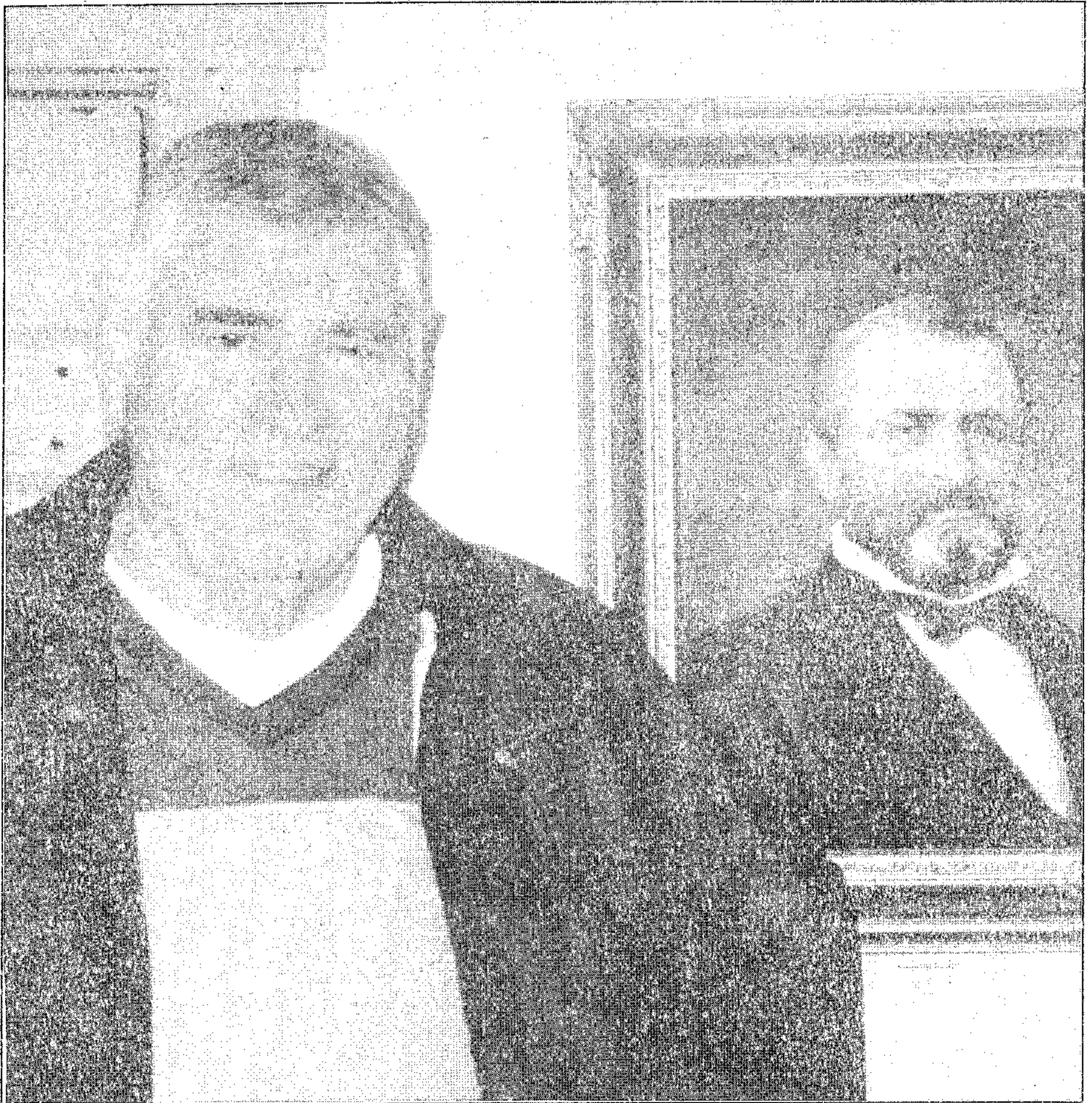


National Old-Time Radio Enthusiasts
N.O.T.R.E. NEWS

VOLUME 14

OCT '01



DAVE WARREN inside General Ulysses S. Grant's birthplace in Point Pleasant, Ohio
with the official portrait painted by Dave. [April '01]

Cover Artist - Old Time Radio DIGEST &
<----- FOTR Convention covers ----->



Dave Warren - Artist, Diver, Old-Time Radio Producer

Starting out in Portsmouth, OH [as did Bob Burchett and Roy Rogers], Dave grew to be a world class commercial artist. In early September, Portsmouth honored one of its favorite sons, Dave, with his very own "Star" on the flood wall downtown. Based in Cincinnati one of the commission he has undertaken is to paint the portraits of all eight of the Ohio born presidents. The cover shows Dave with the official portrait of General Grant at his birthplace in Point Pleasant, Ohio.

His good friend Bob Burchett, who has known him all his life says that once Dave commits to a project, he will do his very best. At the age of 8 he dove on the 10 foot diving board at the local swimming pool. He became a very good diver. He was second in the Mid-American conference when he was a sophomore at Ohio U. Dave started his Pee Wee football coaching career by coaching some kids where he lived. He got a game with a team that was experienced. They got off the bus with great looking uniforms and his boys just had what they could find. The sight of that team made them a little unsure of their chances of doing well. At the half, the other coach came over to Dave and called the game because Dave's team was beating them so bad it was demoralizing his team. He went on to have some of the best teams in the Cincinnati area, winning many championships. Fathers would bring their boys from all over to play for Dave. The other teams were all out to beat him. He had several All Americans and several pro-players over the years. Dave plays the banjo, is self taught on the piano and still sings with the King's Men Group. Whatever Dave did, he did it well!

Besides being an artist, he taught commercial art in high school to inner city kids. When they found he was stronger than they were and commanded their respect he could get them to start to learn from him. A good lesson for today's school system.

From an early fascination with radio and the programs focused on his age group when a kid through its hey day Dave has been a lover of the spoken word in comedy and drama. This led in the early 80's to the formation of The Dave Warren Players to recreate radio shows not addressed by the professional players attending the Friends of Old-Time Radio conventions in Newark. Later he took The Players to the Cincinnati and to Los Angeles old-time radio conventions.

Dave's life-long struggle to 'do his best' is what has made him decide to disband The Dave Warren Players. What follows is an explanation of the reasons for the demise of our favorite amateur radio group.

The Newark Friends of Old-Time Radio conventions have really missed out by not having Dave Warren and John Rayburn doing several of their *Amos & Andy* recreations. They were absolutely great doing those two parts, with the exact intonation of Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll that Dave and John were able to do.

Professionals, such as Conrad Binyon, Bob Mott and Nicademus Smith (Lightnin' on the TV version of the show) paid the finest compliments anyone could ever pay to The Dave Warren Players. These people knew Gosden and Correll. Dave sat next to Conrad Binyon at the SPERDVAC Convention in California and Conrad said "the show is absolutely great." Conrad told Dave that he closed his eyes and the show took him back to his childhood and that it actually brought tears to his eyes. Bob Mott told Dave that John and he doing the two *Amos & Andy* shows was scary for its accuracy, that it was like *de ja vu* for him. Nicademus Smith hugged Dave after the show and said he thought "it was great". And they were great productions of the show heralded as **The Greatest Show in Radio** by all of us that know Old-Time Radio.

So, guess what? All of the Newark conventioners missed out because of the Newark Convention Board decided to censor the show. The chief instigator being Dave Zwangler. Zwangler wanted to play the Kingfish and when not cast for the part he pouted and convinced the board that it was politically incorrect. Instead of allowing a free an open debate of any controversy surrounding the production - they opted to censor the production. Things got so bad that at one board meeting Zwangler menaced Gary Zoggy with the threat to "do to him what the recent heart attack had not accomplished, if that show is allowed to be presented." Although Zwangler had been cast in many of The Dave Warren Players' productions, apparently he had forgotten his friends.

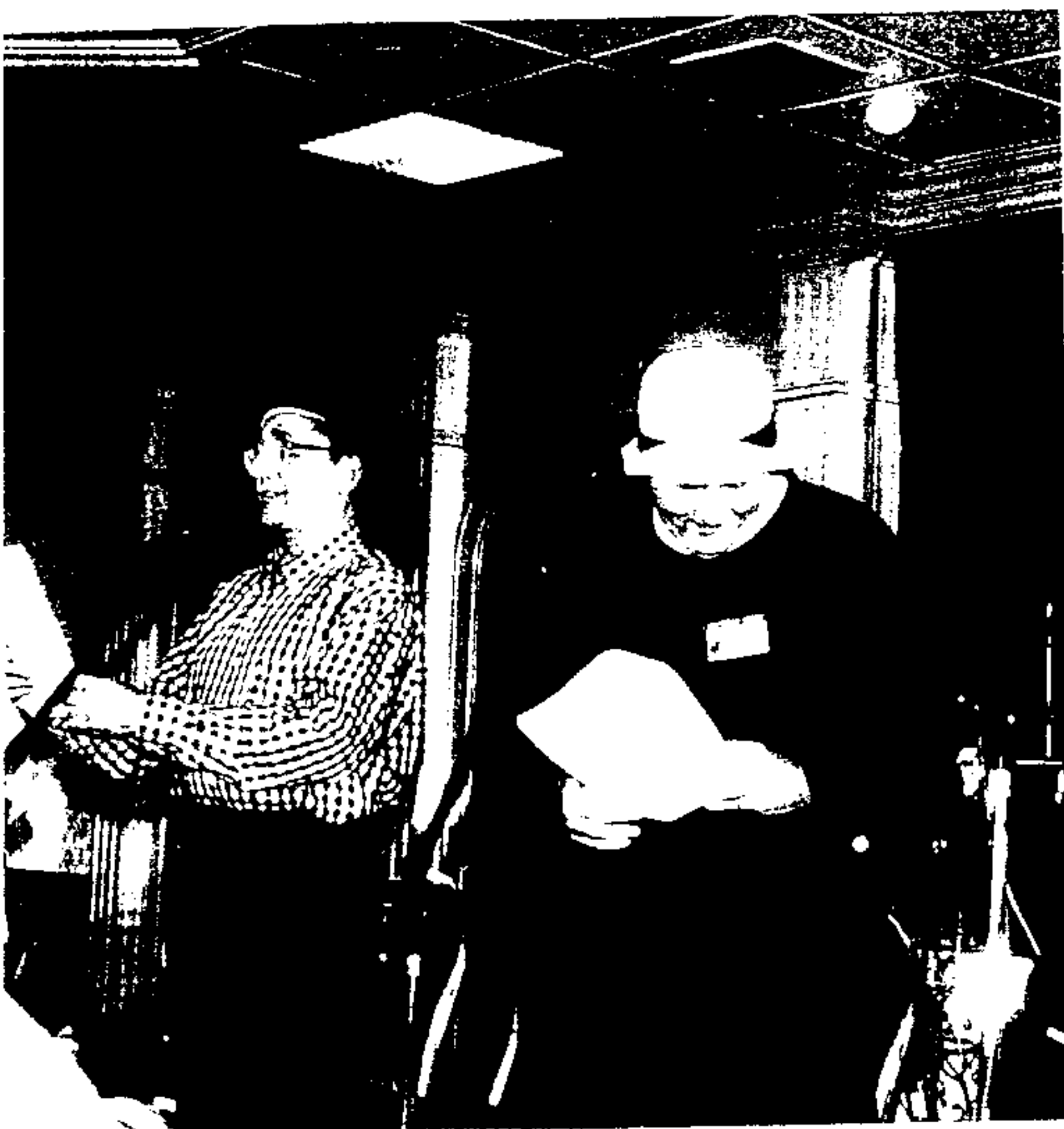
This reaction to an essentially pure radio recreation of the most popular radio show of the Golden Age had a chilling effect on Dave and all others aware of the situation.

Without a doubt this show should have been able to be presented. And too, anyone who had a different opinion to voice on any aspect of the production should have been encouraged to speak up both before and after the production and of course choose to listen or not listen to the show. This is what America is all about. **FREEDOM.**

Dave Warren is, and always has been, a gentleman. And this publication thinks the Friends of Old-Time Radio owes Dave and all who attend the Newark conventions an apology. God's Speed Dave Warren!



Here is Dave Warren, high atop the Wall of Honor in Portsmouth, Ohio on Labor Day, 3 September '01. He is annotating his Star, which will forever present famous residents of Portsmouth to the world.



Sam Levene starring with Dave Warren at FOTR, Newark



Dave Warren with Fritz Ritterspach in Eden Park, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Ron Lackmann -

When he was fourteen years old, Ron Lackmann auditioned for Nila Mack's CBS radio show, *Lets Pretend*. Unfortunately, he neglected to tell his parents that he had missed a day of school to attend the audition and that he had decided to use the name "Bobby Van Camp," which he thought sounded more theatrical than his given name. When CBS called asking to speak to "Bobby Van Camp," Ron's puzzled mother told the caller that there was no one at that address named "Bobby Van Camp," and Ron, afraid to tell his parents the truth, probably lost out on performing on one of his favorite radio shows. Ron had previously been heard performing in several radio plays produced at childhood friend Chuck McCann's amateur radio station, CMBC, which broadcasted over a one mile radius from Chuck's home basement studio in Queens Village, New York. Attending Hofstra College on a Drama scholarship after he graduated from high school, Ron played major roles in college productions of *Macbeth* (with Silent Screen star Ian Keith), *Othello*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Richard the Third*, *As You Like It*, *Once in a Lifetime*, *The Italian Straw Hat* and in the musical comedies *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, *Best Foot Forward* and *Wonderful Town*. At Hofstra, Ron worked with such talented fellow students as Francis Ford Coppola, Lainie Kazan and Lorraine Serabian. Upon graduation, Ron was elected to "Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities". While in college, Ron had his play *Under the Angeles Wing* produced at Hofstra and the play was subsequently produced at The University of Amsterdam in Holland. Also during his college years, family friend Arthur Wallace, who was a writer at NBC, arranged for Ron to audition for a role on the *Pepper Young's Family* radio series, temporarily replacing actor Larry Robinson, who had to take a leave from the show to rehearse for an upcoming Broadway show.

Ron played the part of Bud on *Pepper Young* for several weeks. It was also at this time that several of Ron's children's plays, including *Why the Indians Wear Moccasins*, *The Crooked Jar* and *The Gold Tree* were published by Plays, Inc. in Boston. After graduation from college, Ron was drafted into the United States Army and was given a Broadcast Specialist's Military Occupational Skill (MOS). While he was in the Army, Ron produced, directed and narrated the documentary radio series *Lifeline* for the Armed Forces Network and directed and acted in fifty two radio plays, which were produced at WFDH at Fort Dix, New Jersey, working with such talented draftee-soldiers as Steve Lawrence, Bob Dishy and Nick Todd. At WFDH, Ron also interviewed singer Elvis Presley when Elvis had a hiatus at Fort Dix, while waiting to be shipped to Europe. When his Army stint ended in 1959, Ron actively began to pursue a career as a stage actor and appeared in Actor's Equity touring and New York production of *Oklahoma*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Boy Friend*, *Death of a Salesman* (with Thomas Gomez), *King of the Dark Chamber*, *The Moon is Blue*, *Auntie Mame* (with Constance Bennett), and *Kelly*, prior to its disastrous and short Broadway run. He was also seen on such early TV shows as CBS's *The Verdict is Yours* and *The First Hundred Years*. In the early 1960s, Ron accepted a job as Director of Speech and Drama for the Central High School District #1 on Long Island, and supervised Speech and Drama classes and activities for three high schools and directed numerous plays over the next thirty year period. While he was teaching, Ron continued working as a Voice Over actor and narrated the Music in the Air programs for Pan American Airways (produced by Billboard magazine), dubbed many foreign films, and provided the voice of Farmer Gray for the re-dubbed *Farmer Gray* cartoon film series. During several sabbatical leaves and vacations, Ron also managed to play

a Macy's Salesman in the film *The Secret Mixed Up Files*, which starred Ingrid Bergman, and for five months, was actor Max Von Sydow's stand-in and photo double during the filming of William Friedkin's now classic film, *The Exorcist*. He also hosted the *Education in Action* radio show at WHLI on Long Island and his play, *Hadrian's Wall*, was produced at Madison Center in New York City. In 1970, Ron's book **Remember Radio**, and subsequently his **Remember Television**, had been published by G.P. Putnam's, and Ron became a semi-regular co-host and resident nostalgia expert on WOR's "Joe Franklin TV and Radio shows for the next three years. In the years that followed, Ron was the announcer for the *Mrs. Greenthumb's Gardening Show* on radio and wrote over thirty-five additional books including **The Soap Opera Almanac** (Berkeley), twenty books for Xerox's Education Publications "Weekly Reader" series, **The Encyclopedia of American Radio** (Facts on File), which won the Popular Culture Society Award as Best Reference Book in 1997, **Women of the Western Frontier in Fact, Fiction and Film** (for McFarland), as well as numerous articles for such magazines as 'The Grade Teacher, Patron, Hit Parader, Afternoon TV, etc. Ron's latest book **The Encyclopedia of 20th Century American Television** (Facts on File), will be released early next year and he is currently working on a book called **On Broadway: an Encyclopedia of American Musical Comedy** (also for Facts on File).

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ed: And for patrons of FOTR conventions, Ron has starred for many years in the Dave Warren Players productions. He also has conducted numerous panels with luminaries from the entertainment world including our favorite author and star Peg Lynch. We are lucky that Ron has shared his many talents with us in spite of painful health problems. Many thanks!



Bobby Van Camp in '78 playing Patrick Dennis in the Constance Bennett tour of *Auntie Mame*



Ron Lackmann, aka Bobby Van Camp recently starring in a Dave Warren Players' production at FOTR in Newark.

OBITUARIES

Raymond E. Johnson, Radio Host, Dies at 90

By RICHARD GOLDSTEIN

Raymond Edward Johnson, a versatile radio and stage actor who provided a signature moment for radio as the ghoulish host with the creaking door in the long-running "Inner Sanctum," died on Aug. 15 in Wallingford, Conn. He was 90.

Mr. Johnson was a familiar presence in the radio serials of the 1940's and won acclaim playing Thomas Jefferson in Sidney Kingsley's 1943 Broadway play "The Patriots." But he was best known as Raymond, the original host for the gothic tales of "Inner Sanctum," which made its debut in January 1941 and ran for 11 years, on NBC, CBS and ABC.

"I didn't have Leonard Bernstein and 200 musicians doing 'The Ride of the Valkyries,'" Himan Brown, the director of "Inner Sanctum," remembered long afterward. "All I used was a creaking door. There are only two sounds in radio that are trademarked — the creaking door and the NBC chimes."

After three bars of organ music, "Inner Sanctum" opened with the sound of Raymond turning a door-knob and then the creaking of rusted hinges. "Good evening, friends," intoned Raymond. "This is your host, inviting you through the gory portals of the squeaking door." Then came a gruesome joke, laughter intended to make his listeners shiver, and finally an improbable episode with ghosts and bloodcurdling sound effects.

When the stories — featuring actors like Boris Karloff, Paul Lukas, Peter Lorre, Claude Rains and Raymond Massey — reached their climax, Raymond offered another round of macabre laughter. Then he



CBS

Raymond Edward Johnson

concluded the evening by wishing his listeners "pleasant dreams."

Mr. Johnson also played the lead role in "Don Winslow of the Navy" and "Mandrake the Magician" in his busy radio career.

In the summer of 1945, after four years of mail fan sometimes accompanied by oil cans for that creaking door, Mr. Johnson stepped down as host of "Inner Sanctum" and was replaced by Paul McGrath.

By then, Mr. Johnson had achieved success in his Broadway debut as Jefferson in "The Patriots," a tribute to democratic ideals in a war-time America fighting fascism.

While appearing in the play, he continued as the host of "Inner Sanctum" on Sunday nights.

In his review of "The Patriots" in

The New York Times, Lewis Nichols wrote that Mr. Johnson "conveys excellently the various moods of Jefferson."

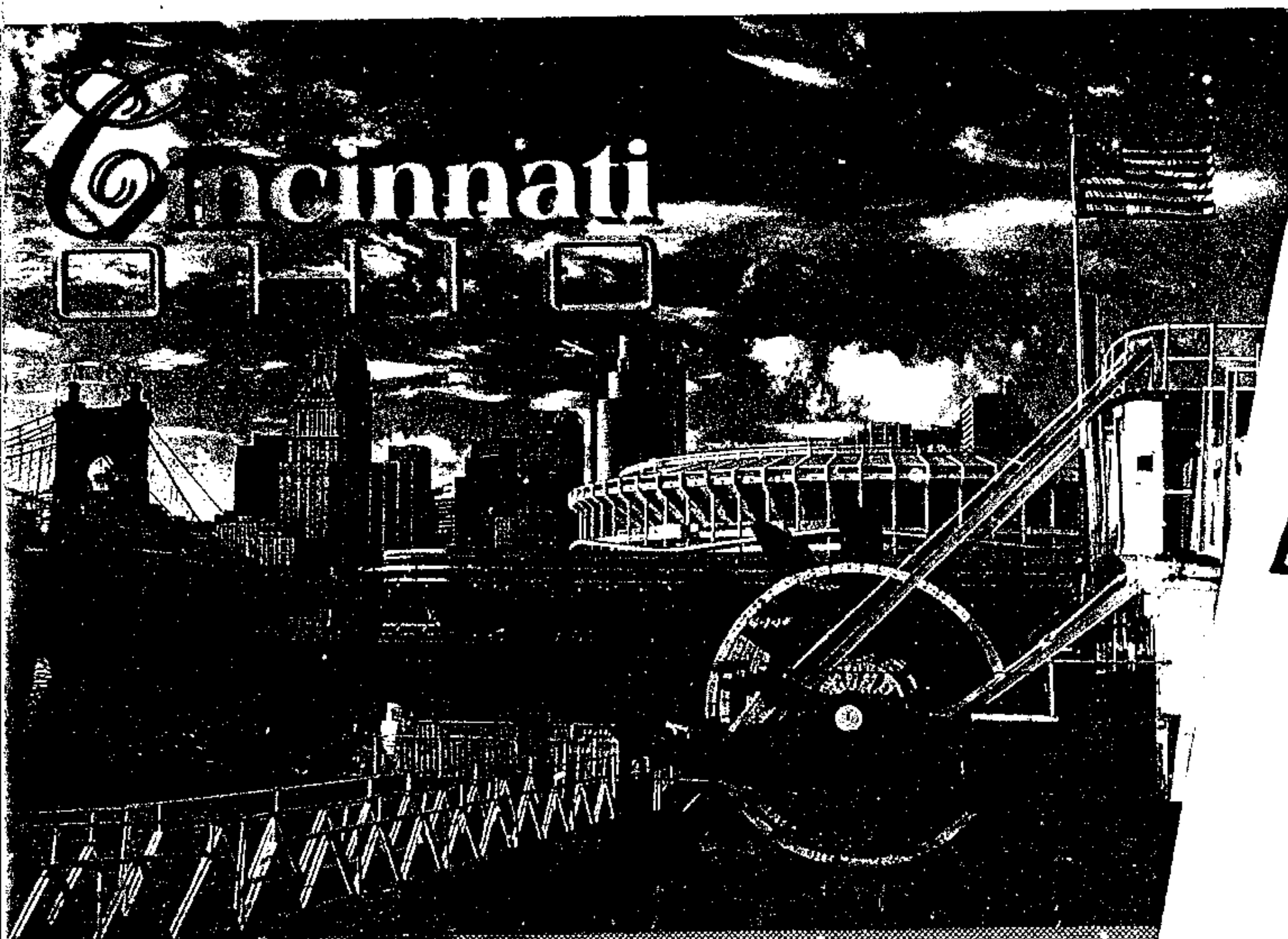
Raymond Edward Johnson was born in Kenosha, Wis., worked as a bank teller, and then studied acting at the Goodman School of Drama in Chicago. His sister, Dora Johnson Remington, who died in 1989, was a radio soap opera actress, best known for playing Evey Fitz, the married daughter in "Ma Perkins."

Mr. Johnson, who suffered from multiple sclerosis for many years, nevertheless revisited his starring years in radio in 1997, when he appeared at a gathering of the Friends of Old Time Radio. He delivered a reading from a portable bed.

His co-star on "Inner Sanctum" was not always a reliable presence, as Terry Ross, a soundman, recalled in telling how a young man setting up the equipment once tried too hard to please.

"We got the hinges and buried them in the dirt out back and watered them down like plants for a couple of weeks or so, till they got nice and rusty, then mounted them on the door a little bit askew, so they would squeak," Mr. Ross recalled in an interview for Leonard Maltin's "Great American Broadcast" (Dutton, 1997). "One of the setup boys came to me and said: 'Terry, I fixed the door for you. I oiled the hinges.' This was just before showtime. What do you do when the signature of the show was a squeaky door?"

Mr. Ross became the door. He imitated its creak with his voice, and Raymond and the eerie plot did the rest.



**CINCINNATI'S
15th ANNUAL
OLD TIME
RADIO
&
NOSTALGIA
CONVENTION**
ADMIT ONE
FRIDAY APRIL 20
\$7.00



Tyler McVey and Ester Geddes relax inside Xavier University radio station WVXU in Cincinnati after being interviewed, along with Rosemary Rice at the Cincinnati Old-Time Radio Convention in April 2001.

Steve Allen seeks dialogue on curbing media vulgarity

Actor, author and songwriter Steve Allen, 78, spoke on the power of television and the increasing amount of vulgarity in popular entertainment on March 31 at the National Press Club. Here are excerpts from his speech and answers he gave to questions from the audience.

Conventional wisdom — if you'll pardon my Washington cliché — has it that censorship is a terrible evil always to be opposed. But I think that very few people who have that opinion have arrived at it by even a casual exercise in critical thinking. . . . I suggest therefore that the time has come for us to reason together in the hope that we can arrive at a broader consensus as to whether it's indeed the case there is never the slightest justification for the imposition of censorship. What is indeed dangerous — and is wisely opposed in almost every case — is the right of any government or church to make the authoritative decision about unpopular expressions. It's obvious, however, that individuals, cultures and the state make a simple and sensible distinction between purely political and philosophical rhetoric on the one hand, and expression that calls into question certain moral and ethical standards of the other. No doubt in their hearts, extremists on the right and left would dearly love to silence each other, but they realize in the United States, they'd never get away with that, thanks to the Constitution. . . .

We all love law and order and we all love freedom. But what is not as readily perceived is these two honorable concepts can never in effect be harmoniously related. They are in conflict; they are on opposite ends of a pole of speculation. . . . Which means every law enacted is an infringement on freedom. When we say no one has the right to drive 75 mph in a school zone, we are censoring freedom. . . .

Another area where there is increasing demand for regulation of some sort, which includes aspects of censorship, concerns the national computer networks. No one with

even a casual familiarity with the less admirable aspects of human nature could have doubted that both professional pornographers and sexual weirdos would have moved into the Internet territory at the first opportunity. . . . I learned only quite recently that there were some 28,000 Web sites promoting various forms of pornography. I was advised yesterday that figure is over 100,000.

In late September last year, the Federal Trade Commission issued a special warning to parents about certain Web sites that dishonestly and closely duplicate legitimate ones but lead children and others into an electronic maze of pornography. The agency called the practice "page-jacking" and described it in very critical terms.

In another instance involving censorship, a few weeks ago President Clinton signed into federal law a ban against the sale of

one of the more revolting examples of creative license in an already remarkably sick culture: crush videos in which mice and other small animals are actually stomped to death by women wearing heeled shoes.

Although television networks and the studios that create their fare are seen as victims of censorship, a rather hopeful note is that all of them practice it themselves. Since the beginning of television, the networks have asserted their right to blue-pencil certain portions of scripts. . . . They say to writers, "You have the freedom to write whatever you want, but we have the freedom to decide whether or not to release your work, unedited, into the marketplace under our auspices."

Any editor in the world is also a censor. The woman who calls herself Madonna appeared on the David Letterman show one night and spent 40 minutes speaking in

shockingly vulgar terms. She refused to leave the studio when David made it clear he wanted her to. . . . The network was able, after the first few words slipped through, to begin to bleed out some of her more offensive words. There you had a case of censorship, imposed by CBS and Letterman's producers.

More and more demands for the last three or four years have been made to oppose the current emphasis on violent speech in popular entertainment at the same time that a separate but strangely contradictory social trend is detectable. An example being all the recent laws . . . intended to discourage and punish political incorrectness.

Certainly, no society has ever been so thoroughly depraved while . . . it preaches there must be no limitations to freedom whatever.

Q: When he spoke at this podium in January, Bob Wright, CEO of NBC, said he was not aware of any

Steve Allen: Although television networks and the studios that create their fare are seen as victims of censorship, a rather hopeful note is that all of them practice it themselves. Photo by Joseph Silverman/The Washington Times



problem of vulgarity on his network. Would you comment?

A: First we must remember Mr. Wright in our prayers. . . . Right in the middle of the battle, he doesn't appear to hear the gunfire. . . . There isn't just a problem, there's a hell of a problem.

Q: How's Jay Leno doing?

A: Well, Jay does a good job. Hosting a talk show is the easiest job I think anybody ever had. Anybody can do it. If you ask questions, you are a talk show host. I have an image that many years ago on a tree stump in a jungle and there were some guys on a log to his right. I am sure they did not sit there silently. Primitive man must have had some form of language. Therefore, that was the first talk show.

Q: How's Jerry Springer doing?

A: Jerry falls into the same category of people as Howard Stern. The best description of Jerry Springer is that given a couple of months ago at a television convention by Grant Tinker, one of the more noble names in television history, when he described Mr. Springer "as a disgrace to television." He was right.

Q: My parents did not allow any television in the house when I grew up. Is that an option, not exposing young people to television?

A: Unfortunately, it's not really a practical solution as much of television is gloriously creative, sensational and admirable and rightly wins awards and it's also the most convenient way to keep up with important news events. Television was, for the most part, really entertainment, certainly during the glorious 1950s, still spoken of by scholars as the glorious Golden Age of television comedy. We laughed at Jackie Gleason, Sid Caesar and Red Skelton and Victor Borge and not a one of them in that whole decade did anything morally questionable. There were no dirty jokes. They were not saints, but when you're on camera, you should have the responsibility as a citizen to leave the dirty stuff behind and just people laugh.

Web Battle Is Latest Episode in Old-Time Radio Serials

■ One firm is carrying on the fight to enforce copyrights, much to the dismay of collectors and Internet users.

By ERIK SMITH, Special to The Times

A little more than two years ago, when the digital music revolution was just beginning to take hold, an entrepreneur from Boston had an intriguing idea: If everyone else was putting music on the Web, why not old-time radio shows?

Pete Kenney, or "Boston Pete," as he calls himself on the Internet, created a Web site that allowed people to download recordings of old-time radio programs, everything from "Gunsmoke" to "The Shadow," and he racked up thousands of "hits" a month, winning a loyal following among fans of old-style radio drama. He also got an angry e-mail from the country's biggest seller of old-time radio programs on cassette--Carl Amari.

Amari, president of Illinois-based Radio Spirits, accused Kenney of trampling on copyrights he controlled and threatened to take him to court. Kenney promptly shut down his Web site, and so did dozens of other Web site operators who had followed his lead.

"Everyone thinks this stuff is in the public domain," Kenney says. "A lot of us cried and gave up."

It was the opening blow in a battle that rages today, maybe not quite as loudly as the war between the music industry and fans of MP3, but over many of the same issues. Over the last two years, tens of thousands of old-time radio programs have been made available over the Web in the downloadable MP3 format, free to anyone with a computer and an Internet connection. Some collectors even sell home-recorded CDs on EBay and their own Web sites, with as many as 50 or more shows on a single disk. Meanwhile, Radio Spirits maintains that it has sewn up the copyrights to just about every program that ever aired, and what the enthusiasts are doing is illegal.

But collectors have been trading and selling these old-time radio shows for more than 30 years, with a wink at copyright laws, and they argue, with some justification, that if it hadn't been for them, most of the programs would have ended up in the dumpster.

Some see the company's effort as an attempt to corner the market on old-time radio shows that not so long ago were thought to have no value whatever.

It's been nearly 40 years since anyone saw any value in old-time radio, at least in a commercial sense. The first network broadcasts came 75 years ago, and soon the entire country was gathering around the radio to hear Franklin Roosevelt, "Amos 'n' Andy," and the war news from Europe. Then television came along, sponsors and stars deserted radio, and the last few programs were canceled in 1962. Since then, a few revival attempts notwithstanding, radio drama has been as dead an art as whalebone scrimshaw.

But when old-time radio died, thousands of recordings were left behind. Though most shows before 1950 were live, virtually every network program after the late '30s was recorded for reference purposes or rebroadcast, usually in the form of pizza-sized records known as electrical transcriptions. Networks and sponsors destroyed these records by the thousands in the 1960s and 1970s, simply to clear storage space. Some records made it into libraries, and others wound up in the hands of private collectors who contacted performers and producers, prowled dusty radio-station storage closets and sometimes smuggled them out the back door.

No one knows now many shows survive, but 150,000 would be a good guess, says author Jay Hickerson of Connecticut, whose "Ultimate History of Network Radio Programming" attempts to catalog every radio program in existence. That's "barely 1%" of what aired, he says. But it's enough to fuel a war today.

* * *

Even before the Internet started bringing a new audience to a dead art form, young Carl Amari discovered there was money to be made from it too.

Today his Radio Spirits, a subsidiary of MediaBay, Inc., is a \$14-million-a-year business, selling lavishly packaged tapes and CDs through its own catalog, bookstores and discount outlets like Costco. Amari says his company has negotiated exclusive agreements with radio-show creators and their heirs, and he insists that just about everyone else is a bootlegger.

Over the last two years, his company has threatened litigation against Web site operators, tape dealers and CD sellers. It sued one Illinois dealer for copyright infringement, settling last year for terms that have not been disclosed. Still, the threat of litigation has done little to quell the Internet

activity--many of the Web sites are back, including Boston Pete's--but Amari says he's gearing up for a larger-scale legal campaign later this year. Web site owners might be required to pay a fee for each download; tape dealers might be limited to reselling Radio Spirits merchandise.

"I know it makes me look like the bad guy," he says. "But if it's protected by copyright, you're not supposed to sell it. If you went on a Web site and sold episodes of 'MASH,' you'd get a cease-and-desist order. Why should it be any different with old-time radio, just because it's a little older?"

Amari, 37, was born too late to remember when the radio waves were filled with mystery and horror and comedy. He heard his first radio program as a teenager, when a friend's father played a tape recording of an old episode of "Suspense." Amari says he was hooked, and by the time he was in college, he had turned a passion for collecting into a business, selling copies of his tapes through his catalog. In that he was no different from dozens of other hobbyists who ran off copies of tape recordings in their basements and garages and sold them by mail-order. But when he started playing the tapes on his campus radio station, Amari got a cease-and-desist letter from a syndicator who controlled the rights to "The Shadow." So Amari did something unusual: He started paying for licenses.

Since then Amari has put old-time radio on a big-business footing. In 1990 he began syndicating his own old-time radio compilation programs, such as "When Radio Was" hosted by Stan Freberg and now heard nationwide in 300 markets (regionally it's carried on stations in Ventura, Santa Maria, Palm Desert and El Centro). re-exposing the public to the form. Another of its compilation programs is "Radio Hall of Fame," which airs on KNX-AM (1070) Friday and Saturdays at 10 p.m. In fact all of the programming on KNX's nightly "Drama Hour" is licensed through Radio Spirits.

Amari estimates that he sells 6 million cassettes a year. The revenue helped him buy out his two major competitors, Adventures in Cassettes and Radio Yesteryear, and it also allows him to obtain material no one else can get, from archives like the Library of Congress that put sharp restrictions on access. But the most important thing, Amari says, is that he pays for the rights to everything he uses, or he makes sure that copyrights have lapsed and the material is in the public domain. He estimates that about 10% of his gross is spent on royalties--more than \$1 million last year. He won't reveal the full list of programs he claims to control, calling it proprietary information, but he says his staff is prepared to back

his claims in court. And he says compensating creators is the right thing to do, even if many hobbyists don't think so.

"Most of [the hobbyists and dealers] are not paying any royalties," Amari says. "When you call them on it, they get crazy."

"I can go out to dinner with the people who created these shows, and I can look at them across the table and hear them say, 'Thank you, Carl, for what you're doing.'"

One of those dinner guests is Irving Brecher. One of the last of the radio producers, Brecher created "The Life of Riley" in 1944, made a star of William Bendix and arguably launched a new kind of program--the sitcom. Brecher copyrighted every script and renewed the copyrights when they expired. But when tapes of the show started to resurface in the '70s, in stores and on the air, no one paid him a dime.

"These people are thieves," says Brecher, 87, of Los Angeles. "People have been stealing my stuff and other people's stuff over a period of years and I don't know who has the power and the money to stop them. At my age, I don't have the energy."

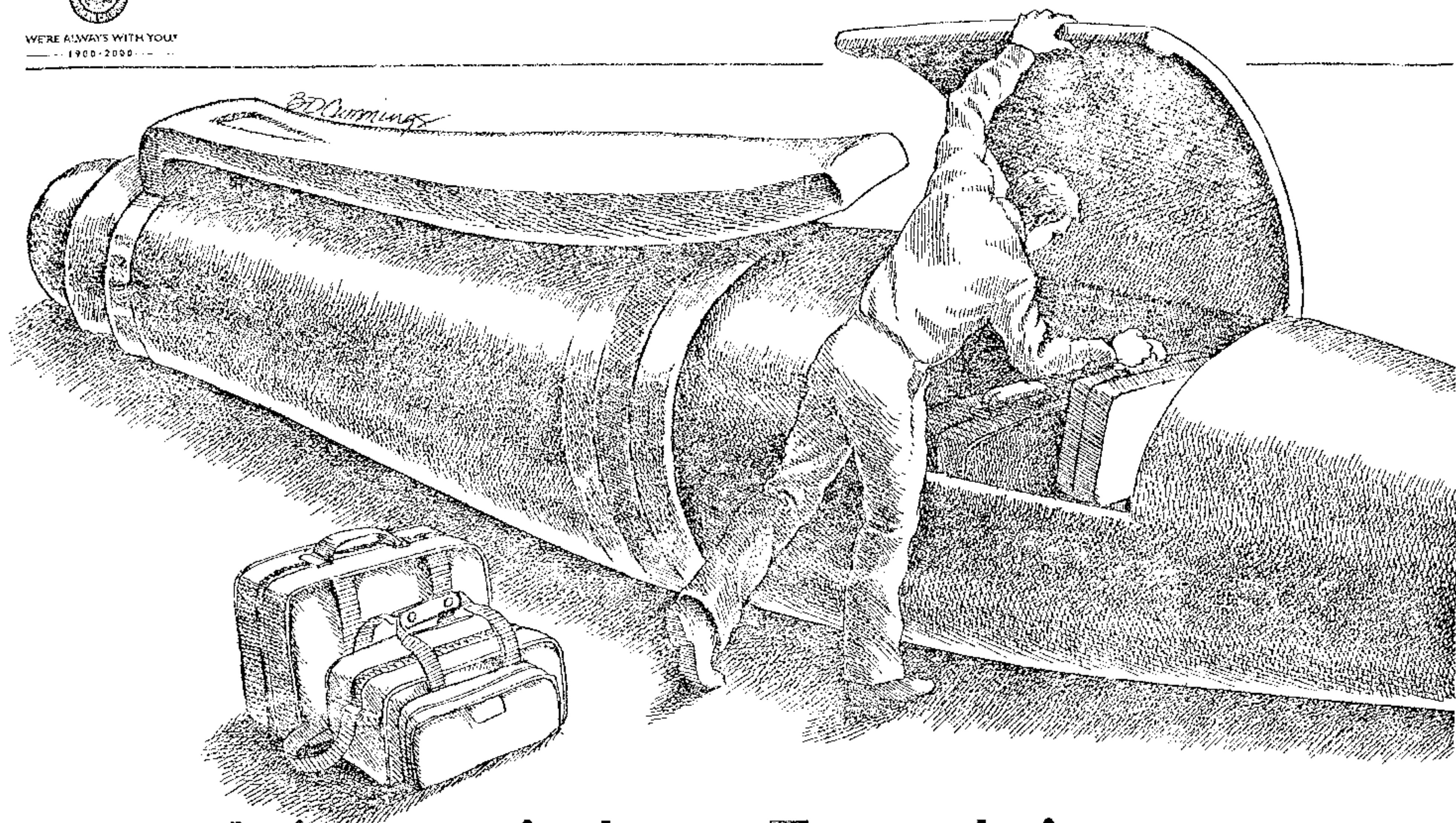
Now, through Amari's company, Brecher is finally getting a royalty. "I love him," Brecher says. But many dealers and collectors are outraged. A check of the Internet turns up hundreds of mentions of Amari's name, seldom in flattering terms. What galls the enthusiasts, they say, is that they're the ones who saved the shows in the first place. If Amari won't tell them what he owns, they can't tell whether he acquired the rights from the legitimate owners, and they can't dispute his claims without going to court.

"Essentially one company is attempting to own the rights to everything done on the radio," says Gordon Payton of Collingswood, N.J., who grosses about \$15,000 a year selling tape-recorded copies of science-fiction and horror programs. "It's like one company trying to own every black-and-white movie ever made and squelch and crush everyone else."

One thing is clear: Most old-time radio programs are still under copyright, even those that aired 75 years ago. Although sound recordings could not be copyrighted until 1972, the underlying script could be copyrighted as an "unpublished work." If producers registered copyrights and then failed to renew them, the script and the show are in the public domain. But in other cases, no one bothered to register a copyright--the vast majority of cases, Amari says. And when copyright law was revised in 1976, those unpublished works automatically gained copyright protection. Finding out who owns them can require costly legal research because there is no central record of ownership.



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Limericks, Freebies, and Never Once Drunk

BY NORMAN CORWIN
ILLUSTRATION BY BARBARA CUMMINGS

PHOTOGRAPHY IS TO THE LAYMAN PERHAPS THE MOST CONSTANTLY ENTICING ART. AS A BUDDY AND FOLLOWER, AT A RESPECTFUL DISTANCE, I FIND MYSELF, LIKE OTHERS, HAVING THE HEART OF A STIEGLITZ, WITH HANDS THAT SOMETIMES SEEM IMPEDED BY BOXING GLOVES. . . . WHAT IS EXASPERATING IS THAT ONE CAN FEEL CLOSER TO MANAGING THE SKILLS OF PHOTOGRAPHY THAN MOST OTHER ARTS, AND YET BE A LONG HOP, SKIP, AND DELUSION AWAY FROM IT.

—FROM "CORWIN ON MEDIA,"
JUNE 1974

In 1973 I was invited by Davis Dutton, then-editor of *WESTWAYS*, to write a monthly column under the rubric "Corwin on Media." That kind of credit nurtures the ego but also adds to the load, for should a column turn out to be flat or mediocre, it's far more painful if your name is featured instead of confined to a quiet byline or sheltered by anonymity.

Professional pride in what some call a vanity credit heightens resistance to the routine enemies of good writing—distraction, fatigue, writer's block, and, especially, deadlines. Once, after having committed myself to turn out 26 original network broadcasts in as many weeks, I found myself so harried and hurried, so besieged and pestered by deadlines, that I squawked in print:

*A deadline is the one thing I abhor
Go away, deadline, and don't come back no more
Go away and stay away because you are a pest
There ought to be a law to put you under arrest
A deadline is hungry, a deadline must be fed
Some day I'm gonna get so mad
I'll kill a deadline dead!*

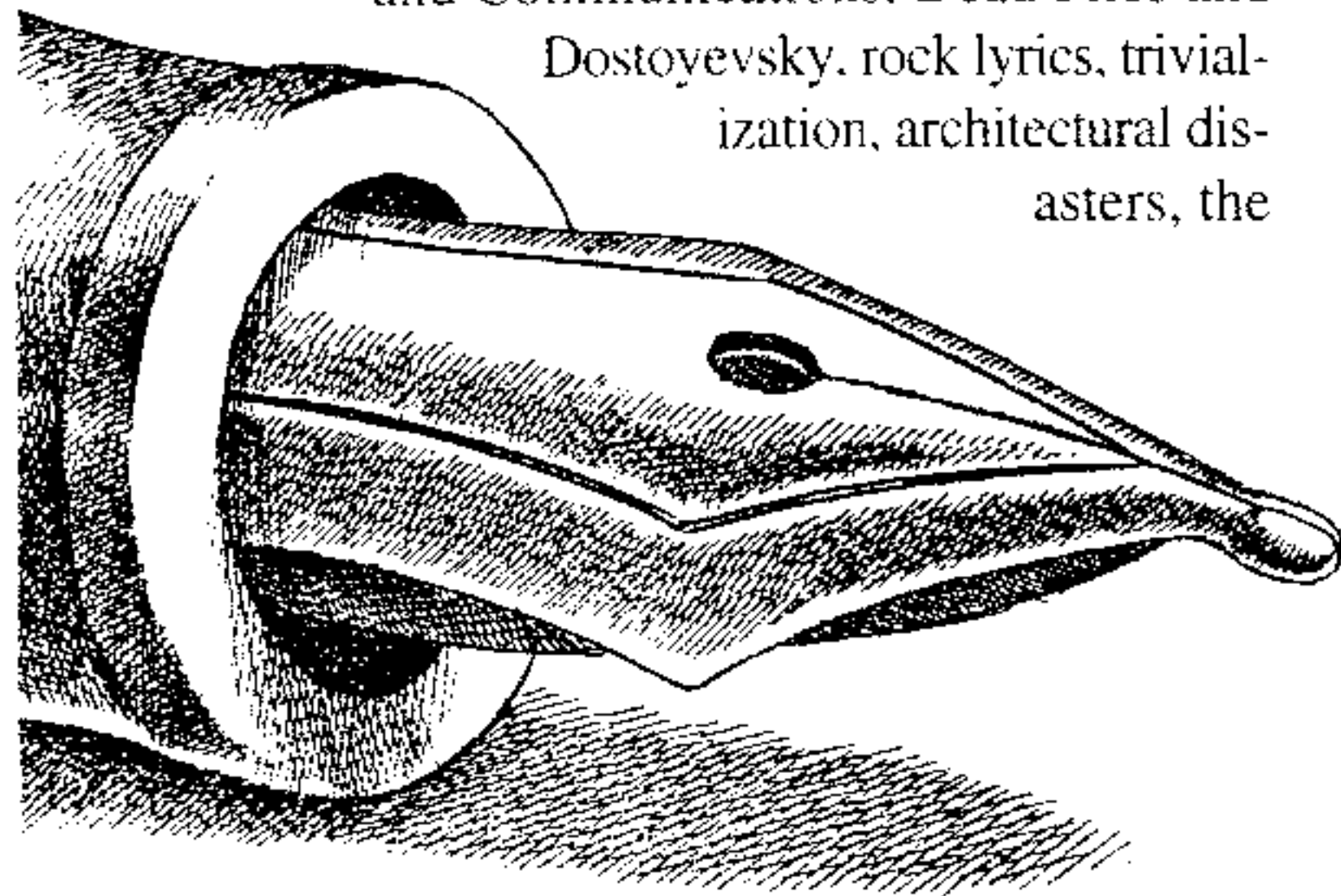
There are columnists whose pieces fly with the greatest of ease, but this testifier is not among them. Now and then when I'd slept well, eaten spinach, and remembered to take vitamins, a column would flow, but most of the time to get it right I'd have to claw and scratch, rethink, adjust, flounder, fiddle, and fidget, and if none of that helped, I'd either chuck the damn draft and start all over again or go to a different subject.

Not that martyrdom is required. Writing, if it's in your blood, is a compound of pleasure and pain, like weight lifting, mountain climbing, and raising a family. Once you make friends with the principle of rewriting, you can actually come to welcome pruning and polishing, to enjoy tracking down the *mot juste*, to exercising the cut-and-paste options on your computer.

Anyway, during an eight-year span I wrote 111 pieces, including eight feature spreads, for Mr. Dutton and his successor, Frances Ring. Their commission was to "bring a frame of reference to the media scene." *Ulp*. Media scene? That just about took in the planet, because all the world has for some time been not only a stage, but a

vast tangled weave of arts, sciences, electronics, journalism, print, music, dance, cinema, radio, television, literature, showbiz, advertising, commerce, and all the subcontractors and cousins of each.

The field was wide open, and I raced around it, writing columns on snobbism in the arts, canned laughter, small art museums, Conscience and Communications, Dead Flies and Dostoyevsky, rock lyrics, trivialization, architectural disasters, the



art of browsing in bookstores and record shops, amphiboly (look it up, do you good), Miguel de Cervantes, Ray Bradbury, Field Marshal Sir Archibald Wavell and his anthology of poetry, the composer Khachaturian, the late Heywood Brown, the even later Jack Smith and S.J. Perelman, puns, the uses of outrage, the joys of compendiums, the docudramatelementary (coined—a type of TV documentary), piffle, bores, Biblical movies, and homemade limericks like these:

*A talented actor named Kane
Complained of a curious pain
It turned out to be gas
Of a very high class:
Commercially useful butane.*

*A poet who lived in New Delhi
Scratched an ode on his fair lady's belly
He was locked up in jail
And held without bail
For stealing the lines out of Shelley.*

The ambience was perfect. WESTWAYS was housed, together with other exemplary departments of the Auto Club, in a magnificent building on Adams and Figueroa, now a historic monument. Although I seldom went there, I found the staff cheerful and cordial, never once drunk or disorderly. Ms. Ring was unvaryingly tolerant of my standard last-minute revisions and of communications such as one accompanying

a manuscript that had given me trouble:

*Phew!**
Love,

**Many interjections are called, but phew is chosen.*

There were perks to the columnship. Editor Ring phoned me one day to ask how I would like a freebie trip to Peru. She said Aero Perú was installing service to Lima and had invited a press party on its inaugural flight. Because I qualified as a member of the press, and the price was right, I went along. A strike of garbage collectors was in progress when we got to Lima, so the city was a bit ripe, but the itinerary compensated for this with a visit to the glorious altitude-migraine city of Cuzco and the magnificent ruins of Machu Picchu, followed by a hop over the Andes to jungle-bound Iquitos on the Amazon.

There was a second, similar bonus—a press cruise to Alaska, out of which I wrote a travel piece titled “Happiness Is Eating a Piece of Glacier,” based on the circumstance that when a small iceberg that had calved from a massive front—a trifle weighing only a ton or two—was captured by members of the ship’s crew and hoisted aboard for curious passengers to see and feel before it melted, I chipped off a piece of ice that had formed perhaps 200 years ago and ingested it. It tasted like ordinary refrigerator ice, but it had a history.

However, the biggest bonus of all was on the letters page—comments on the columns. They never arrived in numbers meriting the lump term fan mail, but every now and then came a greeting, a message of approval, a complaint, an inquiry, even a correction, and some of these missives seemed to me better-written than the columns to which they related. One correspondent named Craig Reardon wrote such a striking letter that it began a friendship now in its 28th year.

I replied on the same letters page to only three readers, twice to correct corrections, and the third time in response to a justified criticism of a mistake I had made in reference to a literary work. An alert Carol A. Cunningham of Bakersfield wrote, “Who is the masked man behind Mr. Corwin’s typewriter, retailoring his usually delightful prose?”

I confessed: It wasn’t a masked man, but a seedy raven that I let in because it looked cold and hungry. It perched on my shoulder as I wrote and suggested the lines. Like a fool, I listened. Nevermore.

It was fun, all the way. ⊕

RESTAURANTS, BUSES,
RAILROAD DEPOTS,
DENTISTS’ OFFICES,
LOBBIES OF OFFICE
BUILDINGS, EVEN
UNDERTAKING PARLORS
DISGORGE TAPED MUSIC
AT A VOLUME
EQUIVALENT TO THE
FLOW OF NIAGARA IN THE
SPRING. IF A RESTAURANT
IS ETHNIC, SO IS THE
MUSIC. THEY ARE
GENERALLY MATCHED.
ONE DOES NOT AS A RULE
HEAR JAPANESE MUSIC IN
A GREEK RESTAURANT,
UNLESS SOMETHING HAS
GONE WRONG. . . . THE
ELEVATORS IN MANY
HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS
CONTINUALLY LAVE
OCCUPANTS WITH TAPED
EARWASH. IT IS ALMOST
ALWAYS DESPERATELY
INNOCUOUS MUSIC,
COMPOSED I SUSPECT BY
CERTIFIED EUNUCHS AND
PLAYED BY OUTCASTS
FROM THE MUSICIANS
UNIONS OF THE WORLD.

—FROM “CORWIN ON
MEDIA,” AUGUST 1973



NORMAN CORWIN'S

MESSAGE FOR THE MILLENNIUM

**AN ELDER
ONCE ACCUSED
OF BEING
WISE HAS
SOME NOTIONS
ABOUT HOW
TO EMERGE
FROM AN
UGLY CENTURY**

ILLUSTRATION BY
DENNIS BROWN

16

I write this at an age when one is supposed to tread carefully in order to avoid tripping on the way out. A few acquaintances of good humor figured that I must have attained wisdom in my nearly nine decades on this planet and, based on that fragile premise, proposed that I share my sagacity with others curious enough to read anything that threatens to be talky.

Years ago the late Jack Smith, in a column in the *Los Angeles Times*, incautiously dubbed me the Sage of Los Angeles. I resisted the temptation to rush out and have cards printed identifying myself as such, and I wrote Jack that the very idea

of being considered wise gave me sage fright. For let's face it, there are as many old fools as young ones, and anybody who can't find his slippers when he is wearing them shouldn't be confused with Confucius.

The occasion for this piece is the same event that has excited, inspired, or scared millions of people: the arrival of the third millennium. To some it's a cosmic event, to others just another succession of days.

In any case, we inherit from the departing millennium certain ironies, chief among them that in all the elapsed time between hunters shaking spears

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2000



*Compassions fail not
in every morning*

and the plays of Shakespeare, between Samson and Samsonite, between Gomorra and Hiroshima, we have failed to make the world a safe or friendly neighborhood. Despite prodigies of discovery, invention, and exploration, sunbursts of art and science, perturbations of government, and convulsions of war—out of all that toil and trouble—we continue to flunk courses in civilization.

Many of our collective failings have resulted not from malevolence but from oversight. It strikes me as symbolic of the difficulties we face that the single wealthiest man on Earth, a Croesus whose groaning coffers hold more than the treasuries of some nations, amassed his billions from the work of scientists who, notwithstanding their brilliance, blundered into perhaps the worst screwup in the annals of technology: the Y2K goof that spread gloom and anxiety clear around the globe. This

cadre of geniuses simply overlooked two ciphers in the plump, round number 2000—all because they didn't bother to think beyond 1999.

The oversight stands as a model of shortsightedness, like those of gorging ourselves on irreplaceable fuels, fouling the air and water, stripping forests, and generally insulting the physical world as though there were no tomorrow, whereas there are, in fact, 365,000 of them in the new millennium alone.

We enter the third millennium nervously. After all, we are just emerging from a criminal century, the ugliest on record: two world wars, clusters of lesser ones that were no less deadly for those involved, and genocidal massacres on a stupendous scale. Added to which, in many walks of society—especially in city life—there is a low-grade but chronic malaise fed by confusion, rootlessness, sensory overload, loss of purpose, lowered standards, crass commercialism, insecurity, and a general sapping of moral vigor.

Not that it's been all downhill. The converse of "you can't win 'em all" is "you can't lose 'em

HOW DO
WE DETOXYFY
THE NEW
MILLENNIUM—
MAKE
IT SAFER,
CLEANER,
CALMER, LESS
NEUROTIC,
MORE
RESPONSIBLE
TO ITSELF AND
THE FUTURE?



THERE CAN
NEVER BE A
RIGHT TIME
TO STOP
CARING, TO
QUIT TRYING,
TO GIVE UP.

It comes down to the value of exemplars, which can be either positive or negative, and it works like this: Because of the principle that a calm sea and a prosperous voyage do not make news but a shipwreck does, most circulated news is bad news. The badness of it is publicized, and the negative publicity attracts more of the same through imitation.

This sets in motion a kind of self-renewing dynamo that accumulates energy like the batteries of a hurricane. What is more, exemplars are contagious: It took only one hijacker to infect commercial aviation throughout the world; today no major airport is without an elaborate security apparatus.

But good can be as communicable and catching as evil, and that is where kindness and compassion come into play. So long as conscionable and caring people are around, so long as they are not muted or exiled, so long as they remain alert in thought and action, there is a chance for contagions of the right stuff, whereby democracy becomes no longer a choice of lesser evils, whereby the right to vote is not betrayed by staying away from the polls, whereby the freedoms of speech, assembly, religion, and dissent are never forsaken.

I would caution those people younger than I to expect no fast solutions to stubborn social problems. The antagonisms, hatreds, insecurities, follies, fevers, lunacies, greeds—all that is odious in human intercourse—are not going to vanish out of courtesy to the new millennium.

But neither will there disappear generosity, love, fraternity, kindness, brotherhood, charity, civility, nobility of spirit, and the quest for peace. And toward the ultimate mix of warm benignities and cold reality there can be no greater catalyst than Goethe's chain of kindness—and again, still again, compassion. For to the extent that considerateness can be instilled in human relations, malice stands to be neutralized, frustrated, and even overcome.

I would say to the young who will occupy most of the coming century that the hard and costly lessons of past millennia are all there in the books to be studied and applied to the future. I would caution the young to beware of discouragement and despair. And I would remind them that all storms on this earth, even the worst of them, come to an end.

And so does this homily. ⊕

This country's foremost radio dramatist, Norman Corwin has written books, poetry, and countless magazine articles. He teaches at USC.

The NOTRE News is a collaboration of an international group of people dedicated to Old-Time Radio -

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Derek Tague, Orange, New Jersey
Vince Damiano, Queens, New York

National Old-Time Radio Enthusiasts - N.O.T.R.E.

[RETURN TO INDEX](#)YORK SUNDAY NEWS
JANUARY 14, 2001

Magician's son's success story a real page-turner

By KAREN MULLER

For Dispatch/Sunday News

While other high school kids were flipping burgers at McDonald's or pursuing the usual part-time jobs, Martin Grams Jr. was writing.

Grams, who lives in Delta, has turned out one book after another since his 1995 graduation from Kennard Dale High School. His first work, "Suspense -- Twenty Years of Thrills and Chills," was published in softcover by Nebraska-based Morris Publishing in 1996.



Grams Jr.

"Suspense" details the chronology of an old-time horror series which ran from 1942-1962, first on radio and later on CBS television. Many popular Hollywood actors, including Bob Hope, Lucille Ball, and Frank Sinatra made an appearance on the show, many in roles the audience would not expect, Grams said.

Now 23, the son of magician and museum curator Martin Grams Sr. and his wife, Mary Patricia Grams, Grams travels to book signings and appears at conventions when he isn't working on his new writing projects. His sixth book, "Alfred Hitchcock Presents: A Companion" will be released in softcover by Kirby Publishing in late April, and will be available at bookstores and on the Internet. Grams interviewed more than 150 actors, producers, directors, and writers, including Fess Parker, who played Walt Disney's "Davy Crockett," and Sydney Pollack, who made his directing debut on the "Alfred Hitchcock Presents."

Hitchcock's daughter, Patricia Hitchcock, wrote the forward for Grams' book. Officials with Kirby, the Arlington, Virginia-based publisher, expects "Alfred Hitchcock Presents: A Companion" to pick up a large European market and perhaps be its best selling book because of its long-lasting universal appeal, Grams said.

"Fifty years from now, people will still be writing books on Hitchcock," he said.

The young author who admits to struggling with high school English Grammar attributes his achievement mostly to long hours of hard work and his love of old-time radio and TV series.

"I'm always asked the question," he said. "'How can you do so many (books) and you're so young?'"

He makes the time, he said. He is motivated not as much by money as by a strong feeling the work needs to be done before the episodes are lost. The histories must be written, he said, before there is no one left who remembers anymore.

A professed "perfectionist," Grams said he often stays up until 1 or 2 a.m. writing, then gets up to work his "day job" as head teller at the HARCO Credit Union in Bel Air, Md.

After his first book, fans were asking for more, Grams said, so he wrote his second and personal favorite so far -- "The History of 'The Cavalcade of America'"

The NBC series ran from 1935 to 1957 and was sponsored by Dupont. Like "Suspense," the second book is a chronology of all the series' TV and radio shows -- including the members of the cast and the plot descriptions for each episode.

His third book, "The CBS Radio and Mystery Theater -- an Episode Guide and Handbook to Nine Years of Broadcasting, 1974-1982," took only six months to complete and was co-authored by New Jersey collector Gordon Payton, known as the "Sci-Fi Guy" in the science-fiction radio broadcast industry.

Payton provided Grams with all nine years' worth of press releases for the show,

which was broadcast seven days a week. Grams interviewed actors from the series to complete his work, including Tony Roberts, Rosemary Rice and Ralph Bell. Released in hardcover in 1999, the book retails for \$65 from McFarland and Company Publishers.

The fourth book -- published by McFarland and retailing for \$75 -- is "Radio Drama -- American Programs, 1932-1962," which includes chronologies of such shows as "The Adventures of Ellery Queen," "The Adventures of Superman," "The Shadow," and "Gunsmoke," among many others. The project took him almost two years to complete, he said, as he was working on other books concurrently.

After "Radio Drama," Grams wrote two chapters and the Hitchcock appendix for "The Alfred Hitchcock Story," edited by Australian author/editor Ken Mogg and published by Titan Books in London. His most recent release, "Have Gun -- Will Travel Companion," a collaborative work with TV producer/director Les Rayburn, was published in softcover in September by Kirby Publishing.

"Have Gun" documents all 106 episodes of one of the highest rated TV shows in its six years -- from 1957 to 1963, Grams said.

Grams also has written magazine features. His latest story, "War of the Worlds -- the Panic Broadcast Revisited," was published in the October issue of "SPERDVAC RadioGram" magazine.

There's no end in sight for Grams' writing projects.

"An overnight conversation on the phone can turn into a project the next morning," he said. "It's a lot of fun. I've become a celebrity without actually being one. I've made a lot of nice friends -- famous and not famous."

[RETURN TO INDEX](#)

Eddie Bracken Records

Menlo Park in Edison, New Jersey

the birthplace of recorded sound

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[thomas alva edison recording project](#) | [vintage recordings](#) | [vintage record catalogues](#) | [virtual tour](#)

Eddie Bracken



KNOWN RADIO RECORDINGS 1928-1930

*1928

There is a supposed recording of FDR introducing Al Smith at the 1928 Democratic convention, but it appears to be a recreation made, again, for the "I Can Hear It Now" record.

A series of phonograph records released on the Sears-Roebuck "Silvertone" label purports to feature a broadcast of the "WLS Showboat" program, but it appears to be a studio recording and not an actual off-air recording.

The widely-distributed "Amos 'n' Andy" sequence in which the two discuss the upcoming election is from a Victor record, one of several to be released by the team over the next two years, and is not a radio broadcast. Ironically, it is this phonograph record most often used by NBC to represent this series in various retrospective programs, since the network recorded only a handful of actual broadcasts during the program's 15-minute serial era. Syndication discs of "Amos 'n' Andy" began to be recorded and distributed by WMAQ, Chicago in the spring of 1928, but these were not off-air recordings of a live broadcast. Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll would record the shows ahead of the scheduled air date, allowing time for pressing and distribution. The shows were approximately nine minutes long, with each episode recorded on a single twelve inch 78rpm record. Each episode included a bit of redundant dialogue at the end of the first side to ease the transition between sides. Those stations with dual turntables would most likely have been sent two copies of each disc, allowing a smooth blending of the sides. Opening and closing announcements were done live by each subscribing station, and no commercials were included. Each set of discs was to be returned to WMAQ after being broadcast, and the discs were presumably destroyed on their return. So it is that only a very few of these episodes seem to survive. Most of those that do date from mid-1929. This was the first series to be distributed in such a manner, and the project was extremely successful. "Amos 'n' Andy" achieved national renown long before they began their network run, and the success of their "chainless chain" would have significant influence on the industry the following year

??/??/28--"Roxy's Gang" NBC Blue Network. WJZ aircheck recorded by the Edison Company. This program was discovered by Dr. Biel in the archives of the Edison Historic Site in New Jersey. I haven't heard the program, and have no details as to its content. The "Roxy's Gang" series was an important early variety show presided over by New York theatre impresario "Roxy" Rothafel. Performers ran the gamut from vaudevillians to classical artists. Other material found at the Edison site had some relation to Edison, so we might presume that at least concerning this particular show's content.

*1929

Following on the success of the syndicated "Amos 'n' Andy" other companies began prerecording shows for distribution to individual stations, and all programs dated 1929 currently in collectors' circulation that I have encountered are syndications and not authentic off air recordings.

Chicago was the center of syndication activity, with the National Radio Advertising Company being one of the largest operations, producing shows for such clients as the Meadows Manufacturing Company, Maytag, and Brunswick-Balke-Collender. N-R-A-C shows were usually recorded at the Brunswick Record studios and released on specially-pressed Brunswick 78rpm discs. Columbia Records had a similar relationship with some of the other syndicated program producers, releasing discs using its much-touted "New Process." By late 1929 or very early 1930, Columbia also began releasing syndicated radio product on 16 inch pressings at 33 1/3 rpm, taking advantage of technology developed for the Vitaphone talking-picture process. Most stations, however, had only 78rpm turntables, and the 78rpm discs are decidedly more common.

One such 1929 disc that has caused a lot of confusion among collectors is the "Don Lee New Year's Party" recording. This recording was a specially-prepared Brunswick disc featuring various KHJ performers distributed by Don Lee to his employees as a holiday gift in December 1929. It is not an actual broadcast.

There are however at least four authentic broadcast recordings extant from 1929. They include:

1/12/29-- Cascade Tunnel Dedicatory Program. NBC Blue network linecheck, recorded by the Victor Talking Machine Company. The Great Northern Railroad sponsored this hour long program, celebrating the opening of its tunnel in the Cascade Mountains of Washington State. Graham McNamee reports from Berne, Washington as the first train goes thru, and there are speeches by President-Elect Hoover and assorted other dignitaries. Back in New York, Phillips Carlin is studio announcer for musical entertainment by George Olsen and his Music, along with cut-ins from San Francisco by Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink. Pressings of the discs for this program were apparently distributed by Great Northern as a keepsake of this historic event to employees and clients, and

very few sets are known to exist.



2/11/29--Thomas Edison Birthday Tribute. NBC Blue Network. WJZ aircheck recorded by the Edison Company. Another recording unearthed by Dr. Biel at the Edison Site. According to radio listings of the day, this was an hour-long tribute to Edison on his 88th birthday intended as the first in a series of Edison-sponsored programs. The climax of the program was a short talk by the inventor himself. The recording is not quite complete -- the amplifier in the recording unit failed before the end of the program.

10/21/29--Light's Golden Jubilee Celebration. NBC Blue network. WJZ aircheck recorded by the Edison Company. The fiftieth anniversary of the invention of the light bulb is observed in this special program from Dearborn, Michigan. An array of luminaries including President Hoover pay tribute to Edison and his invention. Edison himself also speaks, and participates in a re-enactment of the first lighting of the electric lamp. Albert Einstein speaks by shortwave from Berlin, but reception is extremely poor. 32 minutes of this hour-long program survive, with musical selections deleted. The recording includes the earliest surviving version of the NBC chimes -- a five note progression very much unlike the standard G-E-C.

11/13/29 -- Remarks by Eleanor Roosevelt at the annual Seven Colleges Dinner in New York. WOR, Newark aircheck, recorded at Columbia University. Excerpts from this broadcast include a speech by Mrs. Roosevelt --then First Lady of New York State-- on the importance of education for girls. I have not examined the recording, but it is most likely an instantaneous aluminum disc, one of the earliest surviving examples of this format. The disc is held by Columbia as part of its Brander Matthews Dramatic Library collection, and a tape reference copy is held by the Library of Congress.

*1930

Syndicated shows become even more popular, with many companies now in the field, many with names designed to simulate those of the real networks. They include Continental Broadcasting, World Broadcasting, Radio Digest Bureau Of Broadcasting and others. Again, virtually all circulating programs dated 1930 are from syndication discs. Several "Amos 'n' Andy" sequences dated 1930 are, again, from commercially-released Victor records, and are not broadcasts.

1/21/30 -- Speech by King George V at the opening of the Five Power Naval Conference in London. BBC linecheck recorded by the Gramophone Company of London for commercial release on the HMV label. This is a fairly common disc, one of a series issued by HMV of important speeches by the King. Many of these are broadcast recordings. In addition to this recording, there is a lengthy series of discs from this Conference in the Brander Matthews Library collection at Columbia, but I have been unable to confirm if they are actual broadcast recordings.

8/4/30--Talk By Colonel Lindbergh. CBS and NBC networks. CBS aircheck recorded by "Electro Broadcasters Corporation and distributed on 2 10" 78rpm records. This is the earliest CBS recording in my collection, a ten minute speech by Lindbergh on the future of aviation. It was the aviator's first formal radio address, and he sounds decidedly nervous. Plans called for this program to be relayed to a worldwide audience by short wave, and Lindbergh actually gave the speech twice--the first time was shortwaved to the BBC in London, but weather conditions over the Atlantic prevented it from getting through. The second broadcast, the one recorded, was intended for stateside listeners.

11/30/30, 12/22/30, 12/29/30 -- Empire Builders. NBC Blue network, airchecks of KYW Chicago. Recorder unknown, but probably Universal Recording Laboratories. Part of a series of recordings of programs from this pioneering dramatic series to have recently surfaced. This program, sponsored by the Great Northern Railroad, was a dramatic anthology focusing on the tales of passengers on the Empire Builder, Great Northern's crack train on the Chicago-to-Seattle run. It was one of the first straight dramatic programs on the NBC schedule, and these programs provide an important window into the birth of network radio drama. The casts include such well-known performers as Don Ameche and Bernadine Flynn, and the production values are excellent, putting the lie to the assumption that all early drama was primitive. Additional shows survive from 1/5/31, 1/12/31, 1/19/31, 1/26/31, 2/2/31, and 2/16/31.

BACKGROUND

For most people the term "early radio" is used pretty loosely...anything before the introduction of format radio in the fifties would qualify, and certainly anything involving drama, comedy or variety programming. But for those of us involved in the collecting and documenting of radio history, it's hardly appropriate to refer to, say, a reel of "Johnny Dollar" episodes from 1960 as being representative of "early radio." It would be more accurate to confine the use of this term to radio up to 1935.

The date 1935 was chosen for a specific reason. It was in that year that NBC, spurred by the introduction of the so-called acetate recording disc, established its radio recording division. For the first time, a radio network took it upon itself to record and archive its programming for the use of artists, advertisers, and network staff. CBS established its network recording operation three years later.

But recordings prior to 1935 do exist. Experimental recordings were made by various phonograph companies and research laboratories almost from the beginning of broadcasting in the early twenties, using the newly-developed electrical recording process and producing phonograph-record pressings from wax masters. Some of these recordings were commercially released, others were made for experimental purposes and remain largely unknown. The Victor Talking Machine Company, The Compo Company of Canada, the Thomas A. Edison Laboratories, and Western Electric were among the companies producing such recordings. Later, some recording companies branched into the radio-syndication business, and part of that work involved recording certain network programs by line check for later broadcast on stations not connected to network lines.



From the late twenties, private recording studios in major cities were recording radio broadcasts off the air on behalf of advertising agencies or performers, using a primitive instantaneous recording system. The process usually used bare aluminum discs of from six to twelve inches in diameter, a special blunt-tipped recording stylus, and a heavily weighted recording head. The modulation would be indented into the surface of the disc creating a recording of the broadcast. By 1932, several companies were providing this service in New York, among them the Speak-O-Phone Recording Studio at 201 West 49th Street in Manhattan. This company maintained branches in other major cities as well, including Chicago and Boston. Another large New York based company was Broadcast Producers, Incorporated, which maintained a studio at 220 West 42nd Street. And, in Chicago, the Universal Recording Laboratories began in 1931 to provide a regular airchecking service. Companies such as these are responsible for most of the existing radio programs before 1935.

A home version of this recording system was marketed by RCA beginning in late 1930. Instead of aluminum discs, the system used recording blanks made of a plastic material, either solid or bonded to a cardboard core, but the basic process was the same. The signal was embossed in a preexisting groove, rather than being cut into a flat surface. Home Recording was featured on several high-end radio consoles marketed by RCA from 1930 to 1932 under the Radiola, Victor Radio, and RCA Victor nameplates. Home Recording was also featured by General Electric and Westinghouse as a result of their crosslicensing agreements with RCA.



So, the technology was in place by 1930 for widespread recording of radio broadcasts. And, contrary to the mythology which has arisen over the years, recordings were commonly made. Many ad agencies insisted on full recordings of the programs they sponsored, for post-air critiques. Fred Allen, in his book *Treadmill to Oblivion* notes that the agency producing his first series, "The Linit Bath Club Revue" of 1932-33, would listen to recordings of each of his programs the day after they aired and offer blistering criticism of the performance. Doubtless this practice was the rule for many agencies and advertisers determined to get the best value for their entertainment dollar.

Artists also recorded and collected their own programs. In a 1933 column, New York *Daily News* radio columnist Ben Gross mentions that orchestra leader Al Goodman was the proud owner of a complete run of recordings from the "Ziegfeld Follies Of The Air" series broadcast from April to June of 1932 over CBS for Chrysler...and that Goodman was negotiating with the sponsor to possibly syndicate these recordings for local rebroadcasts. (At least two of these programs still exist.) Although nothing appears to have come of this deal, it does indicate that recordings were not at all rare in the early years of network radio.

So, where are they? If hundreds, perhaps thousands of programs were recorded off the air before 1935, why do so few exist today? There are several possible explanations.

One is the inherent fragility of the aluminum recordings themselves. The discs were quite thin, and were easily bent. The grooves were easily gouged into an unplayable condition. The discs were intended to be played only with fibre or bamboo needles. A single pass with a common steel needle was enough to permanently destroy the recording.

Many discs no doubt suffered this fate.

Another factor is the purpose for which the recordings were made. In most cases, artists and agencies didn't have the foresight of Al Goodman, or of Rudy Vallee, who began to keep a meticulously catalogued archive of his programs in mid-1932. Independently made broadcast recordings, for the most part, were made for purposes of immediate evaluation...and once they had been examined, they would more than likely be thrown away. Performers who maintained an ongoing archive of their work appear to have been a definite minority.

A third factor cropped up years later: the scrap drives of World War II. With aluminum a crucial war material, citizens were urged to turn in as much of it as they could for recycling. Many patriotic performers could see no reason to hold onto ten year old broadcasts when there was a war to be won, and no doubt hundreds of early programs were thus lost.

And a fourth factor is simply the fact that many OTR collectors today are unaware that the aluminum-disc system ever existed, let alone even more obscure formats such as celluloid or gelatin discs. Most books and articles written on the subject of radio-show collecting gloss over the technical aspects of the recordings, leaving the novice collector with the impression that the 16 inch acetate transcription was the only method of preserving shows until the introduction of tape in the late forties. Even some advanced collectors may share this belief. Thus, when they run across an old uncoated aluminum platter, they don't recognize it for what it is. Labeling information is often sparse on the discs, often no more than pencil scrawling on the bare metal...and if you don't know what they are, it's easy to pass them by. And, even if a collector does recognize the discs when they are found, they are easily ruined by incorrect playback equipment. Home recording discs made using the RCA system are even more challenging, since if played back with an incorrect stylus, they reveal no recording at all!

So, despite the fact that the recordings were made in significant numbers, few have survived, and even fewer are in circulation. Exactly how many? That's a difficult question to answer, but I'd like to try and find out. What follows is a listing of authentic radio recordings made thru the end of 1931 that I either have in my personal collection, or that I know to exist. By "authentic" I mean a recording made either by linecheck or aircheck of an actual radio broadcast, and which can be confirmed to be authentic. Syndicated programs are not included in this list, nor are commercially or privately released phonograph records not made directly from actual broadcasts.

LUX RADIO THEATRE

Relive the great days of Radio
As a cast of skilled actors present Bernard Shaw's classic comedy

PYGMALION.
(The play that became "My Fair Lady")
Thursday 31st May at 2pm

Majestix (03) 5333 5888 **HER MAJESTY'S**

THE COURIER, Ballarat, Thursday, May 17, 2001

Radio theatre makes revival, temporarily

RADIO Theatre has been revived in a new production starring television and radio veteran Terry McDermott.

Lux Radio Theatre will bring the classic tale of *Pygmalion* (later adapted as the musical *My Fair Lady*) to Her Majesty's Theatre on Thursday, May 31 at 2pm.

The classic comedy of Professor Henry Higgins and Cockney flower girl Eliza Dolittle will be presented in the format that radio theatre took in its heyday.

There will even be interruptions by vintage commercials.

Mr McDermott remembers when Sunday afternoon radio was a prestigious form of entertainment during its 1950s revival.

"The performers used to play in front of a live audience, dressed in tuxedos and evening gowns," Mr McDermott said.

"People had the chance to see the radio stars and see the tricks behind the sounds, like the galloping,

AT A GLANCE

Who: Lux Radio Theatre.

What: *Pygmalion*.

When: Thursday, May 31.

Where: Her Majesty's Theatre.

How much: All tickets \$12.

Bookings: Majestix on 5333 5888.

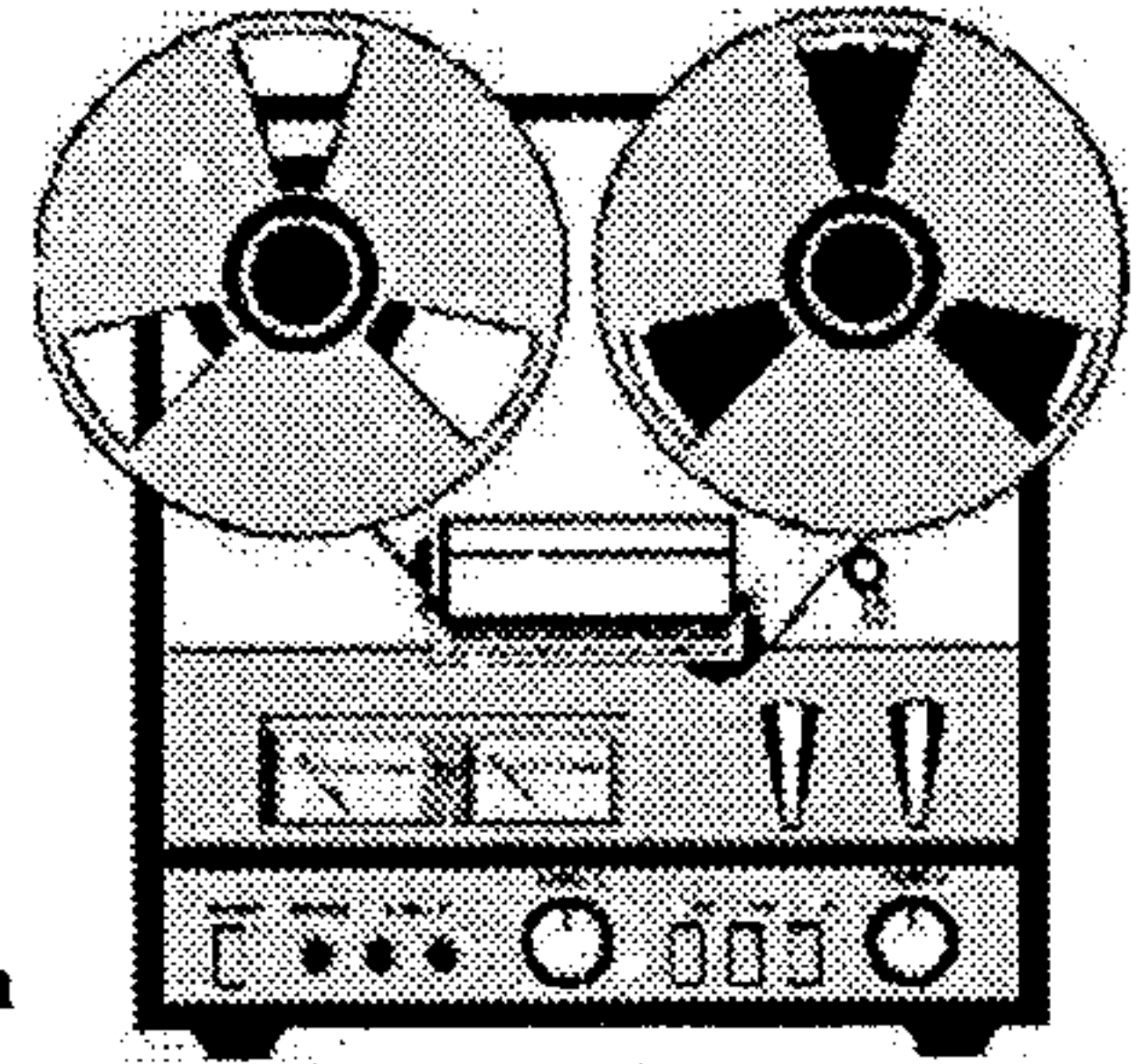
the storms or doors slamming. It added a whole new dimension," he said.

"People also find it fascinating that one person plays several roles, which you wouldn't realise if you heard it on the radio."

Australia

Guitarist Les Paul's Recollections on Crosby's Role in Tape Recording

Here is an excerpt of an interview with Les Paul, pioneer of the electric guitar, conducted by Frank Beacham. In the interview Les discusses the origin of the taping of network radio broadcasts. Paul was a frequent guest on the Bing Crosby radio show, where he often accompanied Bing. The complete interview can be found [here](#).



Les Paul: I'll tell you the story of how the tape recorder came to America. I was working with Bing Crosby on the Kraft Music Hall in California and Bing says to me: "You know, I wish there was a way I could do like you do. You have all your (transcription and wire recording equipment) at home and you can record your stuff in your garage. I have to go down to the studio and do everything. I can't play on the golf course. I'd rather do it right at the club house if I could."



It just so happened that Judy Garland and I were doing a broadcast on Sundays in New York City. We had to fly from California to New York and it took 19 hours. We were playing at 53rd and Broadway and a little old man came up to me -- this was about 1945 or 46 -- and he said his name was Dick Ranger and he had a tape recording machine. He said he picked it up when we invaded Luxembourg in the big push to end the war.

This was big news to me. Colonel Ranger said he walked into a radio station and saw this tape machine and grabbed it. It was too big to carry or ship back so he dismantled it and brought it back to the States piece by piece. Colonel Ranger took this tape machine -- it was called a Magnetophon -- to Orange, New Jersey and put it back together. Then he made a copy of it he called the Rangertone.

Meanwhile, I go to Bing Crosby and tell him there's a man that nailed me at 53rd and Broadway with a tape machine. I said that's your guy. You can put that machine right on the golf course and you can record your show from there. Just get your trio to play behind you and there you go. So Bing says find the guy and bring him out here.

I called Colonel Ranger, brought him out to California, and he demonstrated the recorder at KNX, which is CBS out in Hollywood. Bing said I'll take 50 of them. But Ranger said he could only make one a year. This guy just wasn't a good businessman. Bing says I want someone who can make 50 of them and I need them now.

Well, there was another guy named Jack Mullin who also had one of the German recorders in his garage but he hadn't put it together yet. Finally, Mullin put his together and took it over to Ampex. The people at Ampex took a look and said let's go with it. But first, they said, they had to have some money...so they went to Bing for the cash. He said how much do you want? They said \$50,000. Bing wrote out a check for fifty grand with no interest. He said I don't want any part of the Ampex company. I don't want anything to do with you guys other than have you deliver me those machines. And so it was that I worked on the very first broadcast with tape (Bing Crosby Philco Radio Time, 1947).

If one of the reels on that machine broke it could have killed five people in the room...it was going so fast. The tape that the Germans were using was made of paper. It was like fly paper. The Germans would just scratch some iron dust on it. Later 3M provided the first version of "Scotch" recording tape to replace that German paper stock. So that's how the tape machine got to America. It just floated up on our shores and Ampex made a fortune from it.

Let me say one more thing about tape, since I was there from the beginning. Anybody out there who thinks they've got something stored away on tape had better think twice because we don't know how long tape is going to last. It's almost like a (heart) bypass, unless someone stays around long enough to tell us we won't know how long it's going to work.

(Interviewer's Note: The EQ for Jack Mullin's re-designed circuitry of the 1943 Magnetophon became the basis for the NAB curve. The first pair of Ampex Model 200 tape recorders -- serial numbers 1 and 2 -- were delivered to Jack Mullin at the Bing Crosby show in Hollywood in April, 1948 to replace Mullin's original Magnetophons, which were being used to record the Crosby radio show.)

Les Paul, now 84, wows 'em at Iridium

By CHIP DEFFAA

FORTY-FIVE minutes after Les Paul's first set at Iridium ended, patrons were still lined up getting autographs from the 84-year-old father of the electric guitar.

Stefan Cruet of Corham, N.Y., who talked his uncle into taking him to see Paul for his 15th birthday, got a CD signed. Another teen musician standing behind him, Jonathan Schara of Hicksville, didn't have a CD. Instead he kneeled and got Paul to autograph the manufacturer's label inside his T-shirt.

The next young fan, a drummer, didn't want his name to appear in the paper, except for "Bob," be-

cause he got Paul to autograph a cloth napkin he'd stolen from the club.

He told Paul, "You're an inspiration." Paul cheerfully wrote on the napkin: "Keep on banging those godd- - - - drums!"

One older fan admitted he made a pilgrimage from Spain to see Paul. "He's 84 — he won't be here forever," said the Spaniard.

Paul, who's been playing professionally since leaving home at age 13 in 1928, is looking forward to many more happy years: He remarked off-handedly that his mother lived to be 101½.

As for Paul's playing, it's still blessed with great warmth, whimsy and continuity. He tells a

story well, whether he's using his guitar or just kibbitzing between tunes.

He is one of those rare musicians whose style is so distinctive, any real fan could identify him in just a few notes.

During his set he caressed melodies well worth caressing: "Out of Nowhere," "Someday Sweetheart," "Over the Rainbow." (He was playing some of these same numbers 16 years ago when I reviewed him in New Jersey.)

He'll bend notes playfully, or hold them, building tension until he taps his guitar, seemingly to shake free the next ones.

The set looped along amiably. No, Paul doesn't play the fast

runs of his youth; it would be unrealistic to expect him to. But ultimately it's about making music and entertaining the public, not about how fast you can play.

Once in a while Paul and his cohorts Lou Pallo (rhythm guitar) and Paul Nowinski (bass) picked up the tempo — on "Brazil" and "How High the Moon" (which he just about owns). And he sang an improbable ditty he suggested was first sung by Adam to Eve: "I Want My Rib Back."

It's all good fun. And there's nothing else quite the same in the city.

Iridium, 48 W. 63rd St., (212) 582-2121; \$20 cover, \$15 minimum; 8:45 and 10:45 p.m. Every Monday. Open-ended.

WATCH FOR AN EVEN BETTER IRIDIUM COMING THIS SUMMER!

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TONIGHT THRU SUNDAY

TOMMY FLANAGAN TRIO
Feat. Peter Washington, Tootie Heath

JULY 3 - JULY 8 JULY 10 - JULY 15

LOUIS HAYES **JOHN HENDRICKS**
& The Cannonball Addlerley Legacy Band

EVERY MONDAY

LES PAUL & His Trio
The Legend & Father of the Electric Guitar

48 W. 63RD STREET • 212-582-2121
Buy Tickets Online at www.iridiumjazzclub.com



Williamsburg Film Festival

Back in 1987 a small band of dedicated Western movie fans began congregating at a home a few scant miles west of Williamsburg, Virginia. For four Saturdays a year this home was transformed into the local bijou of the 1940's. Besides watching 16mm movies, food and friendship kept the loyalists returning again and again.

After years of attending several Film Festivals around the country, the group said "We can do that -- even better." And so, in 1997, the Williamsburg Film Festival (WFF) was born.

The WFF started small, but has grown steadily over the years. It's a very friendly festival, having many similarities with our own favorite festival, the FOTR. In fact, in many respects the WFF retains the intimate feeling prominent in the FOTRs of several years ago.

There's a huge dealer's room, where you can buy videos and just about anything relating to 1930's and 1940s movies. In fact, all day, every day of the festival, one room shows old movies continuously. A second room shows videos, featuring several old TV programs.

There are anywhere between a half-dozen and ten guest stars each year. WFF premiered with the likes of Gene Evans, Will Hutchins, and James Best. Since then the lineup has included such super talent as Dale Robertson, Johnny Western, James Drury (1998), Ben Cooper, Jan Merlin, John Mitchum (Robert's brother), Peter Breck (1999), Gale Storm, Joseph Campanella, Harry Carey Jr. (2000), Beverly Garland, Ruta Lee, and our old FOTR friend, Will Jordan (2001).

The guest stars sit in the dealer's room, offering fans the opportunity to secure their autographs in addition to visiting with them. The guests sit in on a movie that features them, wherein they talk a bit about their work in the film and offer fans to ask questions.

A highlight each afternoon is a 90-minute panel, featuring anywhere from two to four of the guest stars. The subject could be general, all about the star's career, or can be themed, such as one a few years ago on old-time radio with Ben Cooper, Jan Merlin, and John Mitchum (all of whom appeared on radio). After dinner, there's usually either a bonus panel or (sometimes, both) entertainment (guests who sing and play instruments).

Saturday evening is the big festival-ending banquet, which includes a served dinner and entertainment from several of the guests. This past year's featured entertainer was Will Jordan, who wowed the audience with some impressions he hadn't used in years.

The 2002 WFF is starting to take shape. Guests already confirmed are Jan Merlin and Frankie Thomas from "Tom Corbett, Space Cadet", G.D. Spradlin, and

commensurate character actor William Schallert (whose hundreds of TV appearances rival that of even the great Parley Baer). The dates are FEB 28 - MAR 2 of 2002, and it'll be held once again at the Holiday Inn - Patriot in Williamsburg. They offer super rates, and you can book your room at 1-800-446-6001. To follow along as WFF-2002 shapes up you can periodically check in at their web site - <http://go.to/williamsburgfilmfestival>

Any questions not answered on the web site can be handled by Mitch Weisberg at 1-540-373-4592.

Hope to see some new faces at WFF in the near future. It is a lot of fun. And this year, there's a huge old-time radio tie-in with the Tom Corbett contingent!!



In February 2001, Frankie Thomas (2nd from left) and Jan Merlin (far right) will head the Sci-Fi convention



BOB BAILEY

You don't think of "leading men" in a Laurel & Hardy movie. With Stan and Ollie as the center of attention, the male leads consisted of either a traditional "juvenile" role or an incidental romantic presence.

Only rarely did we see an actor who shared equally in Laurel & Hardy's dialogue, plot situations, and comic routines. In the 1930s, it was Dennis King (*The Devil's Brother*). In the 1940s, it was Bob Bailey (*Jitterbugs* and *The Dancing Masters*).

Robert Bainter Bailey was born on June 13, 1913 in Toledo, Ohio. Like Stan Laurel, Bailey was born into a show-business family and grew up in a theatrical atmosphere. He became a regular member of the Chicago radio community, with recurring roles in such shows as "The Road of Life," "Scattergood Baines," and "That Brewster Boy."

Bob Bailey answered the call from Hollywood in 1943, and broke into films opposite Laurel & Hardy in *Jitterbugs*. This was a remake of a 1933 Fox film called *Arizona to Broadway*, and Bailey took the featured role of "Chester Wright," a worldly confidence man.

Bailey worked so well with Laurel & Hardy that he was hired for their next film, *The Dancing Masters*. His role of "Grant Lawrence," boy inventor, was neither as demanding nor as prominent as his work in *Jitterbugs*, but he tried his best with low comedy. In the aftermath of a ginger-ale-spraying sequence, Bailey's half-sheepish, half-snarling "I got my pants wet!" is a comic highlight.

Bob Bailey had superb dialogue skills but limited visual "business"; his few moments of facial mugging in *The Dancing Masters* are amusing but mechanical, as though he was uncomfortable in broad comedy. 20th Century-Fox took the hint and turned him into "Robert Bailey," promising young dramatic actor. Throughout 1944 Bailey had moderate to minor roles in five 20th Century-Fox features. He lacked the chiseled profile and rugged physique of the typical Hollywood leading man. His soft, boyish features were not the matinee-idol type. His talents, and especially his voice, were better suited to broadcasting, so Bailey returned to network radio.

In 1955 CBS Radio revived one of its popular detective series, "Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar," and cast Bob Bailey in the lead. The role had been played in the hard-boiled gumshoe tradition by Hollywood actors Edmond O'Brien and John Lund, but Bailey brought new dimension and sensitivity to the tough-guy role. The Bob Bailey "Johnny

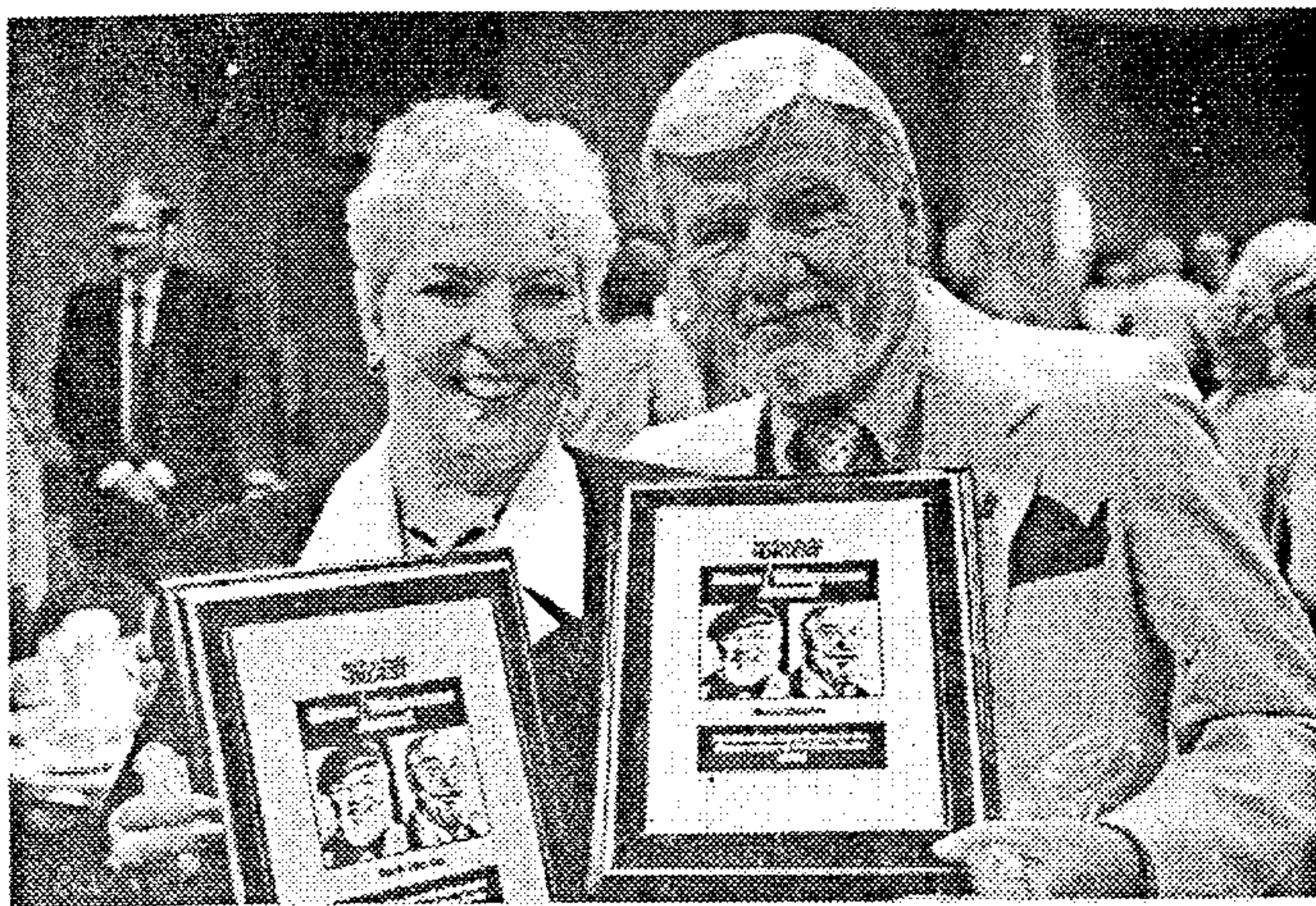
"Dollars" are among the most popular and collectible recordings of vintage radio.

In late 1960, CBS moved production of "Johnny Dollar" to New York. Bailey, unwilling to relocate, was forced to relinquish the job. He kept busy writing TV scripts-the children's adventure show "Fury" was an ongoing project-but his heart was in acting. Plans to bring "Johnny Dollar" to television were dropped when producers couldn't reconcile Bailey's colorful voice with his unimposing (5-foot-9, 150-pound) physique. Bailey made one more film appearance: he plays a reporter in the 1962 Burt Lancaster drama *Birdman of Alcatraz*.

After this film, Bailey suddenly withdrew from show business and settled into a solitary private life, apart from family and friends for many years. In the 1970s, reunited with his daughter Roberta Goodwin, he lived comfortably in a California suburb. Bob Bailey suffered a stroke in 1983 and passed away that year. He was 70 years old.

Bob Bailey was a skilled dramatic actor who made two funny movies almost by accident. We salute his contributions to the world of Laurel & Hardy.

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**Barb and Dave Davies - Stone/Waterman Award Winners
at Cincinnati Convention 2000**