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RADIO
GUIDE



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NOSTALGIA DIGEST

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FEBRUARY-MARCH, 1990

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NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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HELLO, OUT THERE IN RADIOLAND!

February is—and has been for some time—Jack Benny Month on *Those Were The Days*.

This year, we're taking a look at Jack's 23 year career on radio, with representative broadcasts from every one of those 23 years. You'll hear Jack's first and last radio programs, plus guest appearances and significant shows from his more than two decades on the air.

Karl Pearson, who usually writes about the big bands, is also a big Benny fan, and in this issue of the *Digest* he takes a look at Jack's radio career while Bill Oates, a new contributor to this magazine, submitted a fine article about the films of our 39-year old idol.

All in all, it should be a special time for Jack Benny fans.

• • •

The CBS Radio Mystery Theatre was withdrawn from syndication as of December 31, 1989 and since that date has not been part of our *Old Time Radio Classics* programming on WBBM. Because of that and other program acquisition considerations, our January *Radio Classics* schedule was disrupted and our February-March schedule was not available as we went to press with this issue of the *Digest*. We hope to have the April-May schedule in place for our next issue. If you want us to send you a copy of the February-March listings for WBBM when they become available (probably early February), send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Radio Classics, Box 421, Morton Grove, IL 60053.

Thanks for listening.

The Remarkable Radio

BY KARL PEARSON

This is Jack Benny talking. There will a slight pause for everyone to say, "Who cares?"

It was with these very words that Jack Benny made his radio debut on March 29, 1932, as a guest on Ed Sullivan's program on station WHN, New York. Benny's appearance was a one-shot "freebie" that ironically would lead to a successful 23-year career in radio.



JACK BENNY & MARY LIVINGSTONE

Jack's spot on the Sullivan program had been heard by an advertising agency executive who was so favorably impressed with Benny's talents that he suggested one of his clients, Canada Dry, sponsor Jack in a series of his own. The *Jack Benny Canada Dry Program* premiered on May 2, 1932 over the NBC-Blue Network. Billed as "The Canada Dry Humorist," he was heard on Monday and Wednesday nights. Also featured on the program were George Olsen's Orchestra, vocalist Ethel Shutta (Mrs. Olsen), and announcer Ed Thorgersen (who was later replaced by George Hicks).

The Benny character on those early programs is very different from the one that most listeners remember. Jack was a suave "Master of Ceremonies" who told one-liners. But even in the beginning, listeners found the Benny program different from the standard radio fare. Jack was the first comedian who openly kidded his sponsor and product, which was unheard of in the early days of radio. Most sponsors employed announcers who extolled the virtues of the product in an almost reverent manner. Jack poked fun at the sponsor and the product and radio listeners enjoyed it.

The Canada Dry Program switched to the CBS network on October 29, 1932, where it was heard on Sunday and Thursday nights. The switch to CBS brought with it a new cast: Ted Weems and his orchestra, vocalist Andrea Marsh, and CBS staff announcer Paul Douglas, who later became a successful film actor. The only holdover from the NBC series was Mary Livingstone, Jack's wife, who first appeared on the Canada Dry Program on August 3, 1932, as a fan from Plainfield, New Jersey. Mary's initial appearance on

Career of Jack Benny



JACK BENNY AND HIS NEW WRITERS (from left): George Blazer, John Tackaberry, Jack, Sam Perrin, Milt Josefsberg.

the Benny show brought such large volumes of fan mail that she became a regular member of the cast.

The switch to CBS did not last long. There were rumors in the trade that Canada Dry was not happy with their product being lampooned. Whatever the reason, the last Canada Dry Show was heard on January 26, 1933. Within a matter of weeks, Jack had a new sponsor, General Motors.

The *Jack Benny Chevrolet Program* was heard once a week on Friday nights over NBC's Red Network. A new cast was assembled, with Mary once again being the only holdover. The cast included announcer Howard Claney, tenor James Melton, and Frank Black and his Orchestra. Friday night became "Jack

Benny night" as listeners tuned in to hear one of the nation's most popular radio shows.

Jack and writer Harry Conn devised bits of business previously unheard on radio. The Benny program was one of the first to use the orchestra leader and other cast members as foils to the star. The Benny program was also one of the first to make major use of sound effects. In the early days of radio, cast members and guests merely walked up to the microphone with no creative way of blending them into the program. Benny and Conn created the door knock as a device to work characters into the story line. The most popular innovation of the Benny show was the satirization of current movies. One of the first satirizations involved the MGM picture "Grand

BENNY'S RADIO CAREER

Hotel" which Jack retitled, "Grind Hotel."

At the start of the 1933-34 season, there were some minor changes in the program as the Benny show moved to Sunday nights. Alois Havrilla replaced Howard Clancy as announcer and James Melton left the program to start a career of his own. Melton had become an important part of the Benny show and critics wondered if Melton's departure would affect Jack's popularity. Jack hired Frank Parker as Melton's replacement and proved the critics wrong. Parker became an integral part of the Benny cast.

Once again Jack's kidding of the sponsor's product got him into hot water. The president of General Motors did not find the broadcasts at all funny and ordered the Benny show dropped. Public outcry over the cancellation became so great that General Motors tried to get Jack back. General Motors' loss became General Tires' gain, as they were able to sign up Jack for a short 26-week series.

Six days after the last Chevrolet Program, Jack made his debut for General Tires on Friday, April 6, 1934 over the NBC-Red network, taking Mary and Frank Parker with him. Joining the Benny cast were the two "Dons," Don Bestor and Don Wilson. Bestor was a popular orchestra leader of the period and Jack's latest catch-phrase. Former NBC sports announcer Don Wilson delivered the General Tire commercials and took part in various skits. The Wilson-Benny relationship was to become long and fruitful. During the "two-Don" phase of the program Jack referred to his announcer as "Wilson" to avoid confusion with orchestra leader Bestor.

While the General Tire Program lasted only 26 weeks, several more radio innovations occurred during its short run. One of the more unusual ideas involved showing exactly what went on before or

after the broadcast. On one program Jack was "late" for the broadcast and listeners heard him in a taxi on his way to the studio! This was a very innovative idea for 1934.

"Jell-O again, this is Jack Benny talking" was first heard on October 14, 1934 over the NBC-Blue network as Jack and his cast made the switch to "Jell-O" gelatin, manufactured by General Foods. As Jack later said, having worked for General Motors, General Tires and General Foods, "Having three generals in a row ain't bad for a guy who was in the Navy, not the Army.") Benny was now heard in the time slot that he would occupy for the next 21 years, Sunday nights at 7 p.m., Eastern time. By January, 1935, the program was one of the top three favorites in the country. On the last show of the 1934-35 season, Fred Allen and Portland Hoffa made their first appearance on the Benny program, a year and a half before the start of the famous Benny-Allen "feud."

The second season for Jell-O brought two major cast changes when Don Bestor and Frank Parker left the program. Bestor was replaced by orchestra leader Johnny Green, who portrayed a brash ivy-league type. Parker was initially replaced by Michael Bartlett, but the Benny writers were unable to create a suitable character for Bartlett. His replacement was a young tenor named Kenny Baker. Another network change occurred as the show switched to NBC-Red.

The Benny program rode the top of the ratings scale throughout the 1930s. Bill Morrow and Ed Beloin, Jack's new writers, developed new characters and situations. Schlepferman, played by Sam Hearn, was a new character who always seemed to run into Jack wherever he was, greeting him with "Hello, stranger!" A Pullman porter heard on one of Jack's train rides was played by Eddie Anderson. Anderson's appearance drew such favorable audience response that he became a permanent part of the Benny cast as Jack's valet Rochester. Movie parodies



A GREAT RADIO TEAM — Don Wilson, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson (standing); Jack Benny, Mel Blanc (seated).

such as "Lost Horizon" and "Anthony Adverse" were also big favorites with the fans. And in the fall of 1937, Jack's famous Maxwell roadster made its first appearance.

In the fall of 1936 the Benny program moved from New York to NBC's new Hollywood studios. Johnny Green was the only cast member unable to make the move (he was doubling as leader on the Fred Astaire Packard Hour). Green's replacement was the wisecracking Phil Harris. Phil's arrival brought another long-

term cast player into the Benny fold. Other characters soon appeared on the show. Mr. Billingsley, a boarder at the Benny house, was played by Elliot Lewis. Frank Nelson had several bit parts, including an early "train station" routine. Mel Blanc first appeared on the Benny Show as Carmichael, Jack's pet polar bear. One of the many running gags of the Benny show involved Carmichael, who lived in the basement at Jack's house, tangling with the gas meter reader. The gas man was never seen again.

BENNY'S RADIO CAREER

In the summer of 1939 Kenny Baker left the Benny program to strike out on his own. Once again the critics felt that an integral part of the Benny cast was leaving. Baker's replacement, Eugene Owen Patrick McNulty, became even more popular than Baker and would remain with Jack for many years. After a name change, Dennis Day joined the Benny cast on October 8, 1939, along with his "mother," played by Verna Felton.

In May, 1941, Jack celebrated his tenth year on radio. NBC presented several special tributes to Jack, both on radio and at a special banquet in his honor. The most impressive tribute to Benny occurred at the dinner when he was presented by NBC with a permanent deed to the 7 p.m. Sunday night time slot!

General Foods shifted Jack's sponsorship from Jell-O to Grape Nuts cereal in the fall of 1942. Wartime shortages and increased sales kept Jell-O in short supply! Another change occurred a year later when a new team of writers (George Balzer, Milt Josefsberg, John Tackaberry and Sam Perrin) were brought in to boost sagging ratings. The new team streamlined the



JACK BENNY

program format and created many new characters and story lines.

Changes continued into 1944. Dennis Day entered the Navy and left the show in April. For several weeks into the fall season many singers including Frank Sinatra and Martha Tilton filled in until a temporary replacement for Dennis could be found. Larry Stevens became the new singer on the Benny program on November 5.

The year 1944 also saw Jack's association with General Foods come to an end. On October 1, 1944, Jack began his 15-year association with Lucky Strike, an association that continued into television. At first Jack had been scheduled to sell American Tobacco's Pall Mall brand of cigarettes, but prior to the season's start he was switched to the more popular Lucky Strike.

The Jack Benny Program now entered its "classic phase." Many of the shows which listeners fondly remember are from this period. In 1945 there were a number of classic Benny "firsts." On the January 7th program Jack made his first trip to the vault, first ran into the racetrack tout, and

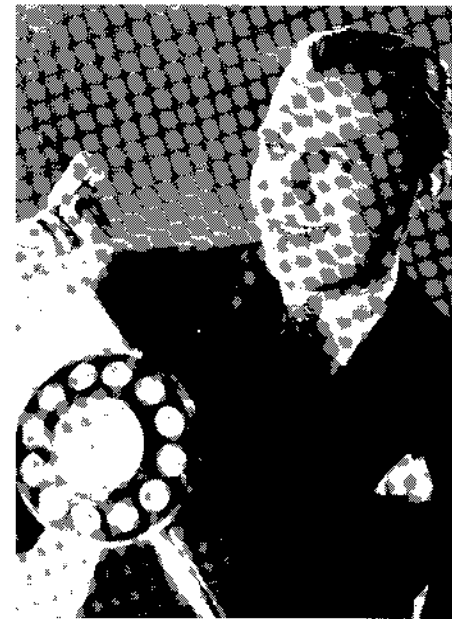
had his first encounter at the railroad station with train announcer Mel Blanc. Mel also made his first appearance in April as Jack's long-suffering violin teacher, Professor LeBlanc. On September 30, 1945, listeners heard the two NBC switchboard operators as Jack tried to call home. A few weeks later Jack tried to listen to the World Series on the radio for the first time. Also heard that fall was one of the most outlandish contests in radio: The "I Can't Stand Jack Benny Because" contest! Adding to this classic phase of Benny programs, was the return of Dennis Day after two years in the navy. Appropriately enough, Dennis made his return appearance on St. Patrick's Day, 1946.

Two classic routines first occurred on a 1948 broadcast. On the March 28th show, Jack borrowed Ronald Colman's Oscar and was held up on the way home. Listeners heard the famous "your money or your life" routine for the first time and Jack spent the next several weeks trying to borrow Oscars from other stars in an effort to replace Colman's stolen one!

The Jack Benny program made radio history during the 1948-49 radio season as it switched from NBC to CBS. Critics felt that it was a daring move to switch networks mid-season and many once again predicted trouble for Benny. Once again Jack proved the critics wrong by starting with a higher rating on his first CBS show than that of his last NBC show!

By 1950 radio was a slowly dying medium. Jack remained loyal to radio by producing a high-quality program week after week. The Benny program was still one of the highest-rated programs on the air. New bits such as Mel Blanc's "Si-Sy" and "Cimarron Rolls" routines convulsed listeners. Movie spoofs on "High Noon" and "King Solomon's Mines" along with guests such as Bob Hope, Fred Allen and Al Jolson continued to provide top-notch entertainment.

Phil Harris left the Benny program in June 1952, to spend more time with his




JACK BENNY

own popular "Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show." His replacement was handleader Bob Crosby, Bing's younger brother. Bob fit into the Benny program nicely.

The last new Jack Benny radio program was heard on May 22, 1955. Radio as a form of popular entertainment had been replaced by television. (Jack made the transition into TV in 1950) and it was CBS that decided to end the radio series, although it continued in reruns for at least three more years.

Jack Benny left his listeners with a radio legacy, having starred in 925 radio shows of his own, along with countless guest appearances on other programs. In December 1967, Jack donated his personal collection to the University of California Library in Los Angeles. Included in the collection were recordings of many of his radio shows. Several years later tapes of a number of recordings in the Benny collection came into general circulation and these, along with other Benny shows, rediscovered by collectors provided fans with the chance once again to enjoy classic radio entertainment.

Chuck Schaden's



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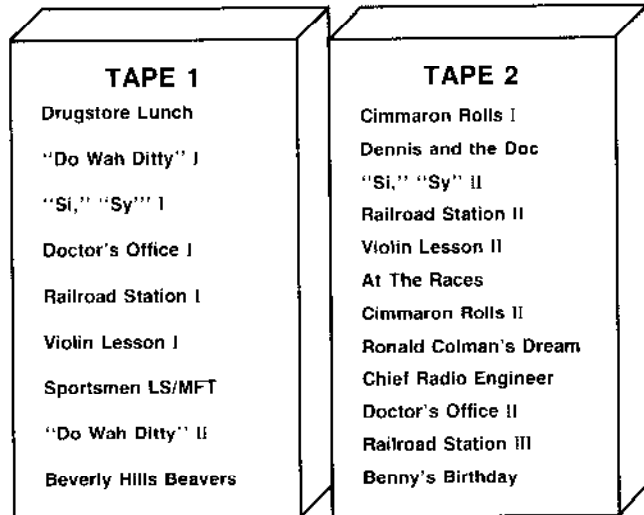
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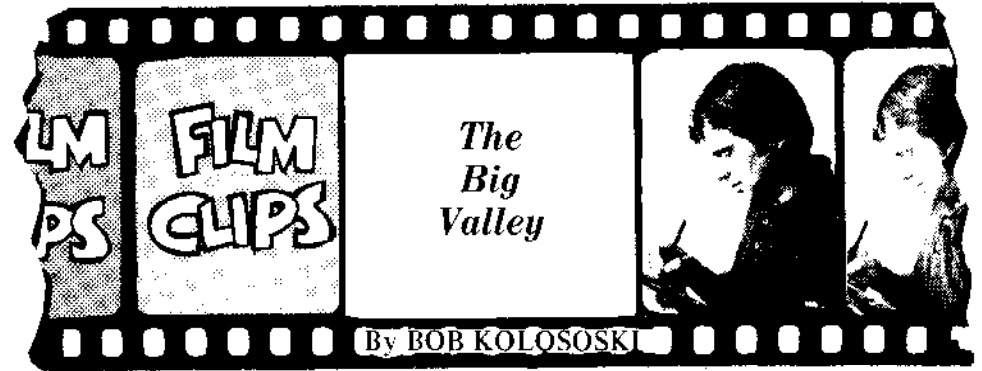
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The western is dead.

At least that is the sacred opinion of those who know in Hollywood. The last big budget western film was *Silverado* and its profits couldn't fill the strong box on the 3:10 to Yuma. Of course, there are several theories why film audiences would rather shop at the local center than see the western movie playing on screen six in the mall's cinema. Abbreviated attention spans, special effects, and music videos are all mentioned when the demise of the western is discussed. I have my own theory and, simply stated, it is that John Ford is dead and like Jack Benny and his money, Ford took the western with him.

Ford's westerns were something special and always will be. His company of players headed up by John Wayne, Ward Bond and Ben Johnson breathed life into the screen characters that roamed the wild west of 100 years ago.

As much as the players added to Ford's western, there was also a place — a very impressive place — that acted as the stage for almost all of Ford's western plays. The place was Monument Valley and although it never was the most beautiful spot on earth it was the perfect spot to film a western. Monument Valley was used by Ford in *Stagecoach* (1939), *My Darling Clementine* (1946), *Fort Apache* (1948), *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949), *The Searchers* (1956), *Sergeant Rutledge* (1960) and *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964). It is where Ford felt at home and where he shot

the body of work for which he is most remembered today.

The Valley and all its natural beauty was an obvious source of inspiration to Ford. His camera shots seemed more lucid and his direction tighter. The actors, too, responded to the surroundings and John Wayne in particular was always more convincing with the Valley over his shoulder. Wayne's best westerns were directed by Ford and shot in Monument Valley. The grandeur of the west and this great country oozes out of every rock formation. The Valley's spectacular views were as impressive in black and white films as they were in color films.

When asked how he came to use the Valley for *Stagecoach*, Ford's answer varied from interview to interview. The truth is he was lead to it by a man who was a true westerner and had lived in the Valley nearly all his life. His name was Harry Goulding and his love of the Valley and the Navaho Indians who inhabited it forced him to Hollywood in 1938.

Harry Goulding was born in Arizona and went to Monument Valley in 1920, (the Valley is two thousand square miles in northwest Arizona), after his discharge from the Army. In 1920, Pioute and Navaho tribes inhabited the Valley in an uneasy truce after years of warfare over the land. That year the Federal government set aside land in Utah and began a program to move all the Pioute out of the Valley. In 1924, the final wagonload of Pioute left

FILM CLIPS

and Harry and his wife, Mike, moved in and laid claim to 640 acres (a school section). Harry and Mike opened a trading post and lodge and were, for nearly 20 years, the only white inhabitants of the Valley. They learned to respect and love their Navaho neighbors. When the Great Depression hit, it nearly devastated the Indians of the Valley. On a trip in 1930, John Huston happened to be in the Valley when a government agent told the Navaho that their meager allotment of rations would have to be cut drastically.

Instead of protesting, the Indians offered to share their food with Harry and Mike if they needed it. It was a day John Huston never forgot. As the Depression deepened, conditions in the Valley worsened and Harry went deep into debt trying to help his Indian friends. One day in 1938, a traveler going through the Valley told Harry that a Hollywood film company was

looking for locations away from Los Angeles to shoot a western. Harry decided that he would go to Hollywood to persuade the movie makers to use his beloved Valley for the film. Harry knew that the Navaho were on the brink of starvation and they needed a miracle to pull them through. Hollywood was the town of happy endings and Harry and Mike packed up their old car and headed for the hills of Hollywood.

Mike had a brother in Los Angeles and although the brother didn't give Harry much hope of succeeding, he directed him to a nearby studio. Harry made it to a secretary's office with a stack of photographs and a bedroll. When the secretary said no one could see him because they were all busy, Harry undid his bedroll and replied that he would camp there until someone *could* see him. Harry was a man with patience and his strategy worked. A few minutes later a fellow in a suit came in to tell Harry he would have to leave. Harry managed to show the gentleman his brownie snapshots and suddenly the man wanted Harry to stay.

That afternoon Harry met John Ford and producer Walter Wanger. That evening Ford decided to fly to Monument Valley the following morning. Harry decided to drive back and left late that night with a five thousand dollar check Ford has given him to cement their deal. The deal was that Harry would guide the film crew around the Valley and arrange for the local Indians to participate in the filming. The next day Ford arrived with John Wayne and Ward Bond (Bond didn't appear in *Stagecoach*). Harry's first assignment was to find an Indian to play Geronimo. Harry obligated by providing one of Geronimo's grand nephews. Slowly the rest of the crew and cast arrived and actual filming began.

Harry introduced Ford to a medicine man named Hosten Tsoh which means Mr. Big. The medicine man's job was to produce specific weather conditions as per Mr. Ford's command. One day Ford said he could use "one hellava sandstorm."

The old medicine man went to work and a few hours later a sandstorm came blowing through the Valley and stopped filming for two days. After several weeks of shooting, Ford and his company left Monument Valley, but they left behind nearly sixty thousand dollars in wages paid to the Indians. The miracle had happened and the Navaho were pulled out of an economic quagmire.

Every time Ford shot a film in the Valley, his production company would spend thousands of dollars helping the economy of the Indians. But for Ford the Valley became more than just a movie location. He built a vacation home there and became close friends with Harry and the Navaho. The Indians called Ford Natani Nez (tall soldier) and he called them brothers. In 1949 a huge snowstorm swept the Valley and Ford had food and supplies parachuted in to help the Indians. Ford

became so identified with the Valley that other film makers stayed away fearing his wrath!

When John Ford died in 1972, he was planning another film — *Appointment at Precedence* — to be shot at Monument Valley. Film maker Sergio Leone used the Valley extensively for *Once Upon a Time in the West* starring Henry Fonda. Fonda was in Ford's *Fort Apache* and his son Peter shot parts of *Easy Rider* in the Valley. In 1973, the Navaho Department of Film was created and its task was to encourage movie filming in the Valley. Harry Goulding and his wife Mike left Monument Valley in the late seventies when it became overrun with tourists and their age prevented them from keeping up with the hectic pace.

The Gouldings are gone but their legacy to the Valley and their beloved friends will never die.

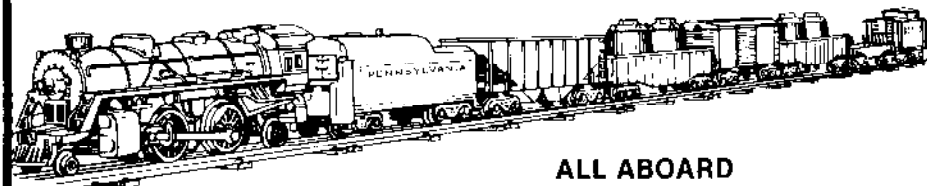
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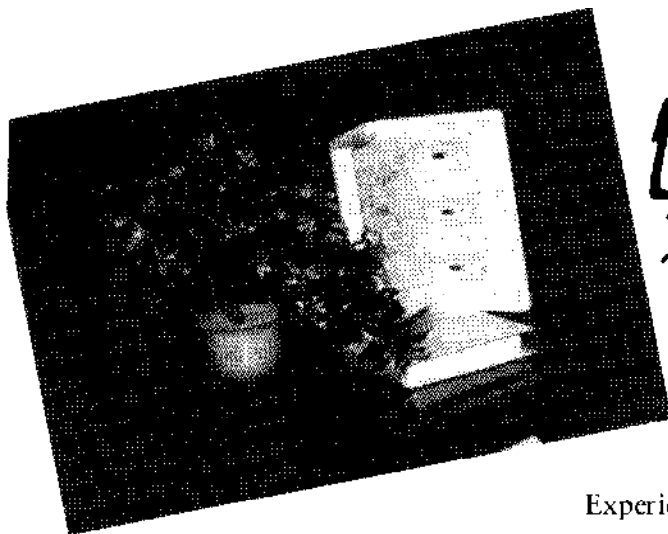
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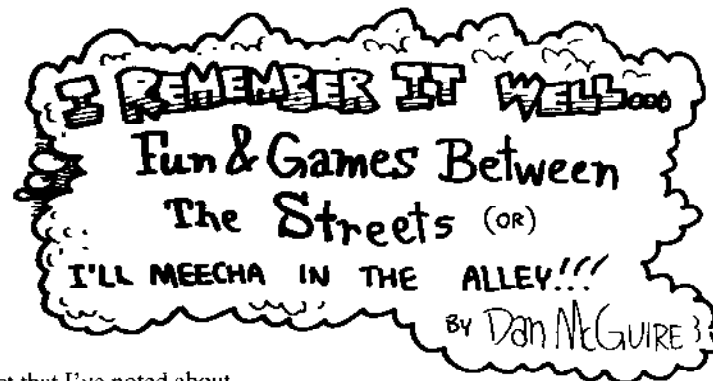
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One negative aspect that I've noted about suburban living is the alleys. There are none.

Chicago's business and residential areas have always had alleys. In the early days, they provided a convenient route for delivery and service people. Main streets were left clear for pedestrian, carriage and (later) motorized traffic.

In the days of cheap immigrant labor, rear tenement dwellings were common and easier to service via the alley. Housewives, hanging clothes out on pulley-operated lines, could shout to each other across the alley, exchanging the latest neighborhood news tidbits.

As the city grew and prospered, alleys became a favorite playground for kids of all but the highest economic strata. Softball games were common, albeit played on an elongated diamond.

Neighbors' back yard gates served as first and third bases. A borrowed garbage can lid marked second. Getting on base required the ability to hit a long ball straight down the narrow field. Balls hit

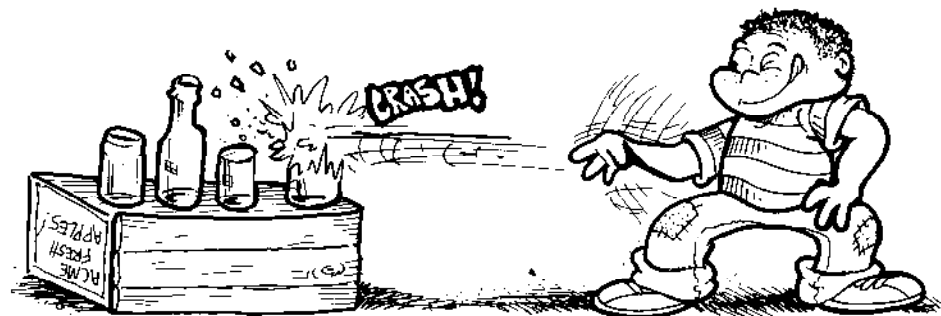
over fences into someone's yard could not be fielded and were automatic outs.

In winter, the alley became a football field. Again, some adaptation was required. The narrow confines put a crimp on fancy plays. Passing predominated, interspersed with a few line charges.

Basketball hadn't achieved its present popularity, but occasional shooting matches erupted. The hoop usually was a bottomless bushel basket nailed to a telephone pole. Few kids actually owned a basketball. As often as not they improvised with a sister's volleyball.

My pals and I did our cavorting in an unincorporated village on the northwest edge of Chicago. Our alleys were a bit different. For one thing, they were wider, to accommodate the now dominant auto traffic. They were also unpaved.

Our fledgling village could afford only a thin layer of stones over the dirt. Residents supplemented this with cinders from their coal furnaces. The stones and cinders kept our alleys from becoming



I REMEMBER IT WELL

quagmires in rainy weather. In dry weather, the cinders aggravated the alley's constant dustiness.

To play, run or ride a bike in our alleys was to risk slipping on the crunchy cinders. Those furnace fugitives were murder on bare skin. We suffered countless skinned or bleeding palms, elbows and knees from encounters with those cursed clinkers.

A common scene involved a young male running home, a pant leg torn and a knee bleeding through it. As the victim sniffed and fought back tears, his mother examined the damage. After satisfying herself that the injury was minor, Mom would shake her head and say, "I don't know if I can patch those trousers. Why can't you kids play at the school yard instead of running in that dirty alley?"

Why, indeed? We had lots of other play areas. But the alley had its own special attraction.

On dull days, I could recruit Wayne, Chuck, Bob or some other buddy to go scavenging. The handle of a broken umbrella, stripped down, made a beaut of a fencing sword. Some worn out faucet fixtures were shaped just like 25th century ray guns. Dry cell batteries, wired to a board with some old oven knobs, made a neat shortwave radio. Or add a buggy wheel and you could be in the cockpit beside Sky King.

Some folk (obviously more well-to-do than most of us) actually tossed out empty milk and soda pop bottles. Those were worth money! The deposit refund on two gallon jugs and a quart pop bottle would get you into a Saturday matinee.

One day, as we were rummaging in a nearby alley, Chuck called from his side. "Hey, Danny! Look at this!" Next to someone's garbage bin, he had discovered an open grocery store box. Inside were ten of the original dozen jars of Karo syrup. What a bonanza!

Our first thought was to sell it door to door. But we quickly realized that adults

would wonder where we had acquired our merchandise, and word probably would get back to our parents. We considered selling it to neighborhood kids. But they were likely to be less interested, more suspicious and short of cash.

The money-making prospects looked dim. Yet, we couldn't let such a "find" go to waste. Finally, we hauled the box to a nearby prairie that had become a refuse dump. We set the jars on empty crates and paint pails. Then we picked up some stones and had a pitching contest.

Soon we had zeroed in on three jars. As



thick syrup oozed through shattered glass fragments, the reason for it being dumped became evident. It obviously had been stored improperly or too long and had spoiled.

Undeterred, we continued bombarding the remaining jars until all were shattered. Flies were now swarming in from seven counties, and a putrid/sweet aroma permeated the prairie. We departed holding our noses. We felt a bit guilty about our destructiveness, yet glad we had not tried to peddle the rancid booty.

At times, we simply roamed the alleys, open to whatever distractions might present themselves. It was a change of pace from strolling "out front" on the sidewalk. Observing people in their semi-private back yard activities could give you another slant on their life-styles.

Alleys were a welcome detour if you were walking down the street and spotted a neighborhood bully on the next block. They also served as shortcuts.

Several of my pals lived on the next street, which shared the alley behind our house. We always went to the back door to call one another out to play. So cutting through the alley was natural and faster than going around the block.

In the late '40s, Robert L. Ripley had a radio version of his famous comic strip series of fascinating phenomena. It came on at 12:45, while I was home from school for lunch. Each program's most incredible story was saved for last and would end about 12:58.

Standing at our back door, I would hang on every word until Ripley capped the tale with his copyrighted challenge: "Believe It Or Not!" Then I'd dash out, down our back porch stairs, through the back gate, down our alley two doors to Bob's yard. By racing through Bob's gangway and cutting a diagonal to the Giles school yard, I could fall in at the end of my class' line as we marched in for afternoon session.

Without the alley, I'd never have made it.

Not long ago I needed an old friend who years back elected to remain a city dweller. "Fred," I asked, "when are you going to leave that dreary city life behind and join the ranks of carefree suburban homeowners?"

"What?" he retorted. "You mean make my family live someplace where people stack up their garbage on the curb in front of their house?"

Touche, Fred. Touche.

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FEBRUARY

Old Time Radio Classics — WBBM-AM 78
MONDAY thru FRIDAY 8:00-9:00 P.M.
SATURDAY and SUNDAY 8:00-10:00 P.M.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>SPECIAL NOTE: Due to programming considerations beyond our control, the schedule of Old Time Radio Shows for February-March was not available at presstime. We expect to resume the complete calendar in our next issue. In the meantime, we'll be glad to send you program information for February and March when it is ready if you will send a long, self-addressed stamped envelope to RADIO CLASSICS, Box 421, Morton Grove, IL 60053. Sorry for this inconvenience; thanks for listening.</p>				<p>1 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>2 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>3 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>
<p>4 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>5 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>6 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>7 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>8 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>9 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>10 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>
<p>11 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>12 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>13 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>14 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>15 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>16 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>17 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>
<p>18 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>19 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>20 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>21 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>22 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>23 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>24 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>
<p>25 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>26 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>27 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>28 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>			

MARCH

Old Time Radio Classics — WBBM-AM 78
MONDAY thru FRIDAY 8:00-9:00 P.M.
SATURDAY and SUNDAY 8:00-10:00 P.M.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>SPECIAL NOTE: Due to programming considerations beyond our control, the schedule of Old Time Radio Shows for February-March was not available at presstime. We expect to resume the complete calendar in our next issue. In the meantime, we'll be glad to send you program information for February and March when it is ready if you will send a long, self-addressed stamped envelope to RADIO CLASSICS, Box 421, Morton Grove, IL 60053. Sorry for this inconvenience; thanks for listening.</p>				<p>1 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>2 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>3 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>
<p>4 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>5 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>6 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>7 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>8 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>9 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>10 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>
<p>11 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>12 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>13 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>14 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>15 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>16 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>17 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>
<p>18 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>19 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>20 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>21 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>22 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>23 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>24 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>
<p>25 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>26 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>27 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>28 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>29 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>	<p>30 Old Time Radio To be Announced</p>	<p>31 Blackhawk Hockey NO RADIO CLASSICS</p>

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 P.M.

FEBRUARY

PLEASE NOTE: The numerals following each program listing for Those Were The Days represents timing information for each particular show. (9:45; 11:20; 8:50) means that we will broadcast the show in three segments: 9 minutes and 45 seconds; 11 minutes and 20 seconds; 8 minutes and 50 seconds. If you add the times of these segments together, you'll have the total length of the show (29:55 for our example). This is of help to those who are taping the broadcasts for their own collection.

Jack Benny's Radio Days!

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3rd

1932 CANADA DRY PROGRAM (5-2-32) Jack Benny's first appearance on his own program features singer Ethel Shutta, announcer Ed Thorgerson, and George Olsen and his orchestra. There's no live studio audience for Jack's show. Canada Dry Ginger Ale, NBC-Blue. (10:00; 11:00; 8:20)

1933 CANADA DRY PROGRAM (1-1-33) Jack Benny, the "Canadian Dry Humorist," stars with Ted Weems and his orchestra, Mary Livingstone, singer Andrea March, and announcer Paul Douglas in an excerpt from the first program of the new year. Canada Dry Ginger Ale, CBS. (12:30)

1934 GENERAL TIRE PROGRAM (8-24-34) Jack Benny stars with Mary Livingstone, singer Frank Parker, comic Sam Hearn, announcer Don Wilson, and Don Bestor and the orchestra. The cast presents their version of the 1934 film, "The Rise of the House of Rothschild." General Tires, NBC-Red. (12:00; 9:30)

1935 JACK BENNY PROGRAM (11-3-35) Singer Kenny Baker makes his debut on this program which also features Mary Livingstone, Don Wilson, Johnny Green and the orchestra. Cast goes to a movie studio to see how films are made: "Open Up That Goldwyn Gate!" Jell-O, NBC. (8:55; 11:35; 10:00)

1936 JACK BENNY PROGRAM (11-22-36) Jack and the gang present an installment of "Buck Benny Rides Again" with Mary Livingstone, Kenny Baker, Don Wilson, and Phil Harris and the orchestra. Jell-O, NBC-Red. (9:35; 10:40; 8:15)

1937 LUX RADIO THEATRE (2-15-37) "Brewster's Millions" starring Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone in a radio version of a story that had been made into a 1921 silent film starring Fatty Arbuckle and a 1935 talkie with Jack Buchanan. Cecil B. DeMille hosts. Lux Soap, CBS. (22:55; 17:25; 18:10)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10th

1938 LUX RADIO THEATRE (9-26-38) "Seven Keys to Baldpate" by George M. Cohan starring Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone with Frank Nelson, Gale Gordon, Lou Merrill, Joe Kearns, Cecil B. DeMille co-stars with Jack and Mary as all three portray themselves in this comedy-mystery. DeMille, casting a picture, tries to avoid Jack who wants a role in the film. Melville Ruick narrates. Lux Soap, CBS. (26:45; 12:35; 21:30)

1939 LUM AND ABNER (3-10-39) Chester Lauck and Norris Goff star as Lum Edwards and Abner Peabody. Guest Jack Benny comes to Pine Ridge to pick up an honorary degree at the University and visit the Jot-Ern-Down Store. Postum, CBS. (12:38)

1940 MAXWELL HOUSE COFFEE TIME (11-21-40) Host Dick Powell introduces guest star Jack Benny plus Mary Martin, Fanny Brice and Hanley Stafford as Baby Snooks and Daddy, Meredith Willson and his orchestra, announcer Don Wilson. Variety show with a holiday theme on this Thanksgiving Day. Maxwell House Coffee, NBC. (18:45; 10:20)

1941 JACK BENNY PROGRAM (5-11-41) On the occasion of Jack's 10th anniversary in radio, NBC presents his life story in musical Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris, Dennis Day, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Ken Carpenter. Jell-O, NBC. (12:25; 17:05)

1942 IT'S TIME TO SMILE (11-25-42) Eddie Cantor stars with Harry Von Zell, Bert Gordon (the Mad Russian), Dinah Shore, Hattie McDaniel and special guest Jack Benny who tries to get Cantor involved in a business deal. Ipana, Sal Hepatica, NBC. (19:35; 8:40)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17th

1943 SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS (6-14-43) "Love Is News" starring Jack Benny, Ann Sheridan and James Gleason with Joe Kearns in a romantic comedy about an heiress who locks horns with a reporter. Truman Bradley announces. Lady Esther Products, CBS. (13:40; 15:20)

1944 JACK BENNY PROGRAM (3-19-44) Guest Barbara Stanwyck joins regulars Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris, Dennis Day, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Butterfly McQueen, Joe Kearns and John Brown. Dennis dreams that he has his own radio show! Grape Nuts, NBC. (16:55; 11:25)

1945 COLGATE SPORTS NEWSREEL (12-28-45) Sportscaster Bill Stern welcomes guest Jack Benny in a year-end program from Hollywood featuring "outstanding sports stories of 1945." Colgate Shave Cream, NBC. (14:05)

1946 FRED ALLEN SHOW (5-26-46) Excerpt from a classic Allen program, his last of the season. Fred's program is interrupted by a studio tour which includes guest Jack Benny who becomes a contestant on Fred's new give-away show, "King For A Day!" Cast includes Alan Reed, Kenny Delmar, Parker Fennelly, Tenderleaf Tea, Blue Bonnet Margarine, NBC. (14:35)

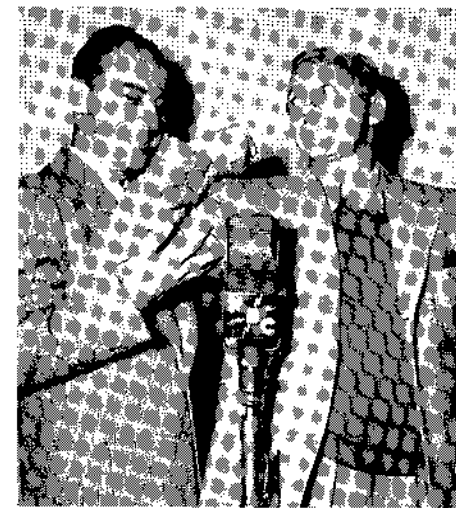
1947 PHILCO RADIO TIME (3-26-47) Bing Crosby plays host to guests Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone. Jack wants Bing to join him and Mary in a band act! Featured are Peggy Lee, Skitch Henderson, Ken Carpenter, John Scott Trotter and the orchestra. Philco Radios, ABC. (10:50; 18:30)

1948 HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (11-18-48) "My Financial Career" starring Jack Benny in the famous Stephen Leacock story about a man who is afraid of banks! Cast features Jack Kirkwood, Joe Kearns. Host is James Hilton. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (13:45; 16:15)

1949 JACK BENNY PROGRAM (5-15-49) Song-writer Hoagy Carmichael joins regulars Phil Harris, Dennis Day, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Mel Blanc, Bea Benadaret, Joe Kearns, Don Wilson. Phil wants to borrow \$2,000 from Jack, who goes to the vault to get the money; Hoagy has a new song; Jack gets a violin lesson from Professor LeBlanc. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS. (11:50; 15:55)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24th

1950 JACK BENNY PROGRAM (4-2-50) Al Jolson, the "world's greatest entertainer" joins Jack and the gang to complain about Mel Blanc's Jolson imitation. Mary Livingstone, Dennis Day, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Phil Harris, Don Wilson, the Sportsmen, Frank Nelson, Mel Blanc. Broadcast from Palm Springs, California. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS. (13:20; 13:48)



BILL STERN & JACK BENNY

1951 JACK BENNY PROGRAM (11-4-51) Guest George Jessel, who is to be Toastmaster at a Friar's Club testimonial for Benny, narrates the story of Jack's life. Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris, Dennis Day, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Don Wilson, Bea Benadaret, Frank Nelson, Joe Kearns, Mel Blanc. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS. (10:00; 17:22)

1952 SUSPENSE (6-2-52) "A Good and Faithful Servant" starring Jack Benny as "a man who worked thirty years to prepare a most unusual retirement plan." Cast features Joe Kearns and Hy Averbach. Harlow Wilcox announces. AutoLite, CBS. (16:15; 12:40)

1953 SUSPENSE (2-2-53) "Plan X" stars Jack Benny as a Martian chosen to deal with an "invasion rocket" from Earth. Cast features Joe Kearns, William Conrad, Howard McNear, Jack Crushin. Harlow Wilcox announces. AutoLite, CBS. (16:10; 12:55)

1954 JACK BENNY PROGRAM (4-25-54) Jack invites the gang over to participate in a seance as one of Dennis' relatives is contacted. Mary Livingstone, Bob Crosby, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Dennis Day, Don Wilson, the Sportsmen, Mel Blanc, Hy Averbach. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS. (9:05; 18:10)

1955 JACK BENNY PROGRAM (5-22-55) Everyone gives Jack a hard time on this, his last radio program. Even the sound effects man wants a chance to "show off" his talents. Mary Livingstone, Bob Crosby, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Dennis Day, Don Wilson, Artie Averbach, Sara Berner, Sandra Gould, Mel Blanc, musical conductor Mahlon Merrick. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS. (11:55; 14:35)

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 P.M.

MARCH

SATURDAY, MARCH 3rd

FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (6-4-40) Fibber cooks up a spaghetti dinner for the boys. Jim and Marian Jordan star with Bill Thompson, Hal Peary, Isabell Randolph, Harlow Wilcox, the King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (8:30; 21:05)

ADVENTURES BY MORSE, (1944) "The Cobra King Strikes Back" by Carleton E. Morse. A ten-part adventure by the creator of "I Love A Mystery" as Captain Bart Friday and his sidekick Skip Turner travel on a steamship from Hawaii to Saigon, by way of Hong Kong and Cambodia. Chapter 1: The Adventure Begins. Syndicated. (11:40; 14:22)

A DATE WITH JUDY (3-20-45) When Judy breaks up with Oogie Pringle, Oogie writes a song for Dorothy Lamour to sing at an Army camp show. Louise Erickson is Judy; Richard Crenna is Oogie; John Brown is Mr. Foster; with special guest Dorothy Lamour as herself. NBC. (11:30; 14:50)

GANGBUSTERS (1940s) Police investigate after two hitchhikers murder a carpenter. Cast features Mason Adams, Tom Holland and Eileen Palmer. Nevada

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Sheriff C.W. Young narrates "by proxy." Sustaining, CBS. (16:15; 13:50)

OUR MISS BROOKS (10-23-49) Eve Arden stars as school teacher Connie Brooks with Gale Gordon as Osgood Conklin, Jeff Chandler as Mr. Boynton, Richard Crenna as Walter Denton. When Mr. Boynton returns from a biology convention, everyone at Madison High gets a gift. Cast includes Frank Nelson and Jane Morgan. Colgate, Lustre Creme, CBS. (12:00; 16:05)

ADVENTURES BY MORSE (1944) "The Cobra King Strikes Back" Chapter 2: Something About the Hooded Snake. Syndicated. (13:00; 13:00)

SATURDAY, MARCH 10th

LIFE WITH LUIGI (4-15-52) J. Carrol Naish stars as the little immigrant from Italy, with Alan Reed as Pasquale, Hans Conried as Schultz. When Luigi is having trouble sleeping, Pasquale tries to convince him that the cause of his insomnia is his not being married to Rosa. Wrigley's Gum, CBS. (14:56; 16:10)

ADVENTURES BY MORSE (1944) "The Cobra King Strikes Back." Chapter 3: The Mad King of Ankar. Syndicated. (13:25; 12:50)

SUSPENSE (2-28-48) "The House By the River" starring John McIntyre and Dan O'Herlihy. A successful poet, known as "the voice and feeling of England," tries to conceal a murder. Robert Montgomery hosts this hour-long drama. Sustaining, CBS. (14:19; 14:28; 15:40; 13:50)

ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET (11-7-48) Ozzie is convinced that his routine way of living should be changed. Cast features Ozzie and Harriet Nelson, John Brown, Jack Kirkwood, Janet Waldo. International Silver Company, NBC. (13:45; 15:40)

ADVENTURES BY MORSE (1944) "The Cobra King Strikes Back." Chapter 4: Temple of Gorillas. Syndicated. (12:15; 12:45)

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SATURDAY, MARCH 17th ST. PATRICK'S DAY

HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (10-28-48) "O'Halloran's Luck" stars Edmund O'Brien as an Irishman who travels to Boston to marry Kitty Malone, but her parents have other ideas. James Hilton hosts. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (14:05; 14:50)

ADVENTURES BY MORSE (1944) "The Cobra King Strikes Back." Chapter 5: The Living Image of Cambodia. Syndicated. (12:30; 13:28)

ON STAGE (4-16-53) "Casey at the Bat" is dramatized in this theatre company headed by Cathy and Elliott Lewis. Hy Averback stars as the Mighty Casey with a cast that includes Howard McNear, Hal March, Peter Leeds, Sidney Miller and Herb Butterfield. Sustaining, CBS. (12:55; 16:35)

PHILCO RADIO TIME (3-17-48) Bing Crosby welcomes child actress Margaret O'Brien on this St. Patrick's Day program. Philco Radios, ABC. (8:35; 12:30; 9:15)

HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (3-17-49) "Our Very Own" starring Barry Fitzgerald in a story for St. Patrick's Day. James Hilton hosts. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (13:04; 15:05)

ADVENTURES BY MORSE (1944) "The Cobra King Strikes Back." Chapter 6: Terrors of the Hollow Mountain. Syndicated. (13:35; 12:48)

SATURDAY, MARCH 24th

ARTHUR GODFREY'S TALENTS SCOUTS (4-18-49) Godfrey introduces "talent scouts" who present their "discoveries." Winner appears with Arthur on this weekday morning show. This is a simulcast from radio and TV. One of the "discoveries" is comic Lenny Bruce. Lipton Tea and Soup, CBS. (14:40; 16:05)

ADVENTURES BY MORSE (1944) "The Cobra King Strikes Back." Chapter 7: The Face of a Beast. Syndicated. (13:30; 12:35)

THE MAN CALLED X (12-2-50) Herbert Marshall stars as Ken Thurston, the Man Called X, with Leon Belasco as Pagan Zeldschmidt. In Guatemala, Thurston investigates the theft of a dangerous cholera culture. Ford, RCA Victor. Anacin, NBC. (13:00; 16:25)

ADVENTURES OF TARZAN (4-18-53) "Evidence Destroyed" stars Lamont Johnson as a rather articulate Tarzan, "the bronzed white son of the jungle," aboard a slave ship. Sustaining, CBS. (9:00; 8:35; 9:15)

EDDIE CANTOR SHOW (2-28-45) Music and comedy as Eddie gets a position with Army Intelligence. His assignment: Capture Hitler! With Leonard Seuss, Nora Martin, and Bert Gordon, the Russian. Sal Hepatica. Trushay, NBC. (8:50; 12:20; 7:15)

ADVENTURES BY MORSE (1944) "The Cobra King Strikes Back." Chapter 8: It Was Not Cannibalism. Syndicated. (14:45; 11:15)



EDMUND O'BRIEN

SATURDAY, MARCH 31st

FRED ALLEN SHOW (3-16-47) Guest comedienne Beatrice Lillie joins Fred for a spoof on the hit Broadway show, "Oklahoma." The Allen's Alley topic: Should a housewife receive a weekly paycheck? Cast features Kenny Delmar, Parker Fennelly, Portland Hoffa, Al Goodman and the orchestra. Shefferd's Cheese, Tenderleaf Tea, NBC. (16:20; 13:00)

ADVENTURES BY MORSE (1944) "The Cobra King Strikes Back." Chapter 9: The Fangs and Teeth of the Enemy. Syndicated. (14:10; 11:57)

YOUR HIT PARADE (4-10-43) Frank Sinatra and Joan Edwards sing the top tunes with Mark Warron and the orchestra. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS. (9:08; 15:24; 11:24)

BOSTON BLACKIE (1945) Richard Kollmar stars as Blackie, "enemy to those who make him an enemy, friend to those who have no friends." Blackie responds when a woman sees a ghost! Lesley Woods as Mary, Blackie's girl friend. Syndicated. (10:30; 13:50)

STARS IN THE AIR (2-7-52) "The Yearling" starring Gregory Peck and Jean Hagen with Johnny McGovern in a radio version of MGM's 1946 film treatment of Marjorie Kinnan Rawling's sensitive story of a young boy attached to a deer. Sustaining, CBS. (14:00; 15:00)

ADVENTURES BY MORSE (1944) "The Cobra King Strikes Back." Final episode in this ten-part story. Chapter 10: The Amazing End of an Expedition. Syndicated. (12:30; 13:15)

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The FILMS of JACK BENNY

BY BILL OATES

(From *Classic Images*, Number 135. Reprinted by permission of the author.)

"It's the *Jack Benny Show* with Mary Livingstone, Dennis Day, Phil Harris, Rochester, . . ."

And as the voice of announcer Don Wilson trails off into the ethereal void, the avid radio listener reminisces on one of the most enduring programs of pre-television during broadcasting's golden age. Whether one recalls countless nights poised before the old Philco or more recently transcribed on record or cassette, *The Jack Benny Show* and its namesake loom over the rest as the epitome of the radio crafter's art.

So successful was Benny that no one else was given his or her own time slot by a network (a place on Sunday nights that was occupied by Benny for the better part of 23 years), and fewer still successfully made the transition into television. Even though Jack Benny seems to typify the art of 1930s-1940s broadcasting, it was the motion picture that first brought American's premiere cheapskate and perennial thirty-nine year old to the masses.

It may seem incongruous to examine the non-radio career of Jack Benny, but his 24 starring and numerous cameo roles in film are often overlooked and moreover the butt of ill-sent (frequently by Benny himself) jokes. Most of Jack Benny's fellow radio performers, like Fibber McGee and Molly, Fred Allen, Lum and Abner, Amos and Andy, Ozzie and Harriet, and many others, made at least one film based on their radio personalities.

No greater example of a transition to film from radio could be exemplified than by that of Orson Welles' *Mercury Theater of the Air* cast's sojourn into the celluloid world in *Citizen Kane*. Usually the references to Welles, Joseph Cotton, Agnes Moorehead, and even orchestra

conductor Bernard Hermann's connection to the radio program is but a footnote to the ultimate American film. Jack Benny's film career is often a more minuscule note to the comedian's long tenure in show business.

Jack Benny's movie "career" began in 1929, when he was asked to m.c. the lavish MGM part-Technicolor *Hollywood Review of 1929*. He was rewarded with this role because of his successes as a monologist headlining vaudeville stages in the 1920s.

Benny, born Benny Kubelsky of Jewish immigrants, first made his bow on February 13, 1894, in Waukegan, Illinois, "over a tailor's sign." After paying more attention to playing the violin than to his schooling, Benny worked his way up through the vaudeville ranks to the prestigious Orpheum circuit with pianist Lyman Woods for \$200 a week. World War I interrupted his stage career, but provided him with a chance to change his method of entertaining forever. The recruits at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station preferred the young violinist's humorous bit as a juvenile in a review called *Maritime Frolics* to his pizzicato and arco.

Benny realized his potential as a humorous speaker and so, after his discharge, continued on his move up vaudeville's ladder, ultimately playing the famed New York Palace. While changing his name first to Ben K. Benny and later to Jack Benny, MGM noted this talent and brought the monologist out to Hollywood to introduce some of those who were under Leo's care in 1929, including Marion Davies, John Gilbert, Buster Keaton, Norma Shearer, Lionel Barrymore, and many others.

The film is a strange mixture of talent

FILMS OF JACK BENNY

and among the more interesting segments are the magic skit pantomime by Laurel and Hardy and the singing of Charles King and Cliff "Ukulele Ike" Edwards.

Amazingly, this early all-talking, singing and dancing film received a nomination for Best Picture Academy Award of 1929-1930. Jack Benny was on his way.

Benny's next three films are often forgotten. While under contract at MGM, he m.c.'d another film, *The Songwriters' Review* (1929), wherein prominent songwriters, such as Herb Nacio Brown, played their songs on the piano prior to the singing and dancing of same. While at Metro, Jack made *Chasing Rainbows* (1930), a starring vehicle for Charles King and Bessie Love. Finally, just prior to Benny's four-year absence from Hollywood, he starred in a Tiffany Production film, *The Medicine Man* (1930). In this film, Jack has the chance to play a role different from his now stereotyped M.C. role, when he acts as a medicine show barker. He's the love-em-and-leave-em type who falls for a tough grocery store owner's daughter.

Since this B-film was made quickly, Jack was able to accept an offer to return to the New York stage in Earl Carroll's *Vanities of 1930*. Though the show was reviewed as bawdy, Jack received accolades and a chance to appear on Ed Sullivan's Broadway talk and gossip radio show in 1932.

After Benny's radio debut, CBS opened up a spot for him on his own show on May 2, 1932. While starring on radio and television for 32 seasons, Jack Benny was able to star in 18 more films.

Jack's return to films began in 1934 in the Reliance picture *Transatlantic Merry-Go-Round*. Benny plays an ocean liner's m.c. who is in love with Nancy Carroll. One interesting part of the film is the parody of *Grand Hotel*, which is entitled *Grind Hotel*, an idea that was first introduced on Benny's radio program.

Frank Parker was included in the cast of the film after he had been brought West to become Benny's radio show tenor. Jack was noted for his effort in the press and was called soon thereafter to begin his most active movie life. Simultaneous to *Transatlantic's* opening, a play written by Benny, George S. Kaufman, and Morrie Ryskind opened in Washington, D.C. and closed soon after. The play was a flop despite the talented comedy writers, but in the meantime, the radio program and new sponsor Jell-O were being tested and enjoyed more and more.

Jack Benny returned to MGM in 1935 to appear in two films. *It's in the Air* with Ted Healy, Una Merkle and Nat Pendleton and *Broadway Melody of 1936* with Robert Taylor, Eleanor Powell and Vilma and Buddy Ebsen. The former film is about Benny and Healy (recently divorced from the Three Stooges), who are two con men trying to stay ahead of the feds. This suspense filled comedy once again earned Benny critical praise which increased even more after his next picture. *Melody of '36* had the cast, story by Moss Hart and songs by Herb Nacio Brown and Arthur Freed ("Got a Feelin' You're Foolin'," "You Are My Lucky Star," and "Broadway Rhythm"), to create an early classical MGM musical. Jack plays a Broadway gossip columnist who, in a need to spice up his Walter Winchell-like radio show, invents damaging gossip about producer Taylor. The movie is a delight from Benny and his stooge Sid Silvers' harassment of Taylor to the fine dancing by Powell and the Ebsens. At the film's premier, Jack thanked everyone and announced Jello's six delicious flavors, "strawberry, raspberry, cherry, Metro, Goldwyn, and Mayer."

Though Jack was grateful to MGM, he never starred in another of its productions, but rather began his long association with Paramount. Adolph Zukor's studio was home (at least temporarily) to many of the great comedians of the 1930s, including the Marx Brothers, W.C. Fields, Bob



BUCK BENNY RIDES AGAIN — In this 1940 comedy, Jack teamed up on the screen with radio partners Phil Harris (left) and Andy Devine (right).

Hope, and others, so it was natural for Benny to sign on with the mountain top company. *The Big Broadcast of 1937* is much like *Broadway Melody of 1936* in plot in that a small town girl tries to make good in the big city. Shirley Ross is the would-be star, while Ray Milland is her beau. Though the cast is talent-laden, with the likes of Martha Raye, Bob "Bazooka" Burns, Benny Goodman, Leopold Stokowski's orchestra, and Burns and Allen (in their third *Big Broadcast*), Jack summed up his attitude towards pictures such as these as "stories for song-and-dance" where story lines are secondary.

Nonetheless, it is an entertaining film.

Jack starred in seven other films at Paramount from 1935-40. *College Holiday* (1935) with Burns and Allen was another lightly plotted musical wherein Mary Boland plays a scientist interested in heredity and the way some groups of people are smarter than others. Instead of producing offsprings of superior intelligence at a gathering of "superior" beings, the student guinea pigs produce a musical.

Artists and Models (1937) found Benny as a financially shaky ad agency owner who struggles to pay his bills while finding

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a queen for the Artists and Models Ball. In the sequel, *Artists and Models Abroad* (1938), Benny tries to get his stranded theatrical troupe back home from Paris after putting the books in the black. Joan Bennett plays a wealthy American abroad who might offer the needed capital if Jack follows her whims. Both *Artists* films are fun to watch.

Between these movies, Jack was offered a chance to appear in *Big Broadcast of 1938* but declined the role because it was like those he had disliked before (the m.c. type). He would have likewise felt uncomfortable singing the romantic song of the picture, "Thanks for the Memory," a theme that was readily adopted by young comedian Bob Hope. When Kenny Baker sings the song on the *Benny* radio show shortly after the film's release, Benny mentions that the song might be a good alternate to "Love In Bloom," but one cast member says that the violinist should not attempt to butcher another good song, though he announced that he would try it the next week anyway.

In 1939, Jack began the first of his last three Paramount films, *Mun About Town*. This mediocre musical about a producer trying to crash London's high society played on the success of Jack's radio show. Two members of the radio cast, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson and Phil Harris, had parts in the film as did Dorothy Lamour (a last minute replacement for the ailing Betty Grable) and Edward Arnold. So positive were the prospects for this movie that Paramount premiered the film at Waukegan's Genessee, Academy and Rialto theaters and broadcast the proceedings on stage as part of the June 25, 1939 radio show. The gala event was attended by regular radio cast members, guest stars Lamour and Andy Devine, and most importantly, a very proud Meyer Kubelsky, the 70-year-old father of the star.

In *Buck Benny Rides Again*, Jack is

joined in a screen adaptation of his oft-used radio skit of the late 1930s by sidekick Andy "Hi ya', Buck" (to be said like a teenage boy's voice vacillating between youth and manhood, but unsure of the course) Devine, Ellen Drew and radio members Anderson and Harris. This western parody, which provided black valet Rochester as many lines as his employer, opened, at Benny's insistence, at Loew's Victoria on East 125th Street in Harlem.

In a poignant introduction, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson related to the audience the three people he thought were color blind in show business: Irving Berlin, who hired Ethel Waters for *As Thousands Cheer*, Shirley Temple's mother for encouraging Fox films to allow "Bojangles" to appear with her daughter, and Jack Benny, the man who often gave the black man in his cast funnier lines than he did for himself.

Later in that year, *Love Thy Neighbor* opened for those who wanted to see the famous Benny-Fred Allen feud on the screen. The high point of the movie was Mary Martin's rendition of her hit song "My Heart Belongs to Daddy," because the incredibly funny and long lived radio feud was not effectively transferred to film.

For all the films that Jack Benny made at Paramount, one non-Benny movie gave him one of his trademarks, "Love In Bloom." Bing Crosby introduced the song in *She Loves Me Not* (1934); and after Jack effectively butchered it as a violin solo, hearing it was never quite the same.

Jack did one picture for Twentieth-Century-Fox in 1941, *Charley's Aunt*. Benny's effort is an amusing remake of the 1925 film that starred Sydney Chaplin. In this updated version of the 1892 play about a college aunt impersonator, Benny is somewhat miscast as an Oxford student, but is extremely successful when wooed in drag by the unknowing Edmund Gwenn. During the year of this film's release, Jack Benny became one of the top ten box office attractions while he was in his eighth year



HOLLYWOOD CANTEEN — In 1944 Jack appeared with violinist Efrim Zimbalist, Sr. and an all-star cast.

on radio and on top of that medium's list of most listened to programs.

So important was Jack Benny to comedy in America that renowned director Ernst Lubitsch sought him to play opposite Carole Lombard, the premiere comedienne of the day, in the Alexander Korda production *To Be Or Not To Be* (1942). Clark Gable and Carole Lombard had been close friends of the Bennys so it would be an even greater pleasure for Jack and Carole to work together.

To Be Or Not To Be was completed close to the winter holiday season in 1941. Ernst Lubitsch moved within Jack the actor as Benny had never been directed before, and the result is Jack Benny's best performance on film. With Lombard, he created the

Tura's, a Polish husband and wife acting team that was being forced out of business by the invading Nazis. When Meyer Kubelsky saw Jack on screen in a Nazi uniform, the star's father stormed out of the theater and didn't speak to his son for two weeks. After several pleas, Benny got his father back into the theater to prove that it was the Nazis who were being lampooned, and the result was the aged Kubelsky's first of thirty viewings of the complete film.

Unfortunately, audiences who loved Carole Lombard were unable to enjoy this her last picture, unreleased at the time of her death in a plane crash on January 16, 1942. The film that Benny starred in was well crafted but had a pall over it, not only

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because of the leading lady's death during a war bond promotional tour, but also because the story was about the valiant heroes in a "European conflict" that was more remote when made, but of a subject matter closer to Americans when released after December 7, 1941.

The results of the release of *To Be Or Not To Be* were mixed. Jack was unable to do his radio show on January 18, 1942, out of respect for Carole and also because he had to take time to sort out the reason for the loss of such a vibrant person. Instead of the regular show, Dennis Day presented a program of appropriate musical numbers and Don Wilson invited the audience to join the singers in a chorus of "America The Beautiful."

Critically, the movie was a success; and although it did not receive as many Oscar considerations as one might feel, it did win Best Scoring of a Comedy or Drama. The film was remade in 1982 with Mel Brooks and Anne Bancroft, but the remake was unable to blend poignancy (to a holocaust aware public) and Brooks' wacky humor effectively. As has been the case so often in Hollywood, the original should have been left alone.

From United Artists, Jack Benny journeyed over to Warner Brothers, a stay which was artistically rewarding, but not as long as one might glean from his references to the Brothers' studio on the radio program. In 1942, Jack appeared in the film version of the George S. Kaufman-Moss Hart play *George Washington Slept Here*. Benny plays the husband to Ann Sheridan, a wife who had accompanied her husband from the friendly confines of New York City to the hostile environs of rural Pennsylvania. As the couple adjusts to a back-to-nature experience, humorous circumstances develop around their "quaint" house and neighbors (one played most convincingly by Percy Kilbride).

Jack made a return to Fox films in 1943 to do a remake of George M. Cohan's *The*

Meanest Man in the World, the story of a small town lawyer who is convinced by his valet (Rochester, of course) to become nasty towards his business clients. This 1920 story is aptly adapted for Benny, who finds himself coming full circle back to happiness and his lost girlfriend (Priscilla Lane).

Jack returned to Warners for two more films: *Hollywood Canteen* (1944) and *The Horn Blows at Midnight* (1945). The first film was the type that Jack generally balked at doing, but since it was for the War effort, a cause for which the comedian spent many hours and travelled many miles, he consented. *Canteen* was one of those typical star-studded extravaganzas, this time set at the real haven for G.I.'s in southern California. Joan Crawford, John Garfield, Eddie Cantor and many others are among those who play themselves in the movie, while Robert Hutton plays the soldier hopelessly in love with actress Joan Leslie. Jack does have a chance to pose himself and his infamous violin within earshot of conductor Efrim Zimbalist, Sr. The result of this very successful film was that Jack L. Warner turned over forty percent of the gross to the real canteen. Jack's personal support of the war effort included a tour of North Africa and the Mediterranean from late July to September of the previous year.

Jack's last picture at Warners was both his most maligned and most famous film. *The Horn Blows at Midnight* was favorably reviewed and often in the light of another angel-messenger film from 1938, *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*. Jack plays the sent-to-earth character, an unsuccessful seraph, who plays in the celestial orchestra and must signal with his trumpet the end to wicked earth. Athaniel, from the third phalanx, fifteenth cohort, is sent to his old home planet to play his trumpet (Gabriel did not have a violin) at the exact stroke of twelve, but is sidetracked by the personal affairs of a beautiful earthling (Alexis Smith). Directed by Raoul Walsh, the cast also includes Guy Kibbee,

Margaret Dumont, Frank Pangborn and others, who all assist Jack in playing a rather unique role (certainly unlike that of m.c. or radio comedian). The part was recreated in the lavish 1949 *The Ford Theater* production on radio and again in 1953 on the prestigious television show *Omnibus*. The Benny production was the highest rated of that television series during a year which also saw Orson Welles in a production of *King Lear*. Unfortunately, and often at Jack's own ribbing, *The Horn Blows at Midnight* gained more notoriety than fame and is seen today by many as another Benny joke, somewhere after his being thirty-nine years forever and eternally cheap.

Later in 1945, as a favor to his personal friend and radio enemy Fred Allen, Benny made *It's In The Bag*. The parts of the film that are funny involve cheap jokes at Benny's home. Allen is on a search for some chairs that he sold, because the seat of one contains twelve million dollars (much like the Russian seats in Mel Brooks' *Twelve Chairs*). This film reinforces the strength of Benny's radio character portrayed in the poorer Benny films, since the salvation of at least part of the film is based on exchanges between Fred Allen and Jack Benny, reminiscent to some degree of the powerful "playing the dozens." After this film, Jack only appeared in cameo roles including: *Somebody Loves Me* (Paramount, 1952), *Gypsy* (Warner Brothers, 1962), *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad World* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1962), and *Guide for the Married Man* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1967).

Perhaps one of the greatest films that Jack Benny might have made late in his life was signed, but not shot before the comedian's death in 1974. The original choices for Neil Simon's *The Sunshine Boys* were Jack Benny and Red Skelton, but the latter stepped out and was replaced by Walter Matthau. In September of 1974, Jack was asked to make a screen test.

Director Herbert Ross told Jack that all was fine with the test except that when Benny walked across the room he did so too youthfully. Ross, though half the star's age, showed how it should be done. Jack was 80 at the time but complied and erased a very famous gait with the director's.

Jack had some time before the actual shooting began and was able to do some public speaking and guesting on television before his death on December 28, 1974. If he could have chosen his own replacement, it might well have been his long time friend, George Burns. Not only did Burns take his friend's part, but he also captured the best supporting Oscar, the oldest person to do so. Although it fits into a multitude of Hollywood "what ifs," it is curious to think about how Jack Benny would have portrayed the aged vaudevillian and if Benny's film career might have been rejuvenated. Jack said that he did such roles "every 28 years, that way the pressure won't be on me, and I'll be around forever." It now seems that George Burns, who restarted his movie career after a 40-year absence, will be around forever.

Unless one is a devotee to late night movies, it is more difficult to recognize Jack Benny's career as a Hollywood film star in light of his incredible achievements for 23 years on the radio. Benny did make some very good movies, among them: *To Be or Not To Be*, *Charley's Aunt*, *George Washington Slept Here*, *The Meanest Man in the World*, *Broadway Melody of 1936*, *Buck Benny Rides Again*, or even *The Horn Blows at Midnight*.

If one can find these on late night television, a reward is there for the finder, as well as a display of talent as vibrant as that which endeared Jack Benny to millions of Sunday night listeners. He was not only the man who was so cheap that when asked by a robber, "Your money or your life?" responded, "I'm thinking it over," but also a talented presence on the movie screen.

CHICAGO — As I gladly renew my subscription. I want to take the time to thank you for your dedications to Mel Blanc and Jim Backus. I enjoyed One Man's Family and thank you for airing some episodes this past year. Would you please tell us fans how the series ended for the characters? The 15th Anniversary issue was wonderful. Are there any plans for special anniversary issues to celebrate every year? Looking forward to Jack Benny Month.
— **BARBARA WAGNER**

(ED. NOTE — Glad you liked our 15th Anniversary Digest. You'll have to wait about five years for another milestone Digest, but we do expect to have a "special" issue for April-May to mark the 20th Anniversary of *Those Were The Days* (and our two decades on the air). As far as the Barbour Family is concerned, "One Man's Family" was scheduled to leave the air on May 8, 1959, but most of the stations carrying the series cut it off a couple of weeks earlier, leaving most listeners across the nation dangling with no "wrap-up" of story and characters. It's too bad, because after 27 years on the air, "One Man's Family" had become "Everyman's Family.")

CHICAGO — We started a small tradition in our family about three years ago when our daughter was born. We put up the Christmas tree to the story of Judy and Jimmy and their search for the silver star. Now Ashley knows that when the Cinnamon Bear comes on, it's time to start putting up the tree! Thanks so much for all the wonderful entertainment you have brought to us through the years. You have a second generation listener in my daughter!
— **CATHERINE DE CILLO**

MT. MORRIS, IL — It seems as though that time of year has come again, so I have enclosed my money order for another year of *Nostalgia Digest*. We thank you for your wonderful program and wish to say "God Bless You" for your help in returning us to some of the good old days of yesteryear. Keep up the good work. I am sure you are making a great number of people happy.
— **J.L. BRADSHAW, SR.**

APOLLO BEACH, FLORIDA — We just moved to Florida and I really miss your Saturday and evening programs. I have been a loyal listener since WNMP days.
— **DAN JABLONSKY**

OSWEGO, IL — I shared a couple issues of *Nostalgia Digest* with my 92 year old grandmother and she was so impressed with them that I am ordering a gift subscription for her. We have enjoyed your radio work for many years.
— **JACK & DOROTHY SIMMONS**

PORTAGE, INDIANA — I'm sending a check for a subscription for Miller's Merry Manor nursing home in Portage, Indiana. My mother has been living there for two years and about six months ago I started playing radio show tapes for the old folks every other Sunday for two hours. They really get a big bang out of them. They like the comedy shows the best. Like all of us,

WE GET LETTERS

they need to laugh, too. So now they'll have your great *Nostalgia Digest* to read and remember the good old days.
— **JOHN SCHUSTER**

KENILWORTH, IL — Last night at the "Keyboard Conversation Series" at the Weinstein Center in Evanston, Jeffery Siegel told a most interesting anecdote about Rachmaninoff. Rachmaninoff was a most serious composer/performer and was once described as "a 5'8" scowl." However, he would NEVER give a concert or make an appearance on Sunday night. While many suspected that it was because of a religious or a professional belief, the fact was that Sunday night was Jack Benny night and he loved Jack Benny. Nothing could keep this "so serious" artist from laughing every Sunday! If you hadn't heard this, I'm pleased to pass it on. Thanks for giving so much to so many.
— **DAVID HUSAK**

CHICAGO — Every night I walk for an hour between 8 and 9 p.m. and the hour flies by because I listen to WBBM *Radio Classics*. Thanks to the Hall Closet and Metro Golden Memories I bought some old time tapes to get me through the hockey season. As for the CBS Mystery Theatre: back in the 70s, I'd fall asleep with the radio glued to my ear listening to the creaking door. I'm 24 years old now so 10:30 p.m. was pretty late back then (especially on school nights!). Also, listening to *Those Were The Days* on Saturdays is so important to me that . . . well, let's say that it's as important to me as Sunday football is to my boyfriend (and that's pretty important!) I had the pleasure of meeting you last year at the Museum of Broadcast Communications and I want to say thanks so much for keeping old time radio alive. (Keep up the "Why, thank you, Chuck" jokes! I love them.
— **JENNIFER L. ZCECH**

ROUND LAKE BEACH, IL — I have listened to many of your shows on radio and enjoy all of them. I have a question which I hope you can answer. It concerns the Lone Ranger shows. I know who played the Lone Ranger, but who played Tonto in the shows? Also, when they started the TV shows, did they look for someone whose voice sounded just like the radio person?
— **MICHAEL SCHARF**

(ED. NOTE — Tonto was played, through the entire run of the series — 1933 to 1955 — by John Todd, a "staff actor" at station WXYZ in Detroit. The Masked Man was, of course, Brace Beemer who took over the role after Earle Graser was killed in an automobile accident in 1941. The gravelly-voiced actor who appeared in almost every show in different roles, belonged to Paul Hughes. Beemer wanted to play the Hanger on TV, but Clayton Moore got the job. His voice fit his appearance.)

CHICAGO — I enjoy your Saturday show very much. I love to hear you and Ken Alexander talk about your childhood memories. I remember the first Christmas shopping I did. I was ten years old (1936). I went to Woolworths. I had a whole quarter to spend. I bought my two younger brothers each a toy car — five cents each. A white handkerchief with lace for my mother — five cents. A pair of socks for my dad — ten cents. No sales tax on those days. Now I have to use a charge card and take three months to pay it off!
— **WANDA GRANATH**

NEW BOSTON, IL — I am 56 years old and well remember when Radio was King. I certainly do enjoy *Old Time Radio Classics*, especially the Mystery Theatre. But I would like to hear more of the Black Museum. Also, I would like if you scheduled the *Old Time Radio Classics* at 10 p.m. I like to go to bed and listen to it then, and it would leave prime time TV open, too.
— **HOWARD W. BRIDGER**

SOUTH HAVEN, MICHIGAN — I thoroughly enjoy the *Radio Classics* show on WBBM. I bought a copy of your history of WBBM. Very nice in every way. At 61, I'm really interested in old time radio. It was simply the best of all. I'm a weekend radio broadcaster at small WDWJ in Dowagiac, Michigan.
— **DAVID BRITT**

BERWYN, IL — The year ahead will be a big one for you, I see. It will be the 20th Anniversary of *Those Were The Days*. Did you think when you started it would last as long as it has? Just out of curiosity, how many years will it be for your Metro Golden Memories? Anyway, congratulations on your milestones. Hope there will be many more years.
— **LARRY LEOPARD**

(ED. NOTE — We never dreamed we'd ever celebrate 20 years on the air with the vintage radio programs. Hope you'll be on hand for the occasion at the end of April. Our Metro Golden Memories Shop will be celebrating its 14th anniversary in March, 1990.)

CHICAGO — I like most of the programs that are featured. Give us more of the Mystery Theatre and the Sealed Book. The lights in the house all go out . . . a few candles are lit. We like all the spooky ones. Of course, Jack Benny is another favorite. My radio is tuned to WBBM.
— **MRS. ANNA SINDELAR**

CHICAGO HEIGHTS, IL — I just want to tell you how me and my friend enjoy your old time radio programs. But there's only one thing we don't listen to and that's when that mystery program is on. We hate it, it's scary. Could you please have less of those on and more comedy! My friend is a very young 82 years old and she just loves to laugh at Fibber McGee and Molly.

George Burns and Gracie Allen, and Archie's Tavern. Please see what you can do.

— **THERESA TREMAROLI** and **MARY CAPIROTTI**

CHICAGO — I began subscribing to the Nostalgia Letter and Program Guide back in 1976 when I discovered your broadcast of old time radio *Those Were The Days* while working in my basement. There was a program on the radio with Fred Allen and Jack Benny, and when I heard it I thought, "Wow, what is this? This is great!" Like you, I am old enough to remember those good old programs. I was born and brought up in New Jersey. I heard some of the old time radio in the afternoon and some in the evening. It is a disappointment to hear so much Mystery Theatre. I am not alone in my dislike for that program. Others whom I've talked to about it, turn it off. My subscription to the radio guide will be discontinued, with regret. Not because of inability to pay for it, but for the programming that is offered. If there is not a football or hockey game to take the place of an old time radio program, when there is an old time radio program it is that stupid Mystery Theatre. Granted, many listeners like it, from what I read in the radio guide, but there are also people who, like me, turn it off. I have been a long-time subscriber, but that's the way it is. Your *Those Were The Days* programs on Saturdays are still good and are enjoyed. I used to tape record the Saturday program and the *Radio Classics* when they were on WAIT. Let's have more comedy and more Challenge of the Yukon. The later are very good adventures. These days there is too much stress and tension, as well as gore in the world. We need more to laugh at. When you were on WAIT the old time radio was better.
— **CHARLES H. BRUNS**

(ED. NOTE — Sorry you are disappointed with our WBBM *Radio Classics* programming and that you have chosen not to renew your subscription to the *Nostalgia Digest* and *Radio Guide*. When we were broadcasting evenings on WAIT (1984-1985) we had *four hours* to bring listeners lots of variety in our programming. For the past four years, on WBBM, we have had only an hour a night (except on weekends with two hours each night) and we are pre-empted frequently during the football and hockey seasons. In our efforts to bring vintage radio programming to Chicago area listeners, we do what we can, where we can.

(As far as the CBS Mystery Theatre is concerned, you will be happy — as others will be unhappy — to know that the revival of that series has come to an end. The syndicated series concluded at the end of December, 1989 and at this time we are not aware of any plans for it to be available again in the very near future. At WBBM we had the opportunity to bring it to listeners every night of the week or to incorporate it into our schedule of other programming from radio's past. We choose the latter. As we have mentioned before, all the material broadcast on WBBM is syndicated material and we do not have a very wide choice of variety available to us.)



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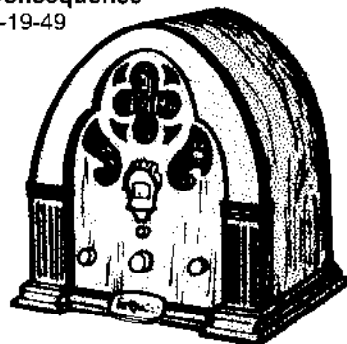
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