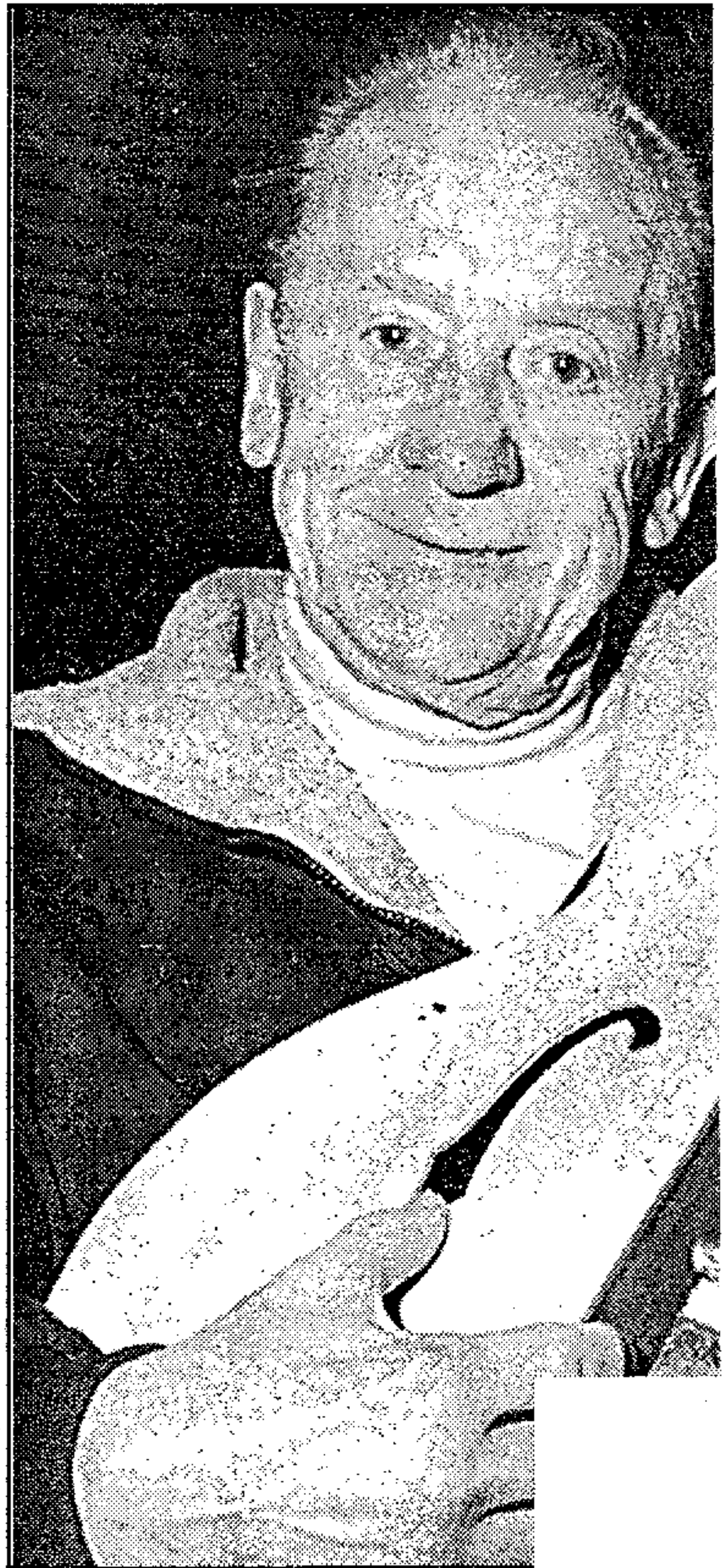
But as one might expect, the inventor has found a way to adapt. "You pull the guitar back and forth," he says. "You want to go up [the neck], you push the guitar. You want to go down, you pull."

At 84, Les Paul has learned that being the elder statesman of guitar virtuosi brings with it certain privileges. "It's simple," he says. "If you want to stop the show, wheel me out in a wheelchair! Come out with crutches.

"Yeah, the older you get, the easier it is, sure. If you're gonna go that direction. But I never go that direction."

He says he feels his age most when he steps out of the spotlight.

"You feel it when you go home, but when you're up on that stage, no, no."



**In recent years, Les Paul has adjusted his playing to suit arthritic fingers.**

New York Post 6/17/00

# 'Whoopee' for legendary Les!

## Guitarist, 85, knows how to pick 'em

By **DAVID HINCKLEY**  
DAILY NEWS FEATURE WRITER

**I** was born in 1915," says the man on the stool with the guitar. "That's the year the Kaiser started World War I."

He pauses.

"I remember playing for the Al Capone gang."

He pauses again.

"And right about now, I feel like a '33 Dodge."

But if Les Paul jokes about feeling old, he doesn't *play* old. He rips into "Makin' Whoopee" with an exhilaration that's almost as astonishing as his dexterity, which is miraculous for a guitarist who basically has no movement in his fingers.

On his picking hand, arthritis years ago froze up the joints in the first two fingers, and the other hand isn't much better. For years, he's just wedged it up against the strings.

"Finally," he says, "I had to say to myself, 'You're 83 years old. Are you going to have to learn to play this damn thing all over again?' The answer was yes. So I did."

And that's how Les Paul came to spend every Monday night of

his 85th year playing that guitar at Iridium, a 150-seat club in the shadow of Lincoln Center.

As he approaches the stage, the first rustle of applause starts before anyone can even see that his hair is still the color that got him the name Rhubarb Red back when he was picking hillbilly tunes in his native Wisconsin in the early 1930s. That was before he built a reputation with his jazz-and-pop trio, playing with everyone from Nat King Cole and Bing Crosby — and before the hits in the '50s with his wife, Mary Ford.

Paul is a bit surprised that he's still as active as he is. "I had a bypass 20 years ago," he muses. "All my friends who had it then are gone now."

His secret, he says, is the music — the Iridium gig, special events, constant fiddling with rooms full of electronics at his 31-room Mahwah, N.J., house.

"After the operation, I asked my doctor if I should take it easy. He said no. So I took a piece of paper and made a list of all the things I liked in my life and all the things I didn't, and the first thing in the 'like' column was playing music live."



**MONDAY MAN** Les Paul, who learned how to play the guitar all over again at the age of 83 because of arthritis, appears every Monday at the Iridium.

When Jay Hickerson invited me to sit in on the Singers Panel and perform at his Old Time Radio Convention, he wasn't quite sure that he'd done the right thing. After all, fans of old time radio think of the beginnings of Rock 'n' Roll as the end of their favorite period of radio.

But there I was, sitting on the Singers Panel that was hosted by Michael Henry and WPDQ-FM's well known Oldies DJ, Stu Weiss. I was seated between Larry Stevens - who used to sing on the Jack Benny radio show - and Les Paul, one of my true recording heroes - a man who practically invented the sound of the modern pop record. It was my privilege and pleasure to be able to tell Les how much I appreciated the recording innovations that he was responsible for.

Anyway, soon it was my turn to sing for these fans of old time radio. I was accompanied by Jay Hickerson on the piano and my good friend, Brian Gari, on guitar and vocal harmonies. (Brian, by the way, is the grandson of the famous vaudeville and radio comedian, Eddie Cantor.)

To my relief - and I'm sure to Jay's - the audience at the Old Time Radio Convention sang along with "Seven Little Girls" and "Roses Are Red" and seemed to have a grand old time.

I think that I might have moved old time radio ahead a bit - into the late 50's and early 60's.



That's me performing, Brian Gari accompanying, and Les Paul smiling.



## On the Air

*What one man can do with two coconut halves, an empty plastic soda bottle, and a pair of athletic socks stuffed with cornstarch*

**I**F you listened to the radio at all in the years 1937 to 1950 (and if you were alive to be doing much of anything back then, you probably listened to the radio quite a lot), then you must have heard Ray Erlenborn. Not heard of, mind you—just heard.

He wasn't one of those sonorous voices announcing grim news from Europe, or an intergalactic gangster purring threats at Buck Rogers, or a hapless family man yelping above the din of comedic mayhem: He was, instead, the

*thrummmmm* of tanks chugging into battle, the *woo-woooooosh* of a spaceship accelerating toward Altair 7, and the *wheeeeeeee-crash!* of a comic hero barreling out the front door, late for work,

and running headlong into the mailman. Erlenborn was a master of sound effects in the heyday of radio.

I am far too young to have heard Ray Erlenborn in his radio days, but I met him recently one afternoon in Seattle, where he was preparing the sound effects for an episode of *The Life of Riley*. This was

not, of course, a broadcast of the famous situation comedy, which went off the air in 1951, but, rather, a live re-enactment of one of the show's original scripts, during a convention of old-time-radio veterans and their fans. There are several such conventions around the country each year, and Erlenborn rarely misses one. Back in the days of Jack Webb, Bing Crosby, and Burns and Allen he was a bit player in the world of classic radio. Now they are all dead, and Erlenborn, at eighty-five, is one of its stars, though his audiences number hundreds of people instead of millions.

On this particular day Erlenborn was standing in a big conference room at the Seattle Center, looking over a tabletop cluttered with the tools of his trade. These included two coconut halves with leather straps stapled onto them, a tiny brass whistle, a set of handcuffs, an empty plastic Safeway Select Grapefruit Soda bottle,

*Ray Erlenborn and producer Jesse L. Lasky on the radio program Gateway to Hollywood, 1939*

and a pair of athletic socks stuffed with cornstarch. Erlenborn picked up each of these things and inspected it carefully—although “inspected” is probably the wrong word, because he was not looking at the objects so much as listening to them, giving each one a shake or a squeeze or a breath of air or whatever it took to dislodge its particular sound. The coconuts produced the *cl-cl-clop* of a cantering horse; the whistle made the *twee-twee* of a bird; and the socks, when squeezed together ever so gently beside the microphone, emitted the faint and untranscribable sound of footsteps in the snow.

In the sound-effects man’s toolbox such props are the precision implements—seldom used though often admired, like a carpenter’s spokeshaves and rabbit planes. The hammers and screwdrivers of Erlenborn’s trade sat on the floor beside the prop table: two wooden steps with roofing shingles nailed to the treads; a brass-knobbed door and its doorframe, about three feet high; and a “splash tank”—in this case a bucket of water with a toilet plunger in it.

There were also four shallow wooden boxes: one full of gravel, one full of hardened cement, one with marble paving on the bottom, and one with plywood nailed across the top. Erlenborn stepped on each in turn, testing the gravel with the toe of a black wingtip (“my best footstep shoes,” he told me), and trod the surface with the careful grace of a dancer limbering up. He listened to the rhythmic scuffing with satisfaction and then stepped back out onto the carpet. “Footsteps are surprisingly important,” he said. “They really paint a picture for people. If they’re right, they’re right.”

When, an hour or so later, the time came for the *Life of Riley* performance, the footsteps were right, and the door openings were right, and the splashes were right. The actors were surprisingly right as well; if you closed your eyes, you’d never guess that the coy, playful voice of Babs Riley, the hero’s teenage daughter, belonged to an elderly lady with permed white hair—the same actress who played Babs in the 1940s. The biggest laugh of the evening was for Erlenborn and his toilet plunger. It came when Chester A. Riley, the show’s maldroit protagonist, and his next-door neighbor, the chickenhearted Waldo Binny, found themselves accidental stowaways on a sailboat:

RILEY: Listen, Waldo, do you know what we’ve walked into? We’re all alone on a boat with two gorgeous girls who are boy-crazy!

WALDO: That’s never happened to me before.

RILEY: Me either. But under the circumstances, there’s only one thing to do.

WALDO: You mean...?

RILEY: Yeah.

WALDO: Isn’t that a little risky?

RILEY: We’re real men, ain’t we? We gotta take the chance. It’s now or never.

WALDO: All right—I’m with you... (Two enormous splashes, as Erlenborn dunked his plunger into the water, pulled it out, and dunked it in again.)

“I’m just getting over a heck of a cold,” Erlenborn told me apologetically. “I don’t know if I can do this or not...” He cupped his hands over his mouth, wiggled them back and forth a little, and suddenly, startlingly, began to cry like a baby—not a full-throated wail but the fretful mewling of a gassy infant working itself up toward a tantrum. It was uncanny to see this sound emerging from the face of an octogenarian—though in some respects Erlenborn does resemble a newborn, with his big round bald head, pinkish complexion, and small, watery eyes. His only distinctly un-infantile features are enormous white side-whiskers bridged in the middle by a moustache, which have qualified him to be cast as Cap’n Andy in *Show Boat* and the Wizard in *The Wizard of Oz* on the southern-California light-opera circuit. Erlenborn’s is an unusual face, but it’s not at all the sort that some people, unkindly, might call “a face made for radio.” If anything, it is a face made for vaudeville, which happens to be where Erlenborn got his start in show business.

Erlenborn is probably one of few people alive whose performance careers have lasted without interruption since the 1910s. By the time he was six months old, his mother had already moved the family to Hollywood and begun planning her only child’s ascent to stardom. Los Angeles’s entertainment culture was enjoying its first, Klondike-style boom; even the downtown cafeterias had string orchestras playing, and not long after he

was old enough to talk, Erlenborn’s mother would lift him onto a tabletop to sing “Pretty Baby” for the lunchtime crowd. Before long he was making the rounds of western vaudeville stages, from the Golden Gate Theatre, in San Francisco, to the Princess, in Cheyenne, Wyoming. There was plenty of work to be had at the movie studios, too. Erlenborn started out as an extra, getting three dollars a day plus a box lunch; then he graduated to a regular role in a series of silent two-reel comedies, where he played the kind of Jackie Coogan-esque ragamuffin who was always knocking baseballs through windowpanes and leaving banana peels on the sidewalk.

Vaudeville died, followed shortly by the silent cinema, and Erlenborn, as he entered young adulthood, found himself looking for work in a newer medium: radio. “There were a half dozen stations in Los Angeles,” he says, “and in the early days they were trying to come up with anything they could think of to keep some kind of noise going out over the air.” He’d go around with a ukulele and some sheet music, filling in as needed. One day in the mid-1930s a producer asked Erlenborn to lend a hand with the effects for the *Pennzoil News Review*; his first assignment, he remembers, was to simulate a squadron of planes passing overhead, which he did on the studio’s pipe organ. (Current-events programs often included dramatic re-creations of the news, complete with sound effects.) By 1937 Erlenborn had a full-time job as a sound man at KNX, the CBS affiliate in Hollywood, which produced a number of national shows.

“There were just three sound guys there when I was hired,” Erlenborn told me. “I’d start the day by playing a recording of a rooster crow for the *Hancock Oil News Review*. That was at six A.M. From then until midnight, when I did a show called *Nightcap Yarns* with Frankie Graham, I’d be doing sound effects for sometimes fifteen or twenty different shows. Sometimes you’d do the same program twice: once for the East Coast and once for the West Coast.”

Very few of the sounds were as easy as that recorded rooster crow. Early sound-effects artists were reluctant to use recordings except when absolutely necessary, because 78-rpm discs wore out quickly under the steel phonograph needles then in use. “Also,” Erlenborn said,

"you couldn't always use the recordings of things like animal sounds, because if you needed, say, a dog with personality, all you were going to get was *wowp wowp wowp wowp wowp*. That's why I got pretty good at doing them vocally."

One particular dog with personality became a specialty of Erlenborn's: Daisy, the Bumstead family pet on the comedy show *Blondie*, which was based on the comic strip. Every time Dagwood ran out the door and crashed into the mailman, Daisy followed, yapping at his heels. "I could do the whole sequence myself," Erlenborn said. "You can choreograph it so it works:

start running from off-mike, then do a whiz whistle for Dagwood flying through the door, then the dog starts barking, then you do a tom-tom for the two bodies hitting together, then I would actually drop a big handful of mail right by the mike. You just have to make sure you keep all the props where you can grab 'em." There were countless variations on this theme: Daisy might start tearing at the postman's pant leg, or she might get her tail slammed in the door, or Dagwood might crash into the doorjamb. "You'd have to tell the actor, Arthur Lake, to do a big *owwww!*, timed just right," Erlenborn said.

In the golden age of radio comedy certain sound effects, by Erlenborn and other masters, were as instantly recognizable as any star's voice. Dagwood's late-for-work sequence was one of the most famous, along with Fibber McGee's opening his closet—a great cascade of crashes and clangs, trailing off into the silvery tinkle of one last, unexpected object bouncing off Fibber's head—and Jack Benny's starting up his wheezing Maxwell automobile, an effect that Erlenborn can still re-create vocally: *chukka-chukka-chukka cha-hoo-cha pah pah pah chugga-chugga*.

**T**HE big room in the basement of KNX where Erlenborn and the other sound men built, tested, and stored their equipment looked something like Fibber McGee's closet must have. One basic rule of the trade was never to throw away any prop, no matter how unlikely that it would ever be needed again. Also, never pass up a chance to add a new gadget to the arsenal. Sometime in the late 1930s word got around that the sound of a large troop of marching men could be imitated by attaching rows of pegs to a taut framework of rubber bands and then rocking the pegs back and forth across a piece of sandpa-

per: *whhh-whhh-whhh-whhh*. Before long it seemed that every good-sized station in the country had a version of this device. (In the late 1930s, understandably, there was a surge of demand for the sound of large troops of marching men.)

The point of such an invention wasn't to make a sound that would sound realistic in the studio. Rather, it was to make a sound that would sound realistic after it had agitated a microphone wire, been converted into an electrical signal, propagated itself as a radio wave, and issued forth from the speaker of an Atwater Kent in someone's living room ten or a thousand miles away—a very different proposition. "A lot of times the actual sound of a thing doesn't give you what you want," Erlenborn says. "There's too much extraneous noise." A good sound man could listen to a sound he wanted to imitate, strip it to its bare essentials, and reproduce only those.

A good sound man also had an ear for nuance. For instance, not all fires sound alike. A bundle of small bamboo sticks, when riffled and twisted, crackles like a campfire, but for a slow, consuming blaze one needs a sheet of cellophane, aged long enough to be nice and brittle, that can be slowly kneaded with the fingers. Crushing a peach basket or two creates the effect of charred timbers falling from a burning roof. Add the whooshing sound of a wind machine—wooden battens scraping rhythmically against a taut canvas—and the fire becomes an inferno. Sometimes, for a complicated effect like this, Erlenborn would organize a group of sound men to take the different parts, and conduct them like an orchestra.

The best sound effects, though, were often the simplest ones. Erlenborn showed me the method he developed to imitate a mouse's squeak: he purses his lips, holds a forefinger up horizontally against his front teeth, and wiggles it up and down. "There," he said. "That's what I use for a mouse sound. Everybody has a different technique, you know. But this one's mine." I tried to imitate him, and all I got was the sound of someone rubbing his teeth. "No," Erlenborn told me. "You have to sort of kiss your finger, like that." I watched him carefully and then gave it my best shot again. Suddenly, miraculously, coming from my own mouth was an uncanny *squee-squee-squee*: unmistakably, as any listener would agree, the voice of a mouse. Perhaps even a mouse with personality. ☘

STEVE SHAMES



**Sound effects whiz Hi Brown, left, works to scare you on his revived radio show, "Mystery Theatre."**

## King of thrills and chills

Shots ring out. Bodies slump to the floor. Disembodied voices laugh maniacally.

Himan Brown, fabled producer of soap operas and radio thrillers for over half a century, is at it again. For him, there's nothing like a blood-curdling scream to get a listener's attention.

"Welcome," an eery voice whispers as the door creaks open, "to the inner sanctum."

That celebrated opener to Brown's popular "Inner Sanctum" show in the 1940s and 50s was reprised for "Mystery Theatre," Brown-produced chillers broadcast in the 1970s. Now the Peabody Award-winning program is back, airing on public radio after a 17-year hiatus.

"People have forgotten how to listen," says Brown, who would like to lure them back to the inner sanctums of their imaginations. "Radio is the theater of the mind. We put you in glass slippers, atop a mountain peak, at the bottom of Atlantis. We try to tap that inward vision, the picture the mind makes for itself."

Brown, 89, grew up when broadcasting was in its infancy, creating his first radio out of a Quaker Oats box wrapped in copper wire. He began his radio career during the Depression, when as a Brooklyn College student he sold air-time to sponsors of "The Rise of the Goldbergs."

His knack for tapping mega-talent like Orson Welles, Peter Lorre and Boris Karloff helped Brown rack up a string of hits—among them "Terry and the Pirates" and "The Thin Man." Each show had its own signature—"Calling all cars" on "Dick Tracy," the belly laugh of private eye "Nero Wolfe," the hiss of the train steaming into "Grand Central Station."

Nowadays Brown, a widower with two children and two grandchildren, produces live historical dramas on figures such as Charles Lindbergh for the Newseum in Rosslyn, Va., and the Cooper Union in Manhattan.

You don't need high-tech special effects to fire up your imagination, he says. "All you have to do is open a creaking door, tell a scary story and let [your] mind create the fear."

*By Christine Lyons Holzwarth*

# VINTAGE RADIO

by Roger Johnson



## The Zenith Trans-Oceanic: 'Royalty of Radios'

**There are collectable radios and collectable radios, but the Zenith Trans-Oceanic seems to have attracted a mystique of its own and has almost cult status.**

**T**HE TERM 'ROYALTY of Radios' is actually the title of a book on Zenith Trans-Oceanics by Bryant and Cones, which covers the complete history and how to identify a given model from the serial numbers, etc. But alas it contains no circuits.

The inspiration for this month's column actually came about when I was requested to repair a Trans-O. At that stage I had never actually seen one of these sets, let alone had any experience using one. So it was a matter of searching the internet, to see what information was available, troubleshooting tips and so on.

Having had to go through this research and then tackle the job, I thought it would be a waste not to pass on what I found. If you too have an interest in vintage radios I think you'll find it quite good reading.

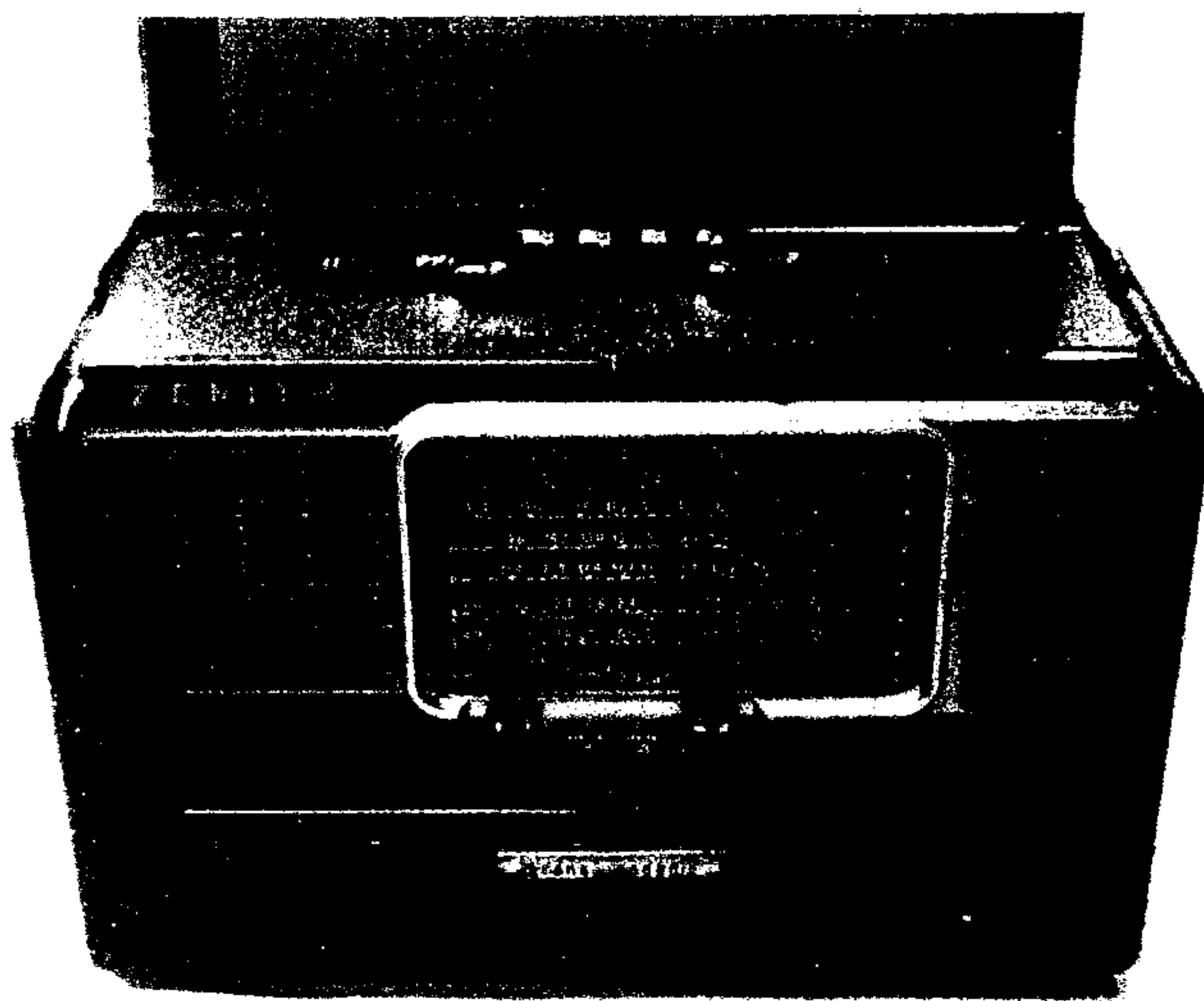
### Background

Punching 'transoceanic' into my search engine came up with the goods. The brief history that follows is largely taken from 'Padgett's Trans-Oceanic Page' (dot com?). So too did a reprint of the US Army Technical Manual for the military version, called the R520B!

An exact circuit for the model concerned, alignment instructions and coil assembly layout was obtained from a mail-order house in the US, whose e-mail address was found whilst browsing the net.

Trans-Oceanics were first released by Zenith in 1942 as the 'Clipper Deluxe' model 7G605 covering six bands: the AM broadcast band, and then five bandspread shortwave bands, viz. 49M, 31M, 25M, 19M and 16M. Production was suspended in April 1942 for wartime commitments.

Post war, the model 8G005 was released from 1946 to 1949, covered the same wavebands, and according to the research material, had 8 'loctal' tubes. It was this model that had the optional adapter and



*Fig.1: The Zenith Trans-Oceanic L600 in all its glory. It dates from 1954.*

switch for 220V AC operation.

Also released in 1946 was a budget priced G6004Y 'global' model, covering the broadcast band and the rather unusual short-wave band covering 9.5 - 12.1MHz; and also the G6001 'universal' version, a broadcast (BC) band only model where the name signified only operation from AC or DC power mains, or batteries. Sales of the G6004Y were poor, and production did not continue.

From 1950 to the end of the valve models in 1962, there are more similarities than differences. Assiduous collectors will no doubt identify and spot all the nuances at 100 paces.

It would appear, for the sake of brevity, that the features common to all those models were: (a) the similar looking carrying case; (b) the use of the curiously called 'wave magnet', which in reality is a loop-coil antenna for the broadcast band; (c) battery and mains operation, and mains operation for 110V AC, 110V DC and 220V AC; (d) tube types 1L6, 1U4, 1U5 and 3V4 and a type 50A1 'barretter' (current regulator) tube; and (e) coverage of seven bands, namely BC, 2-4MHz and 4-8MHz general coverage/marine, and four shortwave bandspread bands for the 16, 19, 25 and 31 metre bands.

## Construction & finish

Like most American gear of the era, it is bold, solid, artistic, looks-as-though-it-should-work and well put together. The carrying case is made of timber and standard models were covered in what we call 'leatherette' but Americans refer to as 'staghorn'.

There is a lift-up flap covering the dial and controls, and a hinged rear panel. Also included are comprehensive log charts. Deluxe models were covered in leather, but cost another US\$20 to buy. (Trans-O's sold for about US\$120 at the time — very pricey by contemporary Australian standards.)

Band selection is via self-cancelling push buttons. Included is a whip antenna for short waves, external antenna and earth connections, the 'wave magnet' which doubles as a direction finder, and a VERY effective series of four tone control switches referred to as the 'Radiorgan'. The single dial lamp is supplied with its own separate battery, pushbutton activated, and there seems no provision to operate the dial lamp from the external power source!

All in all, it is a most attractive unit, and whether the performance was good or otherwise, the very appearance just reeks of quality. American philosophy was that a top performer should look like a top performer. (I agree!)

Additionally, all components were treated against moisture and other climatic conditions to enable it to obtain optimum performance anywhere in the world, regardless of the prevailing climate.

Incidentally the 'wave magnet' has a special extension cable, and is detachable from its position in the case to enable it to be placed against the window of cars, planes or trains.

## The circuit

The model which I was asked to repair was an L600 (chassis type 6L40) of 1954 vintage. Apparently, this model is similar to the military version. The circuit is a well designed five-tube superhet consisting of a type 1U4 tuned RF amplifier, a type 1L6 mixer/oscillator, a 1U4 as 455kHz IF amplifier, a 1U5 detector/audio amp, and a 3V4 in the output. The power supply is transformerless, consisting of a half-wave selenium rectifier with current regulation for the series-connected filament chain via the 50A1 barretter.

As mentioned the wavechange facility is via self-cancelling pushbuttons in an extremely complex switching arrangement. Each switch bank consists of two rows of up to 12 pairs of contacts, and in the actual switching, carefully designed connecting bars connect between selected groups of contacts, such that adjacent pairs are connected to each other, connected to opposite contacts, or become open circuit, and in the process connect the correct coil in circuit and in some cases, short-circuit coils that are not

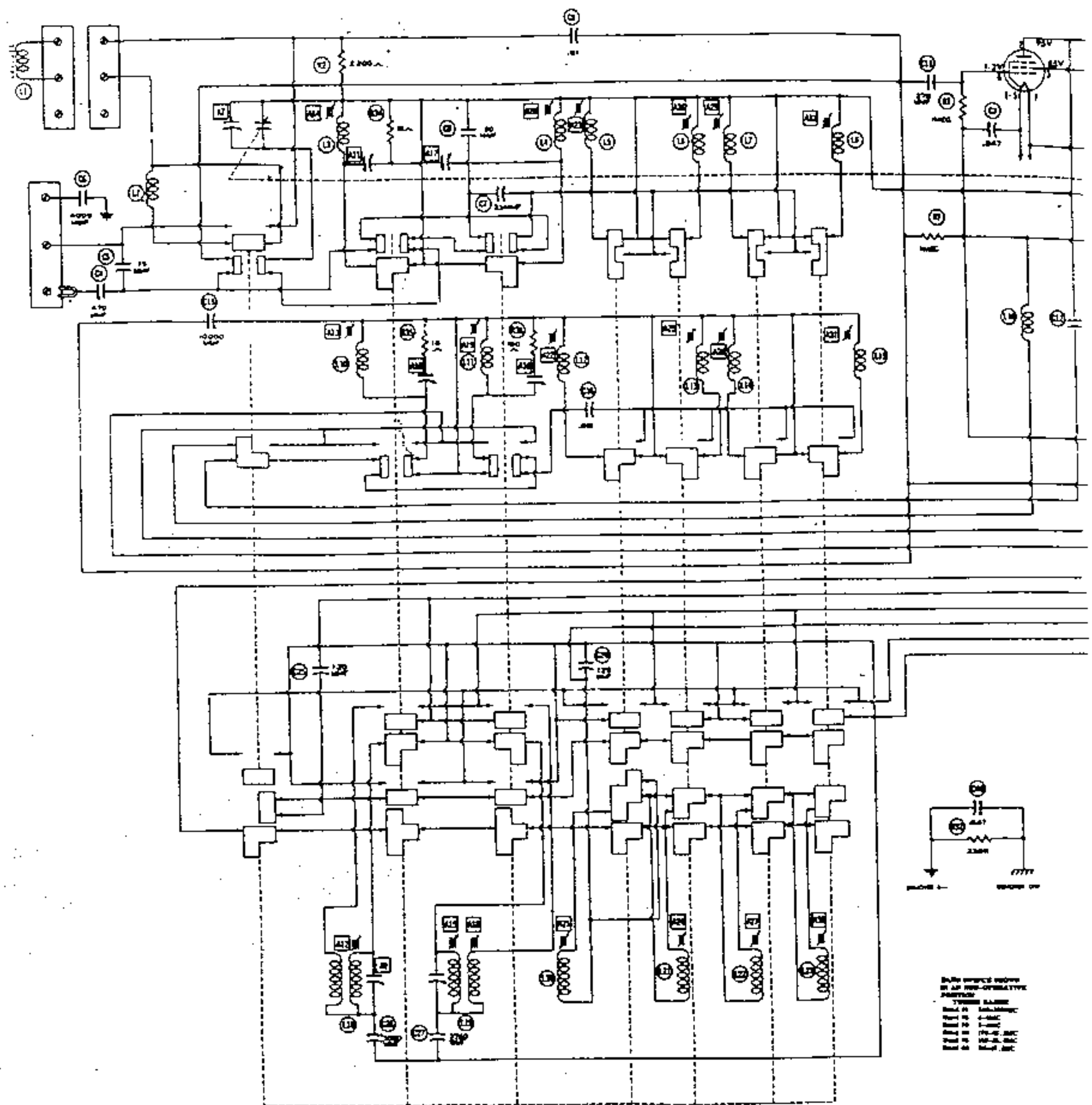


Fig.2: The complicated band switching of the L600's front end.

used. The front end is shown in Fig.2 to give an idea of the complexity.

Although complicated, the front end doesn't hold any real surprises. Moving on, though, we find a rather unorthodox IF amplifier. Instead of supplying the screen of the 1U4 via a normal dropping resistor of around 20k and bypassing it with the time-honoured 0.1uF, the designers 'decoupled' the anode circuit with a 1k resistor and a 3nF capacitor. The screen and the cold side of the IFT are supplied from this point.

In reality, the 3nF capacitor in conjunction with the 1k 'isolation resistor' provides a feedback path to the screen, to neutralise the signal grid-plate capacitance. With a carefully chosen value of capacitor (3nF), the gain of the IF amplifier can be increased considerably without causing it to self oscillate.

## The tone control

The 'radiorgan' tone control is also very unorthodox, but very effective. An exploded diagram is shown in Fig.3. It depends on an inverse feedback voltage obtained from a ter-

tiary winding on the output transformer, fed back to the volume control. (Let's hope the set doesn't have any difficulties here, because a special transformer core would have to be re-wound in the event of an open-circuit primary.)

The diagram shown is taken from the military version, but is in every way similar to the 6L40 apart from part numbers. The tone control resistor-capacitor network consists of R16, R17, R32, R33, R34, R35 and capacitors C47, C48 and C49. R32/33/34/35 form a voltage divider across the tertiary winding of T3.

The function of the four switches is to alter the R-C network frequency characteristic, which results in a change to the audio response. C48 in parallel with R33 makes the network frequency dependent. When the S2B 'Bass' switch is open, as well as S2D being open, C48 in effect reduces the value of R33 at the higher frequencies. The out-of-phase higher frequencies appearing at the junction of R17/32/33 are increased, and are mixed with the high frequencies from the



# VINTAGE RADIO

detector at the signal grid of the 1U5, thereby causing attenuation of the highs. By implication, there is bass boost.

Closing S2B shorts out R33/C48 and cuts out the bass boost, but because the feedback chain is then purely resistive, all frequencies will be attenuated.

Closing S2C with S2B open effectively makes R34 frequency dependant, and has the result of attenuation of the mid-range frequencies. S2D simply alters the total amount of feedback, and with all switches open, feedback is minimal at high frequencies — giving effectively treble boost (hence the 'alto' designation). Closing S2A provides treble attenuation, regardless of the settings of the other switches.

When you hear the receiver in full flight and experiment with the switches, it becomes clear that there are 16 different combinations — many of which are very effective in filtering out or boosting a desired frequency range. It is a very, very effective tone control, and is abundantly simple. Mind you, a tertiary winding on an output transformer has yet to be seen on an Australian made radio!

## Faultfinding & repair

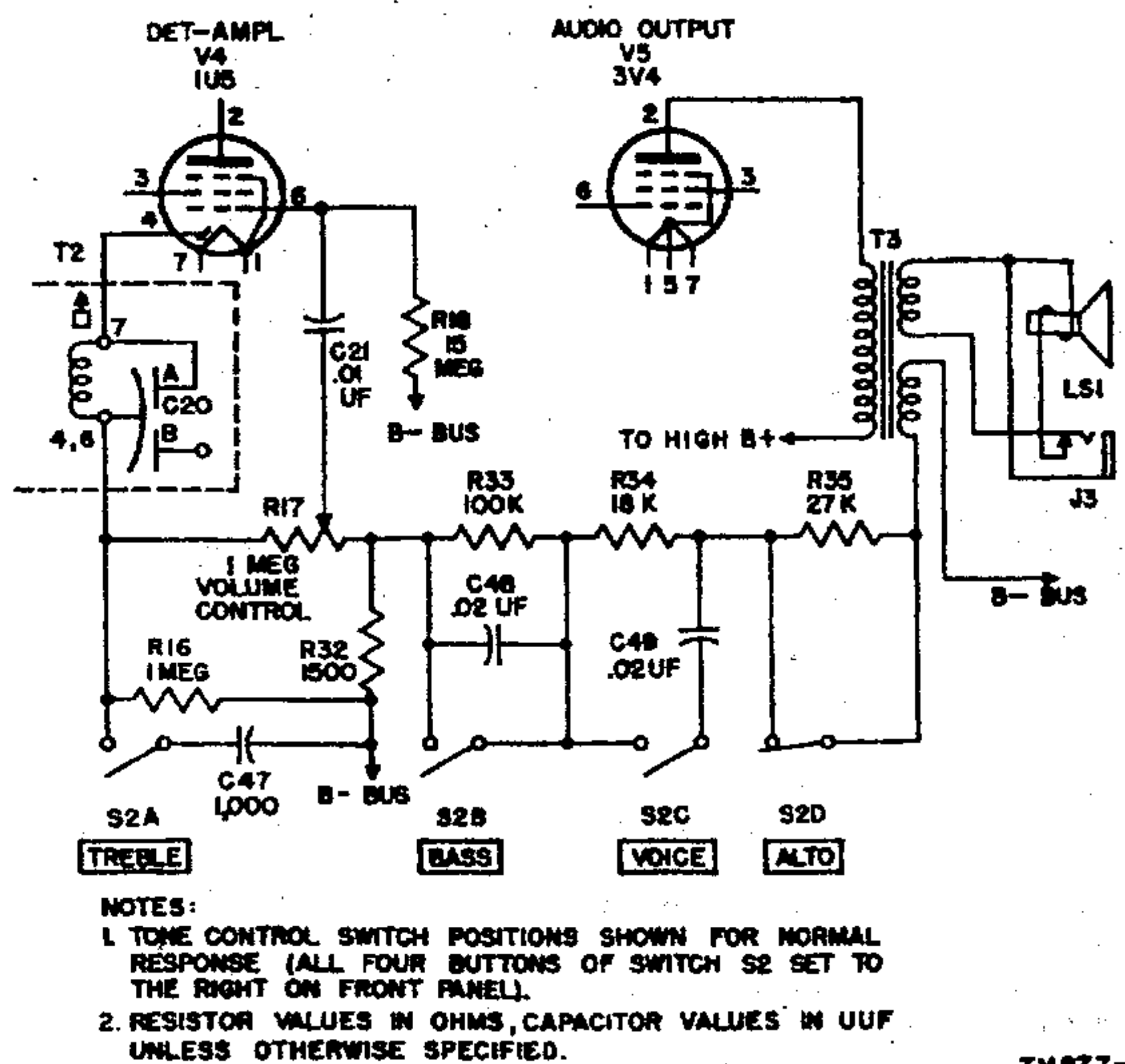
As I discovered, the chassis must be removed from the case in order to do any faultfinding. To do this, the whip antenna must be removed, and for this a tube spanner is required. The mains plug needs to be removed as well.

There are two self-tapping screws holding the chassis to the shelf of the battery compartment. The dial lamp also needs to be removed from the chassis, as its wiring is integral with the cabinet...

If your set is like the one I tackled, the power supply is probably going to be the most likely source of trouble. There is no transformer, and the mains input unit is nothing more than two resistors, a linkpin to select input voltages and a diode in an air-cooled cage.

There is an additional diode in this model. The link pin leaves the cage diode out of circuit for 110V AC or DC operation, and then selects voltage dropping resistors for 220V AC and for DC. There are in effect two diode rectifiers in series, and after filtering, at the cathode of barretter M1 the stated voltage is 115V. The 50A1 drops the necessary 95-odd volts to the series connected filaments, which draw 50mA.

The chassis is isolated from B-, which means a suitable point in the power supply must be found in order to read voltages. Potential trouble spots are a burnt-out 130W



TM677-21

Fig.3: The circuit of the Trans-Oceanic's 'Radiorgan' feedback tone control, which is surprisingly flexible and effective.

resistor or rectifier in the power supply, or a burnt out 50A1. This tube is available from the US, but at a healthy cost (about A\$50). There is a solid state replacement which is available at a lower cost, and it appears that some repairers have merely replaced it with a suitable resistor.

This latter course is most inadvisable unless great care is taken to determine the resistor's precise value. To do this, the tubes should be removed, and 27Ω resistors poked in socket pins 1 and 7 of V1 to V4, with a 56Ω resistor poked in pins 1 and 7 of V5. This represents the actual filament load placed on the barretter or its substitute resistor. The substitute resistor can then be carefully adjusted until the voltage across the filament chain is precisely 9.0 volts.

If you are replacing M1 with a solid state diode, a higher voltage may be obtained, and a wise precaution would be to go through the exercise just described, and if necessary, increase the value of the 130Ω voltage dropping resistor R31.

## Alignment

Although quite precise alignment instructions are available, my advice is that if the set works, and works well, LEAVE WELL ALONE! All sorts of difficulties can be expected,

especially if you're not experienced and well seasoned in the gentle art.

Indeed, in the receiver under test, in daylight hours and with only about six feet of antenna trailing along the floor, many many shortwave stations were received at a healthy volume. Additionally, no shortage of AM stations were received on the broadcast band, with the 'wick turned up'. Given that this is essentially a battery set with about 240mW of audio output maximum, it was decided that performance was unlikely to be improved.

In this sort of situation, attempting any re-alignment would be a hiding for nothing. Of course, if some well-meaning meddler has already 'had a go' and the performance is poor, then there is no alternative...

## Performance

The foregoing should have well and truly primed the reader to expect excellent results, and excellent results they are.

In fact the performance of this set is nothing short of brilliant. The bandsread facility almost puts it in the 'communications' class of receiver. It is little wonder that the Trans-Oceanics have been dubbed the 'Royalty of Radios', and their place in history is assured. ♦

# Legend of the Lone Ranger will live on for two Granite City

John Fornaszewski (left) holds the scarf he got from Brace Beemer, the man who portrayed the Lone Ranger in radio. Zeigler holds one of the masked man's silver bullets encased in lucite.



## They got interested as boys listening to the radio show

They saw him in St. Louis rodeo

BY BOB FEHRINGER

Special to the Post-Dispatch

GRANITE CITY — The recent death of Lone Ranger actor Clayton Moore may mean the end of an era for some, but for two Granite City men, the masked man's legend will never die.

Harold Zeigler, 66, and John Fornaszewski, 59, have followed the exploits of the Lone Ranger since their youth.

"We like Clayton Moore and John Hart, who was also the TV Lone Ranger," Fornaszewski said, "but our real interest is Brace Beemer."

Beemer, who was an announcer on the show, became the radio Lone Ranger in 1941 at WXYZ in Detroit when the first man to wear the mask, Earl Graser, was killed in an auto accident. The job was originally offered to another staff announcer, Mike Wallace of 60 minutes, but he turned it down.

"Mike Wallace has a great voice," Fornaszewski said, "but he wasn't an actor. So they looked around and said 'Brace Beemer.' He had a voice similar to Earl Graser."

Fornaszewski says he became interested in the Lone Ranger radio show at the age of 10. That's when he had his rendezvous with destiny. The newspaper boys in Granite City were invited to attend the

Fireman's Rodeo in St. Louis at the Keil Auditorium. The star was the Lone Ranger and Jay Silverheels as Tonto.

"It just so happened that where I sat was right at the corner aisle of where they would make their entrance," Fornaszewski said.

"They had a full orchestra to do the 'William Tell Overture,' not a canned thing. I'm just a kid, and you gotta remember a guy riding a horse is pretty high up there.

"Where I'm sitting I can hear a horse movement and just like this close," he said, holding his hands a foot apart, "it's the Lone Ranger on top of Silver. It's real to me; I'm a 10-year-old boy."

Fornaszewski's face beams as he tells of the meeting.

"We petted Silver and (the Lone Ranger) gave me this scarf," Fornaszewski said. "I kept it all these years.

"I was hooked from that moment on. It was always a mystery to me — who's that man. See, I'm not thinking it's an actor. I'm thinking, 'This is the Lone Ranger.'"

Aficionados such as Zeigler and Fornaszewski have made the pilgrimage to Oxford, Mich., where Beemer lived until his death in 1965.

They went one step further.

"We got to go to his house," Fornaszewski said. "In Michigan, you'd call it a farm, but they called it a ranch. And that's where Silver lived. (Beemer) appeared with his own horse, Silver Pride, because the real Silver was kind of wild."

Zeigler's and Fornaszewski's authority on Beemer is known around the country. "Six years ago in Mt. Caramel, Ill., that's where he was born and raised, they heard about us somehow," Fornaszewski said.

"The Chamber of Commerce asked us to come down for their Lone Ranger day and the whole weekend.

"It was very successful," Fornas-



EVERETT COLLECTION

**DIED. ARTHUR TRACY, 98,** radio's sentimental Street Singer, who peddled his wares (remember *Marta?*) on the airwaves of the 1930s; in New York City.

Tracy's identity was kept secret when he made his radio debut at CBS in 1931.

## Sybil Trent, a Famous Voice from the Golden Age of Radio Passes

A veteran of the golden age of radio and a star of the Saturday-morning children's radio show "Let's Pretend", passed away at her home in Manhattan.

Mrs Trent's voice was first heard on "Let's Pretend" in 1935, not long after she made her Broadway debut alongside Jimmy Durante and atop an elephant, in Billy Rose's "Jumbo" with songs by Rogers and Hart, at the Hippodrome Theatre.

Over two decades, until the final broadcast of "Pretend" in 1954, she entertained young listeners with renditions of princesses and fairy godmothers and found fame in her startlingly realistic "baby cry".

A precocious child, Mrs Trent began her career at the age of 3 ½, when she performed in a short film with Fatty Arbuckle. Soon she was singing and dancing her way through more than 25 shorts with stars like Ruth Etting and Jack Haley as a member of Warner Brothers' Stock Company.

Feature films at RKO followed, including "The People's Enemy" (1935) with Melvyn Douglas and Lila Lee, and "Keep 'Em Rolling" (1934) with Walter Huston.



By age 6, Mrs Trent was the host of her own radio show on WHN, "Baby Sybil Elaine and Her Kiddie Revue," on which she would conjure imitations of Joe Penner and the Block and Sully comedy team before closing with a sweetly sung "Thank You for a Lovely Evening."

One of the 150 charter members of the American Federation of Radio Artists, Sybil also took the lead on "We Love and Learn, Stella Dallas, Aunt Jenny and David Harum" and performed on shows like "The Martha Raye Show, Ed Sullivan and Joe Franklin's Memory Lane."

From 1973 to 1994 she was the casting director at Young and Rubicam advertising agency in Manhattan. She continued to do vocal work on commercials and in her spare time took reservations at her son's Manhattan restaurants.

"The woman on the phone has the most delicious voice: low, slightly husky, completely inviting," Ruth Reichl wrote in 1994 in The New York Times of Mrs Trent's mellifluous tones. "Just calling for a reservation makes you eager to eat at Montrachet. In addition to her son Drew, she is survived by another son, Tracy, and four grandchildren all of New Jersey

# Stars re-create radio days in Cincinnati!

The lost art of radio drama comes to Sharonville again Friday and Saturday during the 14th annual Old Time Radio & Nostalgia Convention at the Radisson Hotel, 11320 Chester Road.

Bob Hastings, best known as Lt. Carpenter on TV's *McHale's Navy*, will star in a re-creation of an *X-Minus One* drama at 1:30 p.m. Saturday. He appeared on 31 *X-Minus One* episodes.

Mr. Hastings, who also starred as radio's *Archie Andrews*, reunites with *Archie Andrews* co-star Rosemary Rice for a re-creation of a *Mr. & Mrs. North* show at about 8 p.m. Saturday.

Veteran actor Tyler McVey, whose credits range from *Burns & Allen* and *The Great Gildersleeve* to *Patton* and *All the President's Men*, will be paired with Esther Geddes (*Golden Days of Radio*) in two re-creations — *Frontier Gentleman* (7:30 p.m. Friday) and *The Bickersons* (about 2 p.m. Saturday).

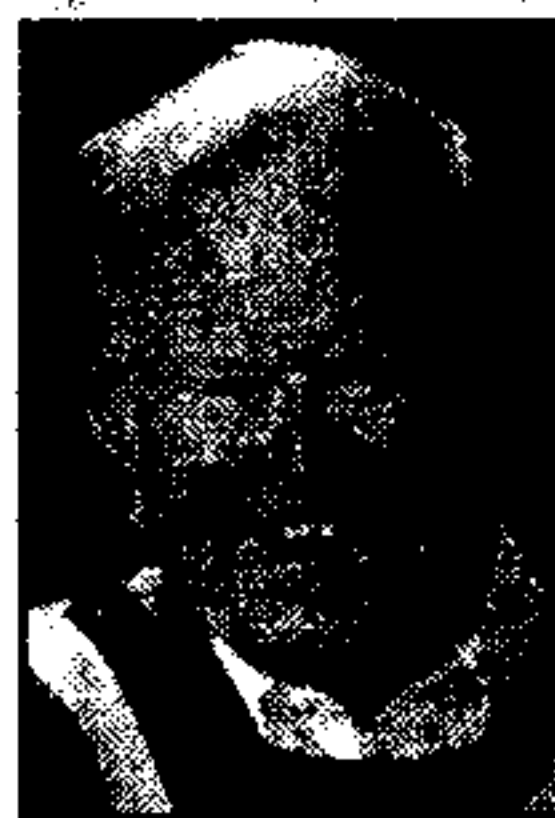
*Ethel & Albert* star Peg Lynch will perform a skit from the series with Mr. Hastings at 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

As in past years, convention organizer Bob Burchette needs non-professional volunteers for speaking parts in the re-creation shows. Auditions will start at 4 p.m. Friday.

More than 41 tables of old radio shows on cassettes, books, magazines, comics, videos and radio premiums will be in the dealers' room 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday.

## Memorial Service for David C. "Larry" Stevens

ting his comeback album entitled, "The Years Of My Youth". Larry was also an active member of the Kiwanis Club of Santa Maria, SAG, AFTRA, Friends of Old Time Radio and a board member



David C. "Larry" Stevens

of The Pacific Pioneers of Broadcasting. He will be remembered by all who knew him as a man of great integrity, kindness and a man with a glorious sense of humor.

He is survived by his wife, Norma, sons David and Carlton, daughter-in-law, Diane and granddaughter Sara.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Marian Home Care and Hospice of The American Cancer Society.

### David C. "Larry" Stevens

Services will be held on Saturday, April 8, 2000, at 1:00 p.m. for David C. "Larry" Stevens, 77, Santa Maria, at the Orcutt Presbyterian Church in the Sanctuary.

Mr. Stevens, a professional singer, passed away on April 5, 2000. He lived in Santa Maria and died peacefully at home.

Larry was born Feb. 26, 1923 in San Francisco and lived most of his life in Los Angeles, graduating from Fairfax High School in 1941. After completing his tour of duty with the Army Air Corp, Larry sang with The Jack Benny Show from 1944 to 1946. Larry continued to pursue show business throughout his life. He recently achieved two longtime dreams by making his comeback performance at the Cinegrill in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel on his 75th birthday and by cut-

Saturday, May 6, 2000  
2:00 p.m.

North Hollywood Church of Religious Science  
6161 Whitsett Avenue  
North Hollywood, CA 91604

## Osgood, former broadcaster part of radio's golden era, dies

March 1, 2000, 2:12 AM

DETROIT (AP) -- Richard Elmer "Dick" Osgood, a retired, longtime Detroit-area broadcaster who was part of radio's golden era, has died.

Osgood, of Farmington Hills, was 98 when he died Tuesday at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, the Detroit Free Press reported.

Around Detroit, Osgood was well-known in media circles during the 1930s through 1950s, in later years quick to recite events dating from his 1934 hiring at WXYZ -- now WXYT-AM -- radio.

As he covered news and show business, Osgood helped WXYZ launch its television operation in 1948 and became the first face to appear on air. He worked at WXYZ until retiring in 1971 just short of his 70th birthday.

For 10 years, he wrote and did research for Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village.

A Boston native, Osgood worked on Broadway as a young actor in the late 1920s under the stage name Elmer Cornell, sharing the footlights with stars such as Bette Davis and Spencer Tracy. In 1932, he appeared in "Stolen Heaven," a film by George Abbott.

12/23/99

Fran Stryker, the chief writer of "The Lone Ranger," persuaded Osgood to come to Detroit.

On the radio at WXYZ, Osgood's "Radio Schoolhouse" quiz show perhaps was his best-known effort in the 1940s. And for 23 years until 1971, he was drama and movie critic

for the station's "Show World" daily broadcast.

His signature on-air sign-off: "Shop your show and save your dough."

Osgood's second wife, Anne, died last year.

Survivors include his son, William, and a daughter, Stella Kirby, and six grandchildren.

No funeral services are planned.

**This issue of the NOTRE News by:**  
Geoff Oates, Australia  
Catherine Passarelli, Los Angeles  
Fritz Ritterspach, San Diego  
Ted (Margarita) Theodore, San Diego  
Harold Zeigler, Granite City  
Derek Tague, Orange  
Barbara & Jerry Williams, the Yukon

## John Hickman, 55; Radio Historian and WAMU Host

John Hickman, 55, a radio historian and former program host at WAMU-FM was found dead Dec. 10 at his home in Gaithersburg. He had a stroke in 1990 and had suffered from seizures and other health complications since then.

Mr. Hickman joined the staff at WAMU-FM in 1964 when he created "Recollections," a program featuring vintage broadcasts from the "golden age of radio." This program later became "The Big Broadcast," which is hosted by Ed Walker and is WAMU's longest-running program. Until his stroke

in 1990, Mr. Hickman was the show's host. He was born in Washington and graduated from St. John's College High School. He attended Belmont Abbey in North Carolina and graduated from American University.

While still in high school, Mr. Hickman began his radio career, working part time at WRC radio, where he helped produce the "Joy Boys," which had as hosts Willard Scott and Walker.

Later Mr. Hickman served in the Army as a broadcast teacher for Armed Forces Radio/TV. In

this period and later while teaching broadcasting for ITT Educational Services in Washington and serving as a public information officer for the Veterans Administration, he continued to produce radio programs at WAMU. He left the VA in 1984.

In 1994, Mr. Hickman gave American University his collection of radio memorabilia. This consisted of 10,000 audio tapes, phonograph records, electrical transcriptions, audio equipment, photographs and books, including episodes from early radio broad-

cast series such as "The Shadow," "Burns and Allen," "Lum and Abner," and "Gunsmoke." Also included were such original news broadcasts as Edward R. Murrow's World War II broadcasts from London.

Mr. Hickman leaves no immediate survivors.

# Studio Composer Frank DeVol

■ **Hollywood:** Despite five Emmy, Oscar nominations, he was best known for 'Brady Bunch' theme.

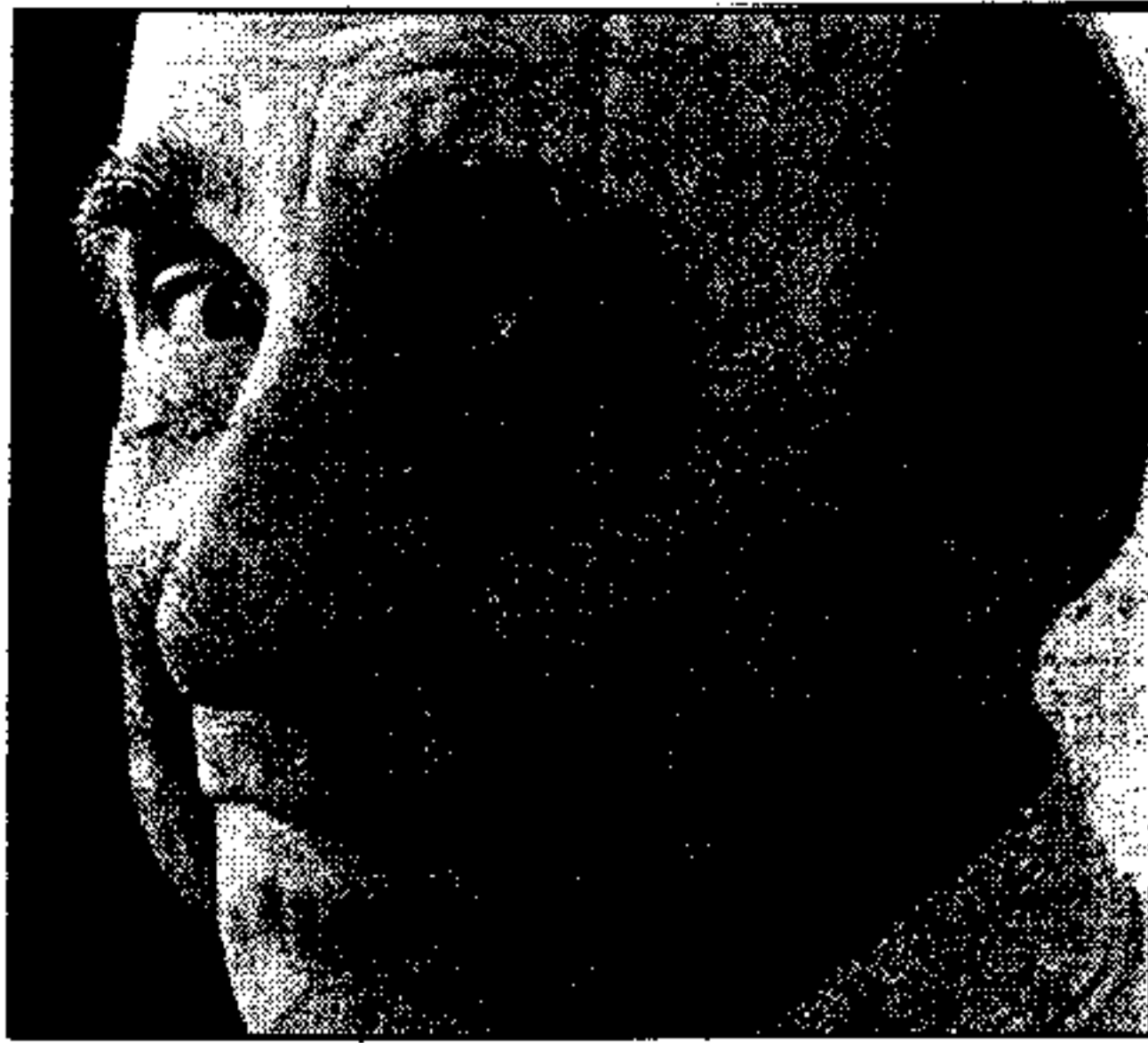
By ELAINE WOO  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Frank DeVol did not invent the microwave oven. He did not climb the world's tallest mountain. Nor did he write a computer program that people cannot live without. He did more.

DeVol wrote theme songs, winsome, bouncing, haunting ditties for television and the movies that invaded Americans' psyches and lodged there—like it or not—for years.

*Here's the story of a lovely lady  
Who was bringing up three very lovely girls...*

DeVol wrote the music for those lyrics that have burrowed into pop culture history as the theme song for "The Brady Bunch," the kitschy 1970s sitcom enjoying perpetual life in rerun heaven.



Los Angeles Times

DeVol said: "I never turn anything down."

One of Hollywood's most popular musical arranger-composer-conductors, DeVol died Wednesday at age 88 in a nursing home in Lafayette, Calif.

His compositions include classic TV

themes for "My Three Sons" and "Family Affair," as well as songs for such movies as "Pillow Talk," "What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?," "Hush, Hush, Sweet Charlotte," "The Dirty Dozen" and "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner."

He began to write music for TV and film after a successful career in radio during the big band era, when he also arranged and conducted recording sessions for such stars as Doris Day, Tony Bennett, Jaye P. Morgan and Ella Fitzgerald.

During his seven-decade career, he received five Academy Award and five Emmy nominations. The latter included a nomination for the "Brady Bunch" song, which never failed to elicit the most rousing reaction whenever he mentioned or played his compositions.

"People gave him tremendous ovations when they found out what he did," said Bob Weiss, DeVol's former publicist and longtime family friend. "They'd say, 'Oh, you're 'The Brady Bunch,' you're 'My Three Sons.'"

DeVol was born in Moundsville, W.Va., but was raised in Canton, Ohio, where his father was band-leader for the local vaudeville theater. DeVol joined the musicians union when he was 14 and played violin and piano for his father's band. Saving his earnings from \$35-a-week appearances at a Chinese restaurant in Cleveland, he bought a saxophone next, learning to play it by watching other musicians.

By the late 1930s, he was playing and arranging for the Horace Heidt orchestra. When guitarist Alvino Rey left that band, DeVol began to arrange for him.

By the early 1940s, DeVol was living in California and working the graveyard shift for Lockheed when he received a phone call from KHJ,

then a Mutual Network radio station, inviting him to be the band-leader for a musical program. Before long, he was musical director for a host of radio personalities, including Ginny Simms, Rudi Vallee, Jack Smith, Dinah Shore and Jack Carson. That led to DeVol reading parts in comedies and becoming a radio personality himself.

Decades later, he married another figure from the big band era, vocalist Helen O'Connell. That marriage occurred in 1991, after the death of DeVol's first wife, Grayce. O'Connell died in 1993.

DeVol's break into movies and television came in 1954, when a friend got him a job on a low-budget Robert Aldrich film called "World for Ransom." The entire music budget was only \$3,500, but DeVol took it because "I never turn anything down," he said. That movie earned him his first Oscar nomination and established him as a Hollywood composer. He wrote music for 16 Aldrich movies alone, including the 1967 box office hit "The Dirty Dozen."

By the early 1960s, DeVol had movie composing down to a science. "I make a chart," he told The Times in 1965. "If I'm scoring a picture and I know I've got to write 85 minutes of music and I've got 15 days to do it, that means I've got to produce five to six minutes of music a day. This way I don't dawdle along."

All together, DeVol wrote music for 47 movies and seven television series.

He also acted, making appearances on the Jack Benny television show, the original "Parent Trap" movie and "Fernwood 2-Night," the 1977 sitcom about a talk show on which DeVol played a studio orchestra leader who ran a dental office on the side.

Overshadowing all those accom-

plishments over a seven-decade career, however, was that 21-line song about a "lovely lady" and "a man named Brady" whose notes DeVol wrote in a day.

Although never a ratings hit, "The Brady Bunch" has provided much grist for analysis in the pop culture mill. Its depiction of a family happily solving mundane disputes over who does the dishes or gets to use the phone was so far removed from Vietnam era woes that it generated a camp following.

Whenever DeVol, who was popular on the cruise circuit in his later years, spoke of his work to audiences, he found it was always the "Brady Bunch" tune that stirred them most.

"When I mention 'Brady Bunch,'" he said a few years ago, "that's when the audience really applauds."

DeVol, a longtime resident of Toluca Lake before moving to San Juan Capistrano and Laguna Hills, is survived by two daughters, Linda Morehouse of Lafayette and Donna Copeland of Denver, and two grandsons.

A memorial service will be held Tuesday at 11 a.m. at Forest Lawn Memorial-Park in Hollywood Hills. Donations may be sent to the Musicians Relief Fund, 917 N. Vine St., Hollywood CA 90038.

# The Lux Radio Theatre

The Lux Radio Theatre began in Australia on 19 March 1939, after five years as the outstanding drama programme on American radio, and it changed the face of radio drama in this country. It was so important at the time because of its glamour presentation—a one-hour play on a commercial network, relayed throughout all states, with publicity emphasis centring on the leading actors, making them stars. It went to air at 8 on Sunday nights all over Australia, and drew enormous audiences. It was broadcast live over 2GB and the Macquarie Network, but since 2GB was still in Bligh Street, without an auditorium, Lux was performed in the nearby 2GZ auditorium before an audience.

As in America, the sponsors were Lever Brothers, whose account was handled by the giant advertising agency J. Walter Thompson. Its Australian head was Sam Dobbs, an American, and the appropriation allocated to the programme was the greatest ever devoted up to that time to a dramatic presentation on commercial radio in Australia. The director of JWT's Radio Department was another American, Phil Mygatt, who had been associated with Lux in America since its inception, as a writer and producer. He had been brought to Sydney to guide the Lux Radio Theatre through the first months of its life in Australia.

The first Lux play broadcast in Australia was *Interference*, a drama originally written for the stage by Roland Pertwee and Harold Dearden. The adaptation, sent from America, was produced by Phil Mygatt, using the name of Douglas Garrick. The stars were American actress Irene Purcell (in Australia to act in the stage play *The Women*) and local actors Thelma Scott, Harvey Adams and Peter Finch. The premiere was an outstanding success, with Finch taking all the top notices and immediately being put under contract by the ABC.

After several months, Harry Dearth took over as producer-director of Lux. On 21 December 1941 the programme moved from 2GB-Macquarie to 2UW and the Commonwealth Network, where it remained until it ceased production in 1951, due to falling ratings. In 1955 Lux returned to the air on 2UE and the Major Network, with Paul Jacklin as producer-director and Stirling Macoboy as executive producer. But it was a brief return, lasting only a year.

The Golden Age of Australian Radio Drama



**HER MAJESTY'S**

# Lux Radio Theatre

## *"The Mystery of the Hansom Cab"*

Relive the days of the Sunday night radio play on the wireless as actors in evening dress and dinner suits recreate a classic radio mystery story live on stage! It's got the lot - glamour and suspense and vintage Lux commercials - "If it's safe in water, it's safe in Lux!"

In this classic Australian murder mystery, dashing young Irish aristocrat Brian Fitzgerald is accused of murdering a man in a hansom cab. Even his fiancée, beautiful heiress Madge Frettlby, is in the dark.

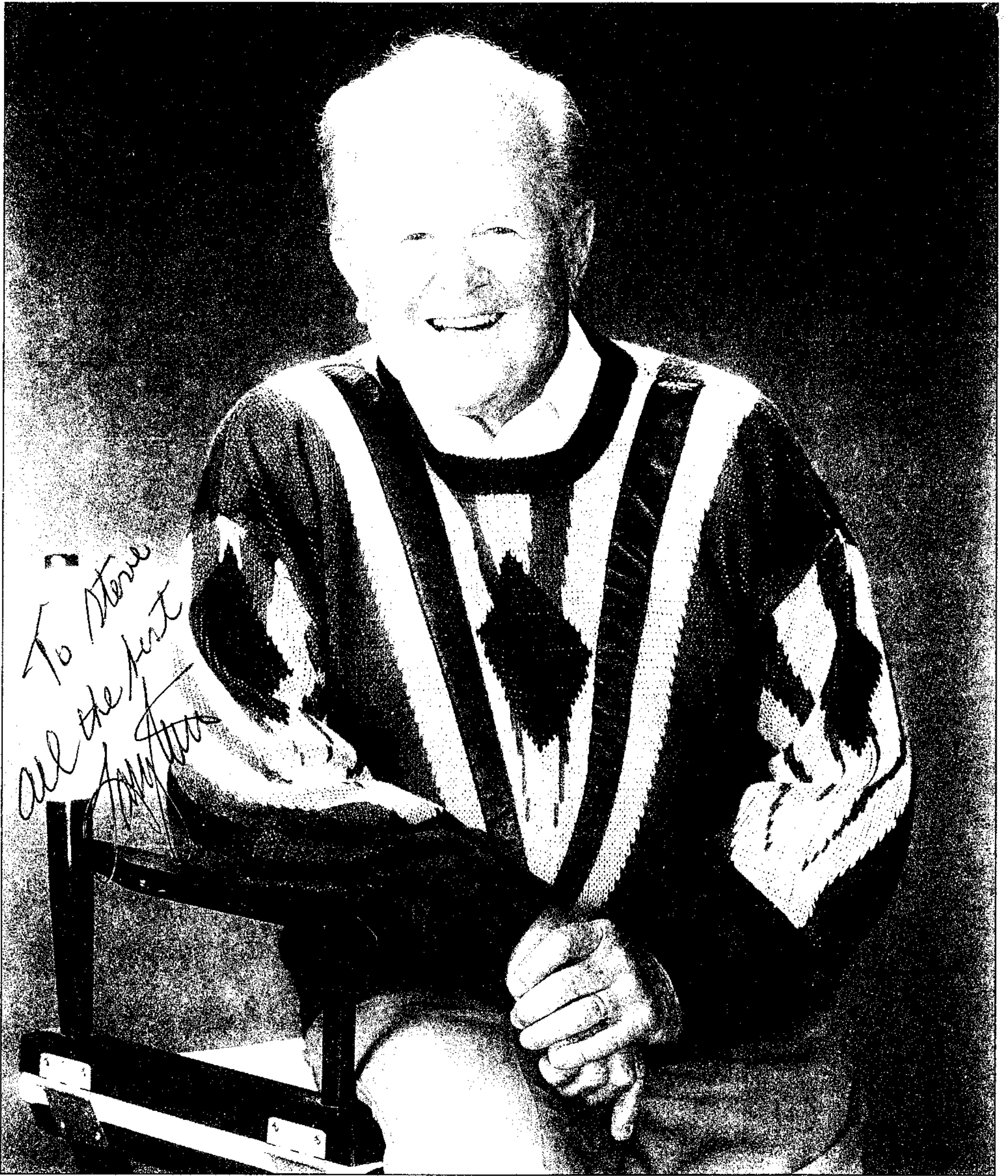
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Larry Stevens

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