

CHUCK SCHADEN'S
NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND
RADIO GUIDE

APRIL — MAY, 1991



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LOU COSTELLO

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NOSTALGIA DIGEST

BOOK SEVENTEEN

CHAPTER THREE

APRIL-MAY, 1991

HELLO, OUT THERE IN Radioland!

It's been an interesting and exciting twelve months since we celebrated our twentieth broadcast anniversary last year.

The fun began with the dedication of the Fibber McGee and Molly exhibit at the Museum of Broadcast Communications, made possible by listeners of *Those Were The Days* . . . all fans of the radio folks who lived at 79 Wistful Vista.

Jim Jordan, Jr., came in from his home in Nevada to be here for the occasion and he was mighty pleased at the tribute paid to his parents, Marian and Jim Jordan.

He stayed in town long enough to visit his boyhood home in the Sauganash area and talk to some of our WBBM listeners during a *Radio Classics* Nostalgia Night.

On another Nostalgia Night on WBBM, veteran actor Gale Gordon called in from his home in California, chatted with listeners, and regaled us with many stories of his radio days.

We traveled to California for a quick interview trip and were pleased to talk about their careers with Harriet Nelson and her son David Nelson, both of the great Ozzie and Harriet radio-TV series.

Betty White, who was honored by the Museum of Broadcast Communications, paid a short visit to our *Those Were The Days* program on WNIB and spoke of her early work in radio.

And on three other occasions at the Museum, we were able to present special *TWTD* broadcasts. Les Tremayne, star of the great *First Nighter* and *Thin Man* programs spent four full hours with us one afternoon. Shirley Bell Cole, who starred on the air in the 1930s as Little Orphan Annie joined us on another occasion and we even had a Quiz Kids reunion when a number of former members

of the famous show came out to celebrate.

But the most dramatic "happening" in the last year was the change in times of our nightly *Old Time Radio Classics* program on WBBM.

Late in November, the Monday thru Friday program time was switched from 8-9 p.m. to Midnight-1 a.m.

Listeners reacted to the change by the hundreds, writing and calling us and the radio station. (A few of the letters we received were printed in the last issue of the *Nostalgia Digest* and you'll find even more in this edition.)

We're still in the Midnight time slot (Monday thru Friday; the weekend shows continue from 8-10 p.m.) and, for the near future, we'll probably stay in that time period.

Many people remarked that, at least, we would no longer be pre-empted for sports programming at midnight. Then, just as we were getting settled at the later hour, what happened? War!! Zap! We were pre-empted for ten days in a row. But we do expect to be bumped whenever newsworthy events are happening around the world or around the corner. After all, WBBM Newsradio 78 is radio's premiere news source for the midwest. And, after all is said and done, we're proud to be part of such a fine station with an illustrious history.

So now we get ready to observe our twenty-first year on the air. Where has the time gone?

We're grateful to everyone who has helped us reach another milestone: the people behind the scenes and you out there in Radioland.

Thanks for listening.

ABBOTT AND COSTELLO

A TWOSOME AND THEN SOME!

By Clair Schulz

For math teachers who are fond of creating theoretical situations that occur when two geometric forms intersect here's one that won't be found in any textbook: In 1936 straight line A met rotund curve C. This union produced hundreds of laughs for twenty years. By what names do we know these two figures?

None of us would have to look in the back of any book to find the answer. Abbott and Costello are one of the most famous duos in history, even more well-known in America than Romeo and Juliet. During the 1940s they were as ubiquitous as Kilroy. Nearly a half century after they reached zenith the dapper dude and the bumbling Rumpelstiltskin are still delighting new generations on the small screen. Even youngsters born in the days of disco fever who love to recite "Who's on first?" know who put those words in their mouths. The story of this unique team is one of gags to riches to rags.

William Abbott wasn't actually born in a trunk in 1895, but he easily could have been for his parents were members of the circus family. It was most propitious for Bud that his father later switched to a part of show business that was just taking off: burlesque. Bud served for a time as a treasurer of a theater in Brooklyn and as a producer of one in Detroit, but these jobs were really an apprenticeship for his days as an entertainer because he observed the performers closely and memorized the standard routines. After he learned the trade out front and in the wings, he moved onstage and became what he still is today: the best straight man in the business.

Lou (born Louis Cristillo) did not have any show business in his blood when he was born in 1906, but he quickly

developed a love for the movies, particularly those featuring Charlie Chaplin. In his youth Lou was quite athletic, excelling at basketball and boxing. His agility proved useful when he was called upon to act as a stuntman during his first stay in Hollywood in 1927, but he gave it up when he began to acquire more injuries than dollars. On the way back to his native New Jersey he heard of a theater in St. Joseph, Missouri that needed a Dutch comedian. At this point Lou wasn't very funny and he certainly wasn't Dutch, but he applied anyway and was hired. He learned on the job and quickly moved up the burlesque ladder to the Orpheum and other top-of-the-line houses in New York. While performing at the Eltinge Theatre Lou saw Bud and Bud studied Lou and before long they realized that their styles complemented each other well.

Once they formed a team the dominoes began falling. Success in burlesque was followed by a ten-week run at the Steel Pier in Atlantic City which resulted in nightclub bookings and an engagement at Loew's State Theatre which led to *The Kate Smith Show* on radio and an appearance on Broadway in *The Streets of Paris* which were their tickets into the movies.

Although their first film, *One Night in the Tropics*, is the only one in which they are not the main players, it is significant because it demonstrates a basic tenet of their motion pictures: don't ever let the plot get so involved that it cannot be interrupted by a burlesque routine. It is quite apparent that the only purpose in having the pair in *Tropics* is so they can deliver a handful of their best bits between musical numbers and love spats.



BUD ABBOTT AND LOU COSTELLO

Cinema scholars are fond of claiming that the first feature in which Abbott and Costello got top billing, *Buck Privates*, is one of their best movies. It is certainly one of their better offerings, but it is not *their* movie. They had to share screen time with the Andrews Sisters, a sub-plot involving a love triangle, and military maneuvers. But the episodic nature of the film was just right for the team's writer, John Grant, to slip in old standbys like the dice game, the drill bit, "Go ahead and sing," and "Lend me fifty bucks."

The success of *Buck Privates* indicated that Americans in 1941 were in the mood for service comedies so before the year was over the team served up *In the Navy* and *Keep 'Em Flying*. But their most significant film that year was *Hold That*

Ghost because this was the first of their "giggle and gasp" films and it was here that the team excelled.

Lou Costello could do more with practically nothing than any entertainer except perhaps Chaplin and W.C. Fields. There were not many easy laughs in their films of the forties; Abbott and Costello earned the audience response through expert timing and precise execution.

They were also earning top dollar at the top of the popularity charts in 1942 as *Ride 'Em Cowboy*, *Rio Rita*, *Who Done It?*, and *Pardon My Sarong* kept them rolling merrily along. In the seven films that followed during the war years the team continued to please audiences with a mixture of fast-moving stories, surefire routines, and frantic chases. In 1946 they

ABBOTT & COSTELLO

tried a change of pace with a straight, lackluster story, *Little Giant*, and a delightful fantasy, *The Time of Their Lives*. With the lukewarm reception to these two films their popularity declined and it wasn't until 1948 that they made a comeback with what very well might be their best film.

Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein has an advantage over *Young Frankenstein*, *Transylvania 6-5000*, and other parodies of horror films: it had the original cast. Bela Lugosi was Dracula and Lon Chaney Jr. was the wolf man; anybody else playing those roles is wearing borrowed robes. Karloff had long since stopped being Frankenstein's creation, but Glenn Strange had played the part in two films and was sufficiently terrifying in the Universal-copyrighted monster make-up. The frightening presence of the Big Three juxtaposed with Lou's antics created a unique blend of laughs and chills that even Abbott and Costello themselves could not duplicate when they met Boris Karloff, the invisible man, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and the mummy. The scene with Lou and the wolf man in an apartment and the one in which Costello unwittingly sits on the monster's lap in an underground chamber are two gems that outshine anything yet produced by battalions of ghostbusters.

It wasn't all downhill after 1948, but the quality of their films which, up until this time had been remarkably consistent, began to be erratic. The pair would put together a couple decent films, then do a turkey like *Comin' Round the Mountain*, follow that with a vehicle clearly geared toward the juvenile market (*Jack and the Beanstalk*), take a step forward by meeting Captain Kidd, and then slide back again with a brace of sorry efforts, *Lost in Alaska* and *Abbott and Costello Go to Mars*. Their last film together, *Dance With Me, Henry* (1956), is painful to watch, not because the movie is so bad, but because the chemistry between the two men, the animation that

marked their most spirited performances, the special magic that they had which no other duo had before or since, all of them were gone. By the summer of 1957 so was their partnership.

Lou did one film without Bud, *The Thirty Foot Bride of Candy Rock*, and some solo television work on *The Steve Allen Show*, *General Electric Theatre*, and *Wagon Train*, but a 1943 bout with rheumatic fever had taken its toll on Costello's heart and he was not a well man when he returned to the world of burlesque for an engagement at the Dunes in Las Vegas in 1958. He suffered a heart attack on February 26, 1959 and he died on March 3.

Bud's problems after the breakup were both financial and physical. The IRS disallowed many deductions he had claimed and repaying the taxes plus penalties cost him his home in Encino and his ranch in Ojai. He found some work doing the old bits in nightclubs with Candy Candido in 1961 and by providing the voice for his character in the Hanna-Barbera series of Abbott and Costello cartoons in 1967, but that did little to keep the wolf from the door. An epileptic who had leaned on the bottle for solace for years, Bud soon was confronted with a succession of maladies: strokes, prostate operation, broken hip and leg, and, finally, cancer. He spent his last two years in a wheelchair and died at his small house in Woodland Hills, California on April 24, 1974.

When people look at the careers of the two men, they tend to think of Abbott and Costello the movie stars and overlook the fact that they were very much at home on radio. In fact, most Americans heard them before they saw them. After their stint with Kate Smith, they made regular appearances with Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen on the *Chase and Sanborn Hour* before acting as a summer replacement for Fred Allen in 1940. Two years later they had their own show.

Their radio programs do not wear as



well as their motion pictures. Bud was basically the same fast-talking, take-charge slicker he was in the movies, but Lou was not the well-meaning "little fellow" we had seen on the screen. Instead, he was a loud-mouthed wiseguy hurling insults at everyone from the wife of the announcer to Mrs. Abbott. On radio the team served up their classic routines like "Mustard" and "Down is up" with the usual relish, but the exchanges that usually opened the program were helpings of corn of the purest sort which are not easy to digest today. However, audiences then ate it up and the show lasted until 1951 when the team moved to television.

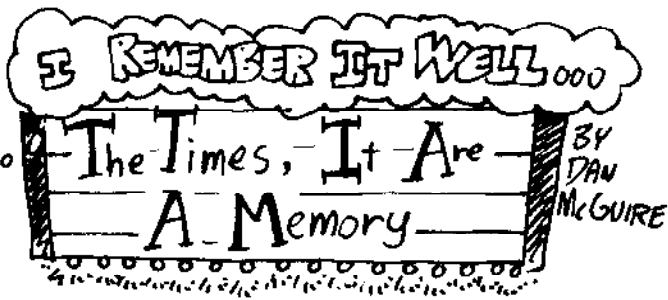
The fifty-two episodes of *The Abbott and Costello Show* started on December 5, 1952 and are still running in syndication. If some of the TV shows look familiar, it is because they are condensed versions of their feature films. The people who like the lemon bit from *In the Navy* can see it again in a segment of "Charity Bazaar." Never seen "Slowly I turned" in *Lost in a Harem*? Tune in the "Jail" episode and follow the moves step by step, inch by inch. The quality of these episodes is rather uneven, but at least Lou was playing the sympathetic klutz we recognized and Bud was in his familiar position as glib prime mover. The program does not contain their best work, but it was good entertainment

and good Abbott and Costello is not at all bad.

Just how good they were is a question that is still being debated. Many critics and film historians place Abbott and Costello in the middle of the totem pole of comedy teams: below the Marx Brothers and Laurel and Hardy and above Martin and Lewis and Wheeler and Woolsey. It probably would be useless to remind them that Abbott and Costello were the leading players in thirty-four feature films released over seventeen years by major studios like Universal, MGM, and Warner Brothers, that no other team came close to that total, and that only the Three Stooges (basically a two-reel team who had several changes in personnel) produced a continuous stream of movies for a longer period of time. They might even concede another point: Abbott and Costello were an unqualified success in the movies, on television and radio, and also on the stage; no other team was anywhere near that versatile. Having admitted that, the learned ones will sigh and say, "Yes, yes, but they were so lowbrow, so plebeian."

True, but at times so was the humor of Chaucer and Shakespeare. No matter how far they roamed from their early haunts Bud and Lou always had their feet firmly planted in the earthy roots of burlesque and burlesque will never be mistaken for drawing-room comedy. Slapstick, pratfalls, double takes, snappy patter, and those venerable routines were what they offered whether they were at the Steel Pier in 1937 or in Hollywood in 1955. Their armor was creaking near the end and it might have been all they had to wear, but it sure was a perfect fit.

Frank Capra was proud of having his name above the title. In the eight decades of motion pictures only two stars have had such drawing power that their names appeared in the titles of ten films. It is comforting to know that as long as film and videotape exist what will always be playing is "Abbott and Costello Meet the Fans Who Love Them."



For my eleventh Christmas, Aunt Evie gave me a booklet of admission coupons good for all the Balaban & Katz movie theatres. In spite of some other neat stuff I received, this gift excited me most.

During a period of roughly fifth through eighth grades, Chuck and I shared a mutual addiction to Saturday matinees. Barring preemptive family events, we ceased asking, "Ya wanna go to the show?" The only question was: Which one?

Scattered around Chicago's northwest side, a dozen or more movie theatres were variously accessible from our semi-rural suburb. All required a shuttle bus ride to Neenah Avenue, where we caught the Irving Park streetcar. Some required additional transfers.

In pre-TV days, a volcanic eruption of B movies flowed endlessly from a raft of Hollywood studios. A lesser flood of quality films featured real plots and top rated stars. Even with double features and midweek showbill changes, no one theatre could present the entire array.

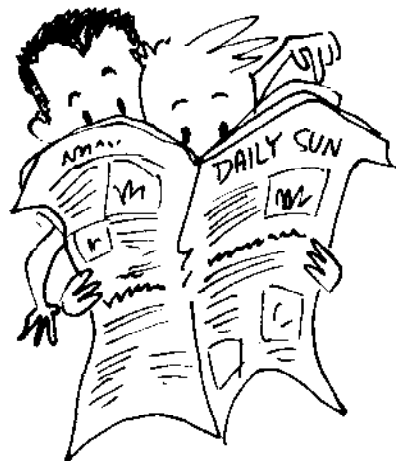
Chuck and I established a Friday evening ritual. We'd huddle over the *Chicago Sun* or *Daily News* movie section, evaluate the listings and narrow the choices. When we agreed on one, we'd decide what time we needed to leave to reach the particular theatre when the doors opened.

In a previous column, I eulogized the *Patio*, which has made a welcome revival after some lean times. Least distant from our homes, the *Patio* got a lion's share of our patronage. If no other listings really thrilled us, we'd end up saying, "Aw,

what the heck, let's just go to the *Pay Show*." (Finding something more creative to do for one Saturday was seldom considered.)

For me, another attraction of the *Patio* was an Andes Candies store on the nearby corner at Austin Avenue. The Andes confectionary chain once blanketed Chicago and its suburbs. It went out of business in the 1950's. Today's closest equivalent is the Fannie Mae chain. But it lacks a special feature that distinguished Andes.

Tucked into a corner of most Andes stores was a soda fountain. They mixed some of the thickest, richest malts and shakes in the city. Time and finances permitting, I would suggest a visit to Andes after the show. Chuck's sweet tooth was akin to mine. He seldom declined.



Sometimes, my weekly allowance running low, I endured a double feature without popcorn or other goodies so as to savor an Andes chocolate malt later.

A bit farther down the line one encountered the renowned "six corners" intersection of Milwaukee and Cicero Avenues. Here the busy Sears Roebuck store dominated a square block on the northeast. In both directions, each of the three main arteries was covered for a couple of blocks by shops of all kinds and sizes. Facing Sears across Irving was the staid Northwest National Bank building. An old fashioned cigar store occupied the triangular corner bounded by Cicero and Milwaukee.

During most daylight hours, a traffic cop helped minimize congestion. Following his hand and whistle directions, we crossed to Milwaukee and walked a block north to the *Portage* theatre, named for the city's Portage Park district.

Given the nature of motion pictures, entering any theatre is like stepping into a world of make-believe. This was particularly so at the *Portage* because of the usual hubbub outside. At holiday time, sidewalks would be so jammed with shoppers that one often had to step into the street to keep moving.

If we left the *Portage* with time to spare, we could do some wishful window shopping or roam through Woolworth's or Sears. A mom-and-pop record store across from the theatre was a favorite stop.

It had several soundproof booths where you could listen to records before making a selection. (This was before the age of headphones and plastic-wrapped LPs.) The owners never objected to letting a couple of kids audition eight or ten of the latest pop singles, even though we seldom had the wherewithal to make a purchase.

By transferring to a Milwaukee trolley car, we could ride about a mile north and take our pick of three — count 'em — three theatres within blocks of each other. Away from Chicago's downtown loop area, it was a rare feat for three movie



houses to survive in such proximity.

The *Gateway* was a block east of Milwaukee on Lawrence. A Balaban & Katz theatre, it has an edge on its neighbors, showing first-run films in a well-maintained, clean atmosphere, just a tad more ornate than most independents. We visited the *Gateway* infrequently because their features usually played at more accessible places.

The *Times* and *Jeff* were both on Milwaukee, just north and south of Lawrence respectively. Mere survival may have been a 4-star achievement for them, even in those days of high movie attendance. Both were obviously older facilities. While not exactly dingy, neither of them sparkled.

Old wads of chewing gum adorned the undersides of many seats, while others on the floor lay in ambush for unwary shoes. Seats with broken springs, ruptured upholstery or a sideways tilt were common.

Both theatres stayed alive, I think, by attracting kids — lots of kids — to Saturday and Sunday matinees. Kids consume large quantities of sweets, and concession sales make or break most theatres.

The *Times*' gimmick was a weekly offering of triple features, almost always with a common theme.

I REMEMBER IT WELL

Abbott & Costello in "Buck Privates"
Laurel & Hardy in "Chumps at Oxford"
Olson & Johnson in "Hellzapoppin'"

There might be three action films, three cowboy films, three detective films, etc. For kids who enjoyed having the pants scared off them, the triple horror show was irresistible.

"Curse of Dracula"

"The Wolfman Returns"

"Frankenstein Meets The Mummy"

Occasionally, they varied the format and presented just two features — preceded by 15 color cartoons. TV's Saturday morning line-up can't compare to that *Times* potpourri of your favorite cartoon characters. Non-stop animated slapstick. Big screen. Contagious laughter from hundreds of hyped-up kids. And no commercials.

Down the street, the *Jeff* showed only two features, usually of related genre. Two war dramas. Two mysteries. Back-to-back Gene Autry and Roy Rogers westerns. Depending on the features' length, the *Jeff*

offered from two to five cartoons.

What helped the *Jeff* attract a full house was a weekly door prize of a balloon-tire bicycle. Ticket stubs went into a huge fishbowl. At an intermission between features, the manager got someone from the audience to come up on stage and draw a winner. Each week some lucky boy or girl got the thrill of their young lives.

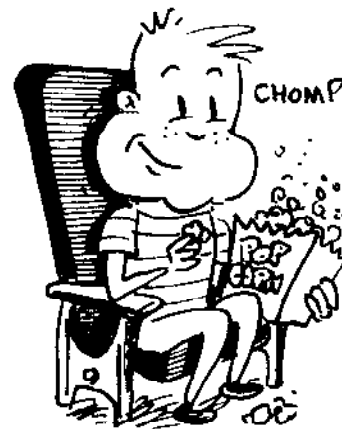
My pal Bob claimed these drawing were rigged. He said winners always were relatives or friends of the management, and the same bike was "won" week after week. When I doubted the logistics of this, Bob insisted he "knew someone who knew." It's tough to argue with such insider information, but I still felt those weekly winners had to be terrific actors if they weren't legit.

If we stayed on the Irving Park trolley past six corners, we soon reached the *Irving* theatre at the street with two names: Pulaski/Crawford. Enroute we passed within four blocks of my grandparents' home.

Before the *Irving's* house lights dimmed, I sometimes was awed by the thought that my mother and her brothers and sisters had walked to this theatre when they were kids. On weekends when I'd stay over with my grandparents, Aunt Florence had taken me to the *Irving* and treated me to such films as "Lassie Come Home" and the early "Jungle Book," starring Sabu.

An added attraction of the *Irving* was its location across from the Buffalo Ice Cream Parlor. For years, the Buffalo ranked as one of the city's best ice cream shops, certainly the northwest side's top contender. During my high school years I had the good fortune to obtain a part-time job working behind the counter. The pay was modest, but the fringe benefits were delicious.

Still farther down the Irving Park line was the *Commodore*. Another relatively old structure, it seemed misplaced in a partially residential block. It never seemed to draw a capacity crowd. In later years it became a foreign language film house



Illustrations by Brian Johnson

and eventually was closed. Because of the long ride, we usually went to the *Commodore* only to catch something we'd missed closer to home.

When the *Patio* began a Batman and Robin serial, it was a must-see for devoted fans like me. Yet, halfway through, I was ill one week and missed a chapter. The *Commodore* saved me from a bat mania attack by running the serial a week behind the *Patio* schedule.

I couldn't have identified the famous namesake when we attended the *Will Rogers*. It required a transfer and a southbound streetcar ride on Central Avenue. The theatre was on Belmont, a block west of the busy shopping area at Central.

The *Will Rogers* is most memorable for its floor plan. Unlike most theatres, it was situated on a corner. The ticket booth faced out on a diagonal. The entry area and outer half of the lobby formed a triangle. This resulted in a departure from the normal layout for concession booth, washrooms, and doors into the theatre proper.

Other names come to mind. *Luna* (noted for its showing of old horror and western films). *Pickwick* (in neighboring suburb, Park Ridge). *Logan* (named for its Logan Square locale). *Mont Clare* (in the nearby suburb of Elmwood Park). A Milwaukee Road railroad track ran directly behind the theatre. When a train rumbled past, the screen shook.

All of these were back-up choices. They were more difficult to reach than our five mainstays. Public transportation ended about four blocks from the *Mont Clare*. For the *Pickwick*, we had to beg some adult to drive us — not an easy chore in times when cars were a luxury and parents not accustomed to being their kids' chauffeurs.

If you grew up in Chicago or any other big city, you probably have similar memories of a dozen theatres when you spent Saturday afternoons with friends. (I haven't touched on the trips downtown to those elegant Loop theatres.)

Readers from small towns and rural communities no doubt had a different experience. As an avid movie buff, I can't imagine living in a town like Texasville with only one picture show. Even if the bill changed at midweek, you would miss hundreds of good films — until decades later when they popped up on late night TV.

A glance through today's newspaper reveals that the *Patio*, *Pickwick*, *Portage* and *Logan* are still operating. (Maybe theatre names starting with "P" cast some sort of lucky spell?) All the others have been boarded up or razed as neighborhoods underwent various changes.

Meanwhile, the once unincorporated village in which I grew up now boasts a splitscreen Loews theatre that offers six films simultaneously. Thank goodness it wasn't there in my youth. The weekly allowance I received on Friday would not have lasted through the weekend.

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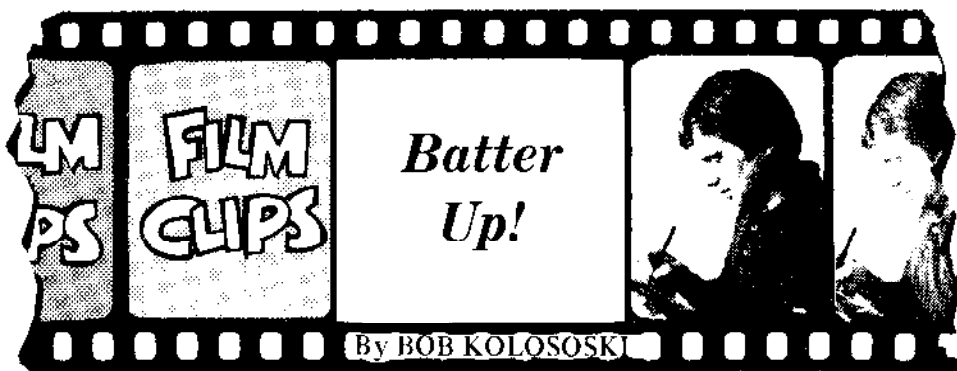
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Batter Up!

By BOB KOLOSOSKI



Baseball is the greatest sport in the world!

There are plenty of football, basketball, and soccer fans who would disagree with that statement but none of them would turn down a boxseat ticket to the World Series. For about one hundred years baseball has been an integral part of the American experience. Baseball has created legends and humbled heroes and for six months out of every year baseball games rule the airwaves and dominate sports pages in major and minor newspapers.

To have a major or minor league team in your city or small town is a source of pride and even lowly Mudville had its Casey. Chicago is a great city for many reasons but at the top of the doggone list is our two baseball teams. The south side has the wonderful White Sox and the north side has the crush 'em Cubs.

For a true-blue baseball fan such as myself it has been sheer heaven living in Chi-town. I grew up on the near north side which meant I was almost a south sider and believe it or not I lived exactly 5.75 miles from the friendly confines of Wrigley Field and 5.74 miles from good ole Comisky Park.

The amount of popcorn I've eaten at baseball games can be measured in tons and soda in mega-gallons but I have never once caught a foul ball screaming into the stands. In the summer of '64 I left an afternoon game at Wrigley and caught the

Addison bus to Western and that south to 35th street and over to Comisky for a Sox vs. Yankees night game.

Through most of my childhood and adult life to date if I'm not at a ball game or playing-coaching baseball or watching it on TV, I'm checking to see if there is a good baseball movie on the tube or at my favorite movie palace.

Even though there have been numerous movies with baseball themes most of them have struck out with audiences. Producers have made movies with baseball themes, but that's not enough to create a good movie or one that a real baseball fan will go to see. The film-makers have to understand the game and love it in order to breathe life into the film.

Robert Redford is an ex-college baseball player and when he made *The Natural* a few years ago he took a chance on a baseball fantasy. His enthusiasm and knowledge of the game made the film work and at one point actually had the audience believe that a batter could knock the cover off a baseball. The film blended myth and legend into a fine brew that intoxicated the audience into suspending their perception of reality for the Grimm-like tale told up on the screen. Another strong point of the film is that Redford *looked* like a ball player. He has a good swing and decent throwing arm and his motions all seemed very natural.

One highly-rated film that has never

worked for me is *Pride of the Yankees* starring Gary Cooper. The biography of Lou Gehrig was directed by Sam Wood, written by Herman J. Mankiewicz and Jo Swerling and produced by Sam (spare no expense) Goldwyn and yet it had one major fault. Cooper didn't know one end of the bat from the other and it showed on the screen. I love the story and Cooper did a fine job of acting but he comes across as a sandlot player, not the iron man of the powerful New York Yankees. Of course, the cameo appearance of Babe Ruth is enough to melt away my criticism and get in front of a screen to watch it one more time.

Unfortunately for Mr. Ruth when it came time for Hollywood to do his life story Mr. Goldwyn wasn't the producer and the screen writers cranked out a fairly mediocre story. William Bendix did his best in the *Babe Ruth Story*, but the movie as a whole fell short of major league entertainment.

Bendix was also the star of a second-rate movie about a major league umpire. *Kill the Umpire* was the movie and the producer should have killed the idea before it got before the cameras.

The one film biography that hits all the bases is *The Stratton Story* with James Stewart playing the great baseball pitcher who lost a leg but had the talent and courage to make a comeback. Sam Wood directed with his eye on the ball and Stewart looked as natural in a baseball uniform as Gary Cooper did in cowboy clothes. The film is a winner from first frame to last.

Would you believe baseball musicals? Well there are a couple hummers that are fun to watch even for the hardened baseball fan. *Take Me Out to the Ballgame* is pure MGM glitz but with Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Esther Williams and Busby Berkeley directing — Holy Cow what a blast! Williams only has about three minutes of pool time but Sinatra croons a few tunes and he and Kelly raise some dust

with their dance routines. Kelly and company are just having fun and it rubs off on the audience.

The only one having fun in *Damn Yankees* is the devil himself. This Stanley Donen produced film based on the Broadway hit musical tells the story of a baseball player who sells his soul to the master of hades for the chance to play for the Washington Senators and beat the Yankees. Ray Walston does a devilishly good job as Satan and Gwen Verdon sizzles and steals the show as the temptress Lola. There are a few good songs and the only weak link in the film is Tab Hunter as the bargaining baseball player. The good news is that Bob Fosse's choreography is a winner and, on the whole, the production is grand slam.

Joe E. Brown made a series of low-brow comedies at Warner Bros. in the 1930's and the best of that bunch was *Alibi Ike*, based on a story by Ring Lardner. Brown is perfect as the hick baseball pitcher brought up to play for the Chicago Cubs. Brown played minor league baseball before he settled on show business and his love of the game comes through on every frame. The hero — Ike — is a great pitcher but a incurable fibber and fabricator of wild stories. His pitching makes him a hero but his ego and little white lies gets him in trouble with gamblers and his fiance played by a very young Olivia de Havilland. The movie is older than any active major leaguer but age hasn't diminished its energy one bit. It's the Carlton Fisk of baseball movies.

Ray Milland is the unlikely hero of another good old baseball movie that shows up on TV at 2 a.m. every once and a while. *It Happens Every Spring* is a light farce with Milland as a chemist who accidentally discovers a liquid formula that will make anything soaked in it repel wood. Therefore a baseball with the liquid on it will fly around a baseball bat instead of being globbered by it. Of course he becomes a major league pitcher and wins

FILM CLIPS

game after game with his wicked curve ball. Its all pretty silly but somehow it works and even the reserved Mr. Milland seems to be having a good time. Paul Douglas the veteran actor is pretty convincing as a veteran catcher who is able to handle the aerodynamic pitching served up by lefty Milland.

Baseball players have problems like the rest of us and *Fear Strikes Out* is a film that explores the turmoil in the early career of Jimmy Piersall. Anthony Perkins is exceptional as the erratic ballplayer driven to a nervous breakdown by his father's obsessive desire to have his son be a baseball superstar. Karl Malden is superb as the overbearing parent. Obviously Mr. Piersall's little league coach didn't explain to him that baseball is fun.

Robert DeNiro is a gifted actor who can do it all and in *Bang the Drum Slowly* he plays a not too bright major league catcher who is dying of Hodgkinson's disease and wants to live long enough to play one more season. This film really got to me because all this catcher had was baseball and he wanted to die playing the game. It also had a cast that looked, talked, and acted like baseball players. It's rarely on TV but it is worth the effort to see if it makes the late show.

On a lighter note Walter Matthau is a pure delight in *The Bad News Bears*. This is baseball little league style with kids that unload obscenities faster than a speeding bullet. Matthau plays an ex-ballplayer who spends his days cleaning pools and evenings polishing off six packs. Then he inherits a team of misfits lead by pitcher Tatum O'Neal. This is a movie I would love my kids to see but the foul language really spoiled what is basically a pretty good blend of baseball and the 50's version of the juvenile delinquent movie. In fact

the grand juvenile delinquent of all time — Vic Morrow — plays the bad guy coach of the championship team. It is definitely little league baseball L.A. style and if seen in a cleaned up television version it's not bad.

There seems to be a renewed interest in baseball by film makers lately and by basic film standards most are routine. *Major League* starring Tom Berringer is a foul ball and *Stealing Home* with Mark Harmon is a rainout. However, Kevin Costner is very good in *Bull Durham* as is his co-star Susan Sarandon. The film explores the less than glamorous world of minor league baseball without apologizing for its subject matter. It is humorous in spots but the fact that men will spend most of their adult lives playing baseball in small towns for minimum wage with no hope of breaking into the "big show" is hammered home. It is good light-weight entertainment. It's also a good warmup vehicle for Mr.


Costner who is also in the absolute greatest baseball film produced. *Field of Dreams* is as heavy as *Durham* is light. After you've seen it it will stay with you like a good book or play. It delves into father and son relationships, lost hopes, eternal optimism and the spirit world. Baseball is the nucleus of this very complicated and beautiful film. It works on many levels and it will move anyone who has ever spent a sunny afternoon at the ballpark cheering for their favorite team and leaving the problems of the world at the main gate.

Movies and baseball are ways we escape the harsh realities that are faced every day. The wars, poverty, and diseases of the world are out there waiting but in a movie theatre or the upper deck we're in another place and time shielded from all that for a little slice of time. The movie theatre, the ball park — there is no better place to step back and let "this cockeyed caravan" go by.

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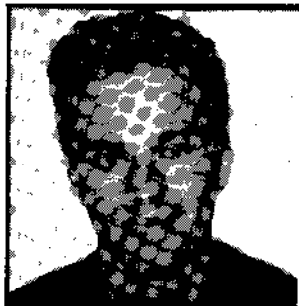
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AS TIME GOES BY

IN THE MOOD

SATURDAY NIGHT IS THE LONLIEST NIGHT OF THE WEEK

WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER



The Golden Age of Radio Receivers

BY TODD NEBEL

The Golden Age of Radio *Receivers* could be termed the period of time when radio manufacturers in the decade before World War II competed to produce the best radios the world had ever seen — before or since.

Between 1930 and 1941, American manufacturers responded to a great demand and produced a superior product which still works effectively and still is in great demand at flea markets and antique stores throughout the country.

The mostly wooden-framed radios from this period were made of quality workmanship and product and can to this day cost hundreds of dollars more than their original asking price (depending on their condition). These radios were entirely American in origin, parts and labor by American corporations who cared not only about profit but in the quality of each one of its products.

In 1930, the majority of radio receivers were in the form of a console. However, as the depression worsened, people began buying less expensive radio sets. The industry then produced the classic sets we know as “cathedrals” or “depression” models which were more compact and less expensive table models for home use.

By 1933, table models made up 74 per cent of all radios sold. Between 1935 and 1941 the radio audience zoomed to 28.5 million, or 81 per cent of American homes as compared to 67 per cent at the start of 1935. At the same time, a previously insignificant element, car radios, went from 9 per cent in 1935 to 27 per cent or 7.5 million automobiles, in 1941. By 1938,

the United States owned half the world's radio receivers and more American homes had radios than telephones, vacuum cleaners or electric irons. The American radio audience ran from top to bottom in the social and economic scale and included everything in between. It could be said that the radio audience was the whole of the American people.

At the outset of the 1930's, RCA controlled the majority of radio's vastly superior superheterodyne circuit up until the 1931 model year. However, it was at this turning point that RCA was required to divest following an antitrust litigation and subsequently General Electric and Westinghouse, former manufacturers for RCA, began to manufacture independently in 1935.

The Philco Radio Company was one of the major radio producers during this “golden age.” It remained behind RCA as a seller of radios until 1940, when it sold an equal number of radio sets. Heavy promotion, pioneering battery-operated portable radios, automobile radios and a line of efficient battery operated radios destined for rural listeners all made Philco the growing giant of the period.

Next in importance was the Zenith Corporation whose dynamic president Commander Eugene F. MacDonald promoted aggressive selling as well as concentration on the home radio market versus diversification. Here, as well, innovations brought success — large, round and easily read dials on radios starting in 1935, a simple radio antennae to improve reception and an inexpensive

shortwave AM portable radio.

Another new company, Emerson Radio was mainly responsible for introducing the small, inexpensive table radio in 1933. Emerson's prices kept getting lower until, by 1939 Emerson was selling radios at under \$10, naturally encouraging many families to own more than one set. Another aggressive firm, Motorola, moved into the automobile market and by 1941 was selling one-third of all car radios, and offered push button sets tailored for specific car instrument panels. The common thread of all of these firms was their aggressive salesmanship and pricecutting rather than major technical development.

Meanwhile RCA, onetime leader in the radio receiver field, was now losing out in other areas of the radio market as well. While remaining the largest maker of radio tubes in 1941, Sylvania and Raytheon were now moving in on RCA's market share. And in the loudspeaker business, Magnavox was making great inroads as well. Most of RCA's problems were due to declining market share from increased competition after divestiture. It wasn't until World War II, under the great leadership of David Sarnoff, that RCA experienced a resurgence by developing military communications and in further developing the entire radio-electronics industry.

Other firms which were once important in the manufacturing of radios, such as Grigsby-Grunow and Atwater Kent, withered away during the depression. Increasingly tight competition among the remaining firms led to narrow profit margins and very little advanced research by the onset of the war. Circuitry became more standardized, parts became interchangeable, and manufacturing became even more streamlined and simplified. Many firms were now selling similar small table models, chairside radios, large floor consoles — some with phonographs — and automobile radios.

The major results were more reliable and efficient radios at low prices and a growing multi-set audience.

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APRIL			Old Time Radio Classics — WBBM-AM 78 MONDAY thru FRIDAY MIDNIGHT to 1:00 A.M. SATURDAY and SUNDAY 8:00-10:00 P.M.			
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 The Bickersons The Shadow	2 Voyage of the Scarlet Queen Charlie McCarthy	3 Jack Benny Dragnet	4 Tom Corbett, Space Cadet Buck Rogers	5 Baby Snooks Shadow of Fu Manchu	6 To Be Announced
7 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	8 Burns & Allen Bill Stern	9 My Favorite Husband Nick Harris, Detective	10 Cisco Kid Vic and Sade	11 Six Shooter Charlie McCarthy	12 Mr. Keen, Tracer Lum and Abner	13 Green Hornet Burns & Allen Dragnet Jack Armstrong
14 To Be Announced	15 Sherlock Holmes Nick Harris, Detective	16 Aldrich Family Bill Stern	17 Chandu the Magician Charlie Chan	18 Lights Out Shadow of Fu Manchu	19 X Minus One The Bickersons	20 To Be Announced
21 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	22 Vic and Sade The Shadow	23 Green Hornet Jack Armstrong	24 I Love Lucy Police Headquarters	25 Tarzan Buck Rogers	26 Charlie McCarthy Voyage of the Scarlet Queen	27 Six Shooter Screen Guild Theatre Jack Benny Captain Midnight
28 To Be Announced	29 Cisco Kid Shadow of Fu Manchu	30 The Bickersons The Shadow	PLEASE NOTE: Due to WBBM's commitment to news and sports, <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> may be pre-empted occasionally for late-breaking news of local or national importance, or for unscheduled sports coverage. In this event, vintage shows scheduled for <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> will be rescheduled to a later date.			

MAY			Old Time Radio Classics — WBBM-AM 78 MONDAY thru FRIDAY MIDNIGHT to 1:00 A.M. SATURDAY and SUNDAY 8:00-10:00 P.M.			
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
PLEASE NOTE: All of the programs we present on <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> are syndicated rebroadcasts. We are not able to obtain advance information about storylines of these shows so that we might include more details in our <i>Radio Guide</i> . However, this easy-to-read calendar lists the programs in the order we will broadcast them. Programs on <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> are complete, but original commercials and network identification have been deleted. This schedule is subject to change without notice.			1 Voyage of the Scarlet Queen Charlie McCarthy	2 Our Miss Brooks Shadow of Fu Manchu	3 Duffy's Tavern Buck Rogers	4 Burns & Allen Green Hornet Dragnet Vic and Sade
5 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	6 Mr. District Attorney Lum and Abner	7 Bill Stern Crime Classics	8 Six Shooter Shadow of Fu Manchu	9 Vic and Sade The Shadow	10 Green Hornet Dick Tracy	11 Cisco Kid Dragnet Charlie McCarthy Lights Out
12 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	13 The Bickersons Voyage of the Scarlett Queen	14 Screen Guild Theatre Buck Rogers	15 Dragnet Third Man	16 Bulldog Drummond Charlie McCarthy	17 The Shadow Guiding Light	18 Jack Benny Gangbusters Abbott & Costello Theatre Royale
19 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	20 Mark Trail Terry and the Pirates	21 Witch's Tale Jack Benny	22 Charlie McCarthy The Shadow	23 Mollé Mystery Theatre Pepper Young's Family	24 Burns & Allen Dragnet	25 The Shadow Lum & Abner The Shadow The Bickersons
26 Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	27 Six Shooter The Bickersons	28 Dragnet Shadow of Fu Manchu	29 Burns & Allen Cisco Kid	30 Jack Benny Green Hornet	31 Lights Out Lum & Abner	

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1-5 P.M.

APRIL

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.

SATURDAY, APRIL 6th

MR. DISTRICT ATTORNEY (5-26-48) "The Deadly Snowflake" starring Jay Jostyn as Mr. D.A. with Len Doyle as Harrington and Vicki Vola as Miss Miller. A look at the so-called "code of criminals," honor among thieves. Ipana, Sal Hepatica, NBC. (15:55; 12:25)

PRESENTING CHARLES BOYER (7-11-50) Actor Charles Boyer stars in "A Thief, A Beautiful Woman, and My Life of Crime" with Sheldon Leonard and Jane Morgan. Sustaining, NBC. (14:00; 13:42)

LUX RADIO THEATRE (10-13-41) "Buck Privates" starring Bud Abbott and Lou Costello making their Lux debut in a radio version of their screen smash. Cecil B. DeMille hosts. The show is loaded with classic Abbott and Costello routines. Lux Soap, CBS. (20:00; 21:30; 19:30)

KRAFT MUSIC HALL (2-17-49) Al Jolson welcomes guest Joan Davis for some comedy and music. Oscar Levant, Lou Bring and the orchestra, Ken Carpenter. Kraft Foods, NBC. (6:50; 12:50; 11:05)

DR. SIXGUN (1954) Karl Weber stars as a "gun-toting frontier doctor who roamed the length and breadth of the old Indian territory." A drunk holds the deed to "Frenchman's Ford." Sustaining, NBC. (12:50; 17:00)

SATURDAY, APRIL 13th SPOTLIGHT ON CATHY LEWIS

MY FRIEND IRMA (4-11-47) First show in the series starring Marie Wilson as Irma Peterson and **Cathy Lewis** as Jane Stacy, with John Brown as Irma's boyfriend Al and Leif Erickson as Richard Rhinelander. III. We learn how Irma and Jane met for the first time. Sustaining, CBS. (15:15; 14:25)

SUSPENSE (11-15-50) "On A Country Road" starring Cary Grant and **Cathy Lewis** in the classic drama about a couple, returning from a picnic, who run out of gas in a storm and hear a radio report about an escaped lunatic armed with a meat cleaver. Jeanette Nolan co-stars. AutoLite, CBS. (15:45; 12:30)

SONGS BY SINATRA (1946) Frank Sinatra welcomes pianist Andre Previn and actress **Cathy Lewis**. Cathy appears with Frank in a "If You Were The Only Girl in

the World" sketch with music. Louis B. Mayer, Sinatra's boss at M-G-M Studios presents an award. AFRS rebroadcast. (7:15; 9:35; 12:20)

SUSPENSE (3-27-56) "The Murderess" starring **Cathy Lewis** in a drama about a day in the life of a woman who awaits an execution. Sustaining, CBS. (10:50; 13:20)

ON STAGE (4-1-53) "Dig The Thief" stars Elliott and **Cathy Lewis** in a "dude ranch" western con game. Cast includes Bob Sweeney, Gigi Pearson, John McIntyre. Sustaining, CBS. (14:45; 14:30)

MY FRIEND IRMA (2-17-52) Marie Wilson as Irma, **Cathy Lewis** as Jane. Jane becomes jealous of a new girl in her office, decides to send a letter of resignation. John Brown is Al; Hans Conried is Professor Kropotkin. Ennds Chlorophyll Tablets, CBS. (13:00; 15:20)



CATHY LEWIS

SATURDAY, APRIL 20th

ABBOTT AND COSTELLO SHOW (2-15-45) Guest Rudy Vallee drops in on Bud and Lou to narrate their version of "Jack and the Beanstalk." AFRS rebroadcast. (8:00; 9:15; 8:25)

PHILCO RADIO HALL OF FAME (2-20-44) All-star variety program with comedian Jerry Lester, singer Helen O'Connell, Paul Whiteman, and the orchestra. Deems Taylor, and special guests Jennifer Jones and Charles Bickford in a radio version of "Song of Bernadette." Philco Radios, NBC Blue. (14:09; 15:28; 19:48; 10:07)

ROGER KILGORE, PUBLIC DEFENDER (10-12-48) Santos Ortega stars as the P.D. representing a wounded war veteran in "The Eddie Lewis Story." Sustaining, MBS. (13:50; 13:50)

THE HUMAN ADVENTURE (8-24-40) "The Story of Chicago" offers an interesting, no-punches-pulled look at the city including the Gold Coast, the slums, the suburbs, and the Loop. Produced in collaboration with the University of Chicago. Sustaining, CBS. (9:30; 8:20; 6:15)

HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (7-8-48) "Pride and Prejudice" is a radio adaptation of the Jane Austen novel. The Bennett household is buzzing with marriage plans. James Hilton is host, Hallmark Cards, CBS. (15:40; 13:24)



JIMMY DURANTE

SATURDAY, APRIL 27th 21st ANNIVERSARY SHOW "Thanks For Listening"

Celebrating Radio's Golden Age



As we complete twenty-one years of *Those Were The Days* broadcasts we'll express our appreciation with an afternoon of sounds from one of the world's great entertainers: Jimmy Durante!

JIMMY DURANTE SHOW (10-8-47) Guest Eddie Cantor visits Schnozzola Durante as the two superstars reflect on their days in show business. Cast includes Arthur Treacher, Candy Candido and Peggy Lee. Rexall, NBC. (8:55; 7:50; 12:40)

THE LEGEND OF JIMMY DURANTE (1968) Documentary narrated by Walter Winchell covering the life and times of Jimmy Durante. (14:50; 12:55; 8:00)

LUX RADIO THEATRE (5-27-46) "Music For Millions" starring Margaret O'Brien, Jimmy Durante, Jose Iturbi, and Francis Gifford. Radio version of the 1944 film about a pair of sisters who join an orchestra. William Keighley is host. Lux Soap, CBS. (21:20; 16:20; 11:25)

KRAFT MUSIC HALL (4-1-48) Al Jolson welcomes Jimmy Durante who wants Al for a partner in a new nightclub. Oscar Levant, Lou Bring and the orchestra, Ken Carpenter, Kraft Foods, NBC. (8:10; 7:35; 14:00)

COMEDY CARAVAN (11-16-45) It's the Nose and the Haircut, Jimmy Durante and Garry Moore. Sketches about lady football coaches and about a scientist experimenting with Uranium. Howard Petrie, singer Jeri Sullivan, Roy Bargy and the orchestra. AFRS rebroadcast. (7:00; 6:30; 5:50)

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1-5 P.M.

MAY

SATURDAY, MAY 4th

THEATRE FIVE (1960s) "Reunion" is the title of this episode from the syndicated series. ABC. (11:45; 8:31)

KATE SMITH SHOW (1943) Kate welcomes guest Veronica Lake and Abbott and Costello. Veronica appears in scenes from her new Paramount Picture "The Hour Before Dawn" while Bud and Lou present their classic baseball routine, "Who's on First?" Ted Collins. AFRS rebroadcast. (14:10; 15:30)

YOUR PLAYHOUSE OF FAVORITES (1940s) "The Suicide Club" starring Dwight Weist and Walter Vaughn in an adaptation of the classic story by Robert Louis Stevenson. A mysterious club partakes in a potentially deadly game. Syndicated. (13:55; 11:45)

SCREEN GUILD THEATRE (11-2-39) "The Beachcomer" starring Charles Laughton, Elsa Lanchester and Gene Hersholt in a radio version of the 1938 motion picture. A missionary tries to reform a bum. Laughton and Lanchester repeat their screen roles. Gulf Oil Co., CBS. (12:00; 17:20)

SUSPENSE (2-21-56) "Hollywood Hostages" features Eve McVey and Tom Brown in the story of a ghost town and a practical joke that wasn't. Sustaining, CBS. (15:40; 10:10)

CHICAGO THEATRE OF THE AIR (4-14-48) "Blossom Time" by Sigmund Romberg tells the story of the music and life of Franz Schubert. It's "radio's greatest hour of music and drama" produced by Marian Claire with the orchestra conducted by Henry Weber. Robert Trendler conducts the chorus. Musical cast features Martha Branne, Bruce Foote, Robert Marshall. The dramatic cast includes Marion Bertland, Everett Clark, Donald Gallagher, John Barclay. Announcer is Lee Bennett. Sustaining, WGN-Mutual. (20:10; 29:10)

SATURDAY, MAY 11th
MEMORIES OF BING

PHILCO RADIO TIME (1-14-48) Bing Crosby stars with John Scott Trotter and the orchestra, the Rhythmairs, Ken Carpenter and guests singer Evelyn Knight and George Burns. "Sugar Throat" Burns wants to make it on his own as a singer. First of two consecutive and related programs. Philco Radios, ABC. (11:20; 18:35)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (2-17-75) Writer Carroll Carroll recalls his distinguished radio career writing for Bing Crosby and other broadcast personalities including Rudy Vallee and Al Jolson in this conversation with

Chuck Schaden recorded in Hollywood, California. (34:30; 36:25)

NOTE: Carroll Carroll died on February 5, 1991 at the age of 88.

KRAFT MUSIC HALL (2-7-46) Bing Crosby welcomes guests comedian Frank Morgan and pianist Eddy Duchin, the "magic fingers of radio." In a sketch, Bing is Morgan's father and Frank is the problem son! John Scott Trotter and the orchestra, the Charioteers. Announcer is Ken Carpenter. Kraft Foods, NBC. (9:55; 13:55; 7:10)

G.I. JOURNAL #48 (1940s) Editor-in-Chief for this issue of the Journal is Bing Crosby whose staff includes Henny Youngman, Mel Blanc, Lena Horne, Ransom Sherman. John Scott Trotter. AFRS. (8:40; 9:19; 10:58)

PHILCO RADIO TIME (1-21-48) George Burns and Gracie Allen guest on this program to wonder why Bing won't make a record with Sugar throat George. Second of two consecutive and related broadcasts. Ken Carpenter, the Rhythmairs, John Scott Trotter and the orchestra. Philco Radios, ABC. (12:35; 17:40)



BING CROSBY



DANNY THOMAS

SATURDAY, MAY 18th

GANGBUSTERS (1940s) "The Park Avenue Pilferers" with Arnold Moss and Les Damon. A couple schemes to burglarize rooms in an exclusive hotel in New York. Sustaining, CBS. (14:40; 8:37)

DRENE SHOW (1-12-47) Don Ameche, Frances Langford and Danny Thomas star with Gale Gordon, Carmen Dragon and the orchestra. Danny has mike fright and Gale, the psychiatrist, tries to give him some help. Don and Frances appear as the Bickersons, with Danny as Blanche's brother Amos. Drene Shampoo, NBC. (6:38; 8:53; 13:50)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (4-26-71) Comedian Danny Thomas recalls his show business career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden backstage at the Mill Run Theatre, Niles, Illinois. (14:30) **NOTE:** Danny Thomas died on February 6, 1991 at the age of 79 and with this TWTD broadcast, we pay our respects to the beloved entertainer.

JOAN DAVIS SHOW (1940s) Danny Thomas makes a guest appearance as Joan's tailor. Cast features Lionel Stander, Florence Halop, Jean VanderPyle. Karl's Shoe Stores, CBS. (15:46; 15:20)

DRENE SHOW (2-9-47) Don Ameche, Frances Langford and Danny Thomas star. Danny still has mike fright, but wants to be an interior decorator. Gale Gordon appears as a real interior decorator. Don and Frances as the Bickersons, Carmen Dragon and the orchestra. Drene Shampoo, Dreft, NBC. (8:20; 9:00; 13:55)

ETERNAL LIGHT (5-9-54) "The Smallest Ship" by Mark Segal, presented by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in celebration of the sixth anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel (May 14, 1948). Public Service, NBC. (11:00; 11:30)

GANGBUSTERS (1940s) "Case of the Tennessee Trigger Men" with Ted DeCorsia and Susan Douglas. Two couples commit a series of armed robberies. Sustaining, CBS. (13:25; 11:20)

SATURDAY, MAY 25th
WE REMEMBER BERRY KROEGER

NOTE: With this TWTD broadcast, we remember one of the great radio actors, Berry Kroeger who died on January 11, 1991 at the age of 78.

INNER SANCTUM (4-17-45) "Judas Clock" starring Berry Kroeger with Jackson Beck. A story of murder and a strange clock which proves to be an unusual weapon. Lipton Tea and Soup, CBS. (14:00; 15:00)

ESCAPE (7-11-48) "She" starring Berry Kroeger, Larry Dobkin and Ben White. Escape to uncharted Africa where "She" is the queen of a tribe of strange natives. Sustaining, CBS. (12:45; 16:10)

SUSPENSE (7-20-58) "It's All In Your Mind" starring Berry Kroeger as a scientist who discovers a drug that enables one to read another's mind! Sustaining, CBS. (11:30; 6:00)

INNER SANCTUM (12-6-48) "Cause of Death" starring Berry Kroeger and Santos Ortega. A man wishes his wife dead and then she appears to him after the burial. AFRS rebroadcast. (12:15; 12:10)

ESCAPE (3-28-48) "A Shipment of Mute Fate" starring Berry Kroeger, Harry Bartell and Peggy Weber in the classic story of the search for a deadly Bushmaster snake, escaped from its cage on a passenger ship at sea. Sustaining, CBS. (14:05; 14:00)

INNER SANCTUM (5-24-45) "Musical Score" starring Berry Kroeger as a playwright who is haunted by a symphony. Lipton Tea and Soup, CBS. (14:45; 14:25)

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NOTES FROM THE BANDSTAND

Big Bands with Strings

By KARL PEARSON

The great majority of the big bands of the Swing Era featured fairly standard instrumentation. The average big band numbered between 14 and 18 musicians and consisted of four sections: trumpet, trombone, saxes, and rhythm. This was the standard instrumentation used by most leaders including Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller and Artie Shaw.

By 1940 several bandleaders began to experiment with the sound of their bands. Some tried new voicings in their arrangements while others augmented their existing brass and sax sections. A few leaders tried a totally new approach by adding a whole string section to their bands. The next few years saw a number of leaders adding violins, cellos and violas to their orchestras.

Artie Shaw was the first of the big-name swing leaders to add a string section to his big band. In late 1939 Shaw had disbanded his conventional-styled orchestra and had taken a trip to Mexico. Shaw discovered that while he no longer led a band of his own, his record contract with RCA Victor called for several more sessions. Upon his return to the United States he reorganized a band for recording purposes only. The sessions gave him a chance to experiment with different musical ideas. One of his ideas was to use a string section within the traditional dance band format. Shaw's band with strings made several recordings, including one featuring a tune which Artie had picked up during his visit to Mexico.

The tune, "Frenesi", became a huge success. Encouraged by the success of these recordings, Shaw reorganized a full-time band which contained a string section. This edition of the Shaw band produced several memorable recordings including "Moon Glow" and a classic rendition of "Stardust".

Another leader actually saw his fortunes change for the better when he added a string section to his band. Harry James had been leading a conventional swing band for two years with a minimal degree of success. In early 1941 James decided to add a string quartet to his orchestra. The strings provided a refreshing contrast to the other instruments in the band and supplied smooth backgrounds for his ballads. (James liked the sound so much that he eventually added several more players to the section.)

After a few more lean months, the band (with the addition of vocalist Helen Forrest) became the sensation of the nation! In 1942 and 1943, the peak years for the James band, Harry had several million-selling Columbia records, including "I Cried For You", "I Had The Craziest Dream", and "You Made Me Love You". During this period Columbia made an amazing announcement: the company was not able to obtain enough shellac, a vital ingredient in record production. Part of this was due to a wartime shortage of shellac, but the main reason was the huge volume of sales of Harry James hits!



HELEN FORREST with HARRY JAMES and his String Section

By 1943 other leaders had jumped on the string bandwagon, adding large sections to their organizations. Glenn Miller, who had enlisted in the Army Air Forces, formed a large orchestra with a 15-piece string section. The Miller Air Force string section even had a radio program of its own, titled "Strings With Wings". Tommy Dorsey, who always did things on a grand scale, had a similar-sized section. Tommy had hired Artie Shaw's entire string section (which had also grown to 15 men) when Shaw entered the armed forces! And Earl "Fatha" Hines outdid many of his competitors when he hired an *all-girl* string section! It was a wise move on his part, for not only did the section provide a new voice in orchestra, but the women were also exempt from the draft!

One of the better string sections within a big band was the one featured with Jan Savitt's Orchestra. Savitt, originally a classically-trained violinist, had only four players (including himself) in his string section. With competent musicians and outstanding arrangements Jan's four

players sounded just as good as most of the larger sections in other orchestras!

It should be noted that the string section was not an entirely new concept within the dance band and had been present in many early dance orchestras. In the years prior to the Swing Era veteran leaders such as George Olsen, Abe Lyman, Ben Pollack, Paul Whiteman and Anson Weeks had string sections in their orchestras. The early editions of the Bob Crosby and Woody Herman bands even had one or two violinists within its ranks! And throughout the Swing Era several sweet bands featured string sections as a part of the orchestra, such as those led by Freddy Martin, Orrin Tucker, Griff Williams and Russ Morgan.

By the mid-1940's many swing band leaders had gone "string-crazy". "Ace Drummer Man" Gene Krupa added strings to his group. In Krupa's case it was a noble experiment that failed, for the public was not interested in Krupa's band with strings. Krupa later explained his reason for adding strings: "I must have thought I was Kostalanetz or something. Musically, it was an interesting experiment." Even die-hard swingers such as Benny Goodman, Charlie Barnet and Count Basie made recordings with strings augmenting their bands.

Here's an ironic twist to the whole "string" or "not-to-string" story.

Many of the big swing band leaders had added string sections to their bands to provide a more smooth and legitimate balance to their hard-driving music. While many of these same leaders had been softening their approach, a number of sweet band leaders (including Tommy Tucker, Shep Fields and Jan Garber) were also modifying their styles. They were leading swing bands!

WE GET LETTERS

It's especially wonderful to hear great comedy when you are troubled. Oh yes, I find it very boring when you talk about the shows or interview the stars.

— MIKE DRUCK

NAPERVILLE, IL — I have been an avid listener to *Old Time Radio Classics* since its first airing on WBBM several years ago. Since I travel a lot, I get a chance to experience radio programming from around the country. There is not, in my opinion, anyone that can come close to the variety and depth of your programming. I brag about "our" show; others who appreciate this type of program always express some envy at my advantage in living in the Chicago area.

— W. B. MILLER

LINCOLNWOOD, IL — I would like to tell you how much I enjoy listening to the old radio shows but I am disappointed in your new midnight time slot. I am unable to listen at that hour as I have to get up at 5:30 a.m. for work.

— LINDA BERKIN

JOLIET, IL — I really enjoy listening to *Radio Classics* and especially now since they are on at midnight. I work a third shift and sometimes missed the show or hockey or sports was on. That one hour makes the night go a lot faster, too.

— DAWN BLISH

RANSOMVILLE, NEW YORK — Please renew my subscription for another year (number 8 now). Although I can only pick up WBBM occasionally (I haven't tried after midnight yet) I thoroughly enjoy your *Nostalgia Digest*, reading it through upon arrival. As a 50-plus-year old, I fondly remember the "golden years" of radio, for me the late '40s early '50s, and have kept the memories alive with several hundred cassette tapes of many shows.

— KARL ZIEMENDORF

ROCKFORD, IL — I was just listening to one of your shows that I've taped and getting ready for tonight's Sunday night show. I may be crazy, but I set my alarm and get my cassette ready for the midnight shows. I wouldn't miss a one! I'm hooked. Recently I turned 38 and your show keeps me going — no MTV or TV sitcoms can be put in the same category as *Old Time Radio Classics*. How could anyone say that they have a definite favorite with all that great talent! If your show changes time slots again, I'll adjust my schedule, because I wouldn't miss it.

— ROBERT WOOD

CHICAGO — I love the new time for your show — midnight. But please can't we have it on weekends, also? Don't care for the little 10-15 minute serials. Unless we can have a whole batch of them together, they are really meaningless.

— MRS J. ROGERS

CHICAGO — I am a Sister of St. Casimir residing at Maria High School. I am 76 years old and legally blind. The radio has been and still is a blessing. I enjoyed the classics and lived through the good old days. Now that the time has been changed, it's impossible to stay awake. I speak for the very many Sisters-teachers and those who are retired. Maybe someday we'll get to enjoy the classics again. Rest assured of our continued support of WBBM. God love you, we do.

— SISTER JOANETTA

NORTHLAKE, IL — I'm out there on weekdays at midnight on WBBM through my tape recorder. Though I seldom hear you direct, I tape your shows and usually play them while I am driving. For your readers and listeners: there are one hour tapes (each side) — 120 minutes altogether. You can get them at Radio Shack and sometimes at other stores carrying tapes. They have "120" on them as against the "45" or "90" etc. You have to be a bit careful in the fast forward or rewind mode since they are thinner tape than the others and can tangle more easily. Stay with us please! We need you on weekdays and weekends on WBBM and Saturday afternoons on WNIB.

— FATHER JOSEPH S. THOMAS,
St. John Vianney Church

(ED. NOTE — Father, perhaps you would like to send some of those tapes to the good Sisters at Maria High School. And, thanks for listening!)

GUTHRIE, MINNESOTA — You have five listeners up here in the woods of northern Minnesota who were very sorry to see old time radio move to 12 midnight on weeknights. We all get up around 5 a.m. to go to jobs and are sound asleep by 12. None of us heard why the program was moved. Could you tell us the reason? Is it permanent?

— FLOYD TWETEN

(ED. NOTE — WBBM Vice President and General Manager Wayne Jefferson has responded to many similar inquiries by saying, "WBBM is primarily a news station and as such must be careful to offer the most appropriate programming during the hours that our core audience desires it. More and more we found that our larger news audience was not being serviced at night because of specialized programming. We have tried to keep *Radio Classics* on the air by moving it to 12 midnight. . . . the program will continue in the 8 p.m. hour each Saturday and Sunday.")

BERWYN, IL — I thought I'd write to let you know that even though the 12 midnight time slot you now have on WBBM is a bit inconvenient, my husband and I still make a point to stay up late to catch your program. We have enjoyed it ever since it began and promise we'll

be faithful listeners as long as you stay on the air. Although it's pretty late for us, I should mention that my sister, who now lives in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, can get you clearly now and also tunes you in when she can. She used to listen regularly when she lived in the Chicagoland area and missed hearing your show terribly when she had to move because of her husband's job. I would tape your program and I could send her tapes so she could keep up with it. Now she can just tune you in herself. So, I just wanted you to know how much my whole family enjoys the show.

— MRS. LEAH ANN BEZIN

PLAINVIEW, TEXAS — I have been a listener of your program for the last three years. I am a continued listener at your new time. Your new time is better for me due to reception problems at 8 p.m. I hope you continue to broadcast your program in its present slot.

— MALCOLM TISDEL

AMES, IOWA — Your change in broadcast time has been fortunate for me. Late-night reception is better, and I enjoy having your program to listen to at what is, for me, the end of the day.

— KARL GWIASDA

LINCOLNWOOD, IL — I am really disappointed. I guess really angry, as to the time change of your wonderful show. I grew up glued as a kid to the radio, waiting in anxiety for these vintage radio shows. If one is listening to an adult talk show, fine. Put it on at midnight. But not a show that lets you reflect for one precious hour a night when times in this world were tolerable. Please let management reconsider the time element. As for me and my family, because of the hour, it is impossible to listen to your wonderful show.

— LORRAINE JADRICK

MADISON, WISCONSIN — Listening at home as usual. Had wondered what happened to you, then just happened to catch your midnight show one evening. Now if you can just do something about those weekend pre-emptons!

— M. H. KNIGHT

CHICAGO — *Old Time Radio* has been a welcome adjunct to our lives, but not at midnight. "Early to bed and early to rise" was the rule in the home in which I was raised, and now as an "old timer" I find this rule a welcome piece of wisdom.

— JOHN B. NELSON

CHICAGO — Just to let you know that 12 is a good time to hear *Radio Classics* because it is after Prime Time and you have less chance of being pre-empted by a football/hockey/basketball/etc. game. Has the CBS Radio Mystery Theatre been released into syndication again? I hope you will have it back on *Radio Classics*.

— LORI BELL

(ED. NOTE — The CBS Mystery Theatre was withdrawn from syndication and, as far as we know, there are no plans at present to release it in the near future.)

HOFFMAN ESTATES, IL — What a pleasure it was to have met Les Tremayne at the Museum of Broadcast Communications. My wife Jan and I had just arrived when Les and his wife walked in, and so we were the first to greet him. When you walked up I had wanted to thank you in person for your help in helping me to get Mel Blanc's autograph in his biography I purchased. This was shortly before he passed away and I don't expect you to remember it, but I did want to thank you again other than a note. Speaking of notes, when Mel sent the book back to me he included a cute note on his "Bugs Bunny" stationery. I have it framed and hanging in my studio. I'm the artist who writes you from time to time on how much I enjoy the programs while I paint. I've been collecting them since 1973, so I have a few.

Your program and events are a valued part of my interests and entertainment. Thanks again for your unique contribution to the airwaves. Radio activates the mind (I don't mean the radio of today) while TV stupefies it. Channel 11 is perhaps the redeeming station, but even it doesn't challenge the imagination like the old time radio programs do. I know I'm on a soap box about good entertainment. The old shows are a lot cleaner, and have a better value system than what's available today.

— ED COOK

BURR RIDGE, IL — Just a note to admit that I wouldn't even think of allowing my subscription to lapse . . . egad! *Time* or *Newsweek*, perhaps, but the *Digest*??? Ridiculous — especially after having gotten an "inside" look at vintage broadcasting last April when I had the honor to portray his Honor, Mayor LaTrivia on the Fibber show. (Any plans in the works for another similar show?) I always look forward to my copy every month (which is more than I can say for *Time* or *Newsweek* sometimes). It's a pleasure, Chuck, to enclose my check for another year of rewarding reading. Thanks to all responsible for a terrific publication!

— JIM LINDON

TURLOCK, CALIFORNIA — Just a note to say how much I have enjoyed your program over the past 17 years. I have moved to California and miss your show very much and all the WNIB programming since there is nothing out here of such high calibre. I want to renew my subscription for two more years.

— PAUL JEVERT

EAST DUNDEE, IL — Thank you very much for your enthusiasm in re-presenting the radio programs we enjoyed in the '40s and '50s. We do enjoy the variety and mix lent by your programming touch. It must be a real treat to have such unlimited proven talent from which to choose. Keep up the good work!

— RICHARD R. BARRY

CHICAGO — I want to hear much, much more Fred Allen. He and Jack Benny are very, very funny and good comedy. I only listen to you for those two shows.

WE GET LETTERS

PONTIAC, IL — I really like your new time for many reasons: 1. not pre-empted. 2. many other things are going on at 8-9 p.m. Could (and do) tape, but many times it is difficult or impossible. 3. It's a good last-of-the-day thing to do. 4. etc. I wish Saturday and Sunday times could be changed to a later time, also. I hope that WBBM-AM is not closing you out. My good will towards WBBM will go down, down, down.

— LESTER BREWER

CRETE, IL — Thank you so much for hours of pleasure in old time radio. On Saturday afternoons and especially with your new midnight show. It probably is not the best time for a family man, but for me it probably is going to be ideal. I work the 3-11 shift as an RN, and often missed your 8 p.m. shows. I usually get home after midnight, but usually can catch your second half. I enjoy taping the shows and reliving all the old time radio that I enjoyed as a young girl. I am 61 and remember many of the stars. I personally think it's a shame that the children of today don't have the fun of imagining all the stories coming to life in their minds. I don't know why the station shoved you to the midnight slot, but you will find a very special group of people in the "night" group. My husband worked the night shift for years and I personally wouldn't work days for any kind of premium. I wish you special success at this slot.

— MRS. RUTH BROWN

ATHENS, GEORGIA — I grew up on Chicago radio and still listen every night. I enjoy your show very much and especially so at your new time. In the old time slot reception was not always good, and you were bucking prime-time TV. I do hope your show will continue.

— RICHARD J. WEAVER

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN — I am very disappointed that you moved *Old Time Radio* to midnight! Now I can't listen.

— MIKE MUELLER

CHICAGO — Since WBBM changed your new airing time from 8 p.m. to midnight, my evening schedule has been rearranged. I don't get to bed until one, but your programs are worth it. I'm only glad they didn't take you off the air entirely. That will be their next step and if that happens, I will never listen to WBBM again. Thank you for giving me a diversion from all the crime, sex, violence and smut that permeates the airwaves on radio and TV. You have rekindled memories of my past that mean the world to me. My grandchildren used to listen to you, but your late hour now makes that impossible.

—MRS. THOMAS J. NAYDER

CHILLICOTHE, IL — I have been enjoying your shows since I tuned in by accident about three years ago. I'm 47, so I grew up listening to radio programs, and I like hearing them again on WBBM. In fact, if it weren't for your program, I doubt if I'd listen to your station at all.

Even though you moved to midnight, it is better for me because there is less static and fade in/fade out late at night. I must confess that I tape your show and listen to it in my car the next day, going to and from work. Moving to the midnight time slot takes a bit of an adjustment, but at least your show is not pre-empted for sports and the reception is better.

— LEE EUBANKS

MADISON, WISCONSIN — I just want you to know that I was able to follow you in your time change. Right now, circumstances conspire to allow me to stay with you at midnight. I am far more wide-awake at 8 p.m., but I am getting used to the new hour. I was raised on radio, especially the Lone Ranger from when I was about 6 until we got a TV set, driven by the family's demand to "Love Lucy!" Your shows bring back some memories!

— PAUL DEVINE

LEMONT, IL — One gets a bit worried when a favorite program is switched from prime time to midnight, in that such might be a precursor to its disappearance. I sincerely hope that is not the case. Perhaps a number of letters such as this will preclude such an eventuality.

I first happened upon your program by mistake, panning across the dial, more than twenty years ago. I believe you were on WLTD from Evanston. I have been a listener ever since, both to your Saturday afternoon WNIB / WNIZ broadcasts, and the more recent WBBM evening show. Having been born during World War II and captured by television in 1948, most of my remembrances of old time radio in real time are of children's programs such as *The Lone Ranger* and *Challenge of the Yukon*, though I can remember that my father convinced me that the glow inside the radio came from the lamps in Fibber McGee's house. However, through your programs I have become an aficionado of a much broader repertoire of programs.

Since I am usually busy in the evenings, it has often been difficult to hear your show, or even to be available to record it. Coupling that with the sports pre-emptions, I usually managed to record only one or two shows a week (plus the four hours on Saturday) which I listen to on my daily commutes to work. Thus the move to midnight has been positive from my perspective. I have obtained a supply of 120 minute cassettes and power the stereo through a digital timer. Thus, since I am nearly always at home sometime in the evening, I can get a tape in place and switch the timer to catch your show for use the following day. Since you are no longer pre-empted, I can count on getting your program on tape rather than a hockey or football game. Keep up the good work.

— PETER B. SCHIPMA

CHICAGO — I feel that your program has been rescheduled to a most inappropriate time period. I have been listening to your program at the 7 p.m. time period and felt that it was a good break from the news. Following Dave Baum's show leaves a three-hour gap in the news and that is too long. I am also finding it to

be very inconvenient to my schedule as it is usually when I am retiring and I like to have the news on when I go to sleep, not an entertainment program. Reluctantly, I tune to WMAQ for the night and then back to WBBM in the morning. I would prefer not having to change my radio.

As to your program, I like it, but I find it to be out of place on an "All-News Radio Station." If WBBM is all-news then your program transgresses that policy. I feel the same for sports presentations such as football, baseball or that wearisome sports talk show that destroys Saturday and Sunday mornings. I feel these programs dilute WBBM's appeal to me as an all-news format. It results in me developing less of a dependence on WBBM for what I want from it all the time — NEWS. That is what I like about WMAQ.

I believe your show would have a more natural home on public radio. However, if the advantages are in your favor to remain at WBBM, then I strongly recommend returning to the 7 p.m. slot and getting a good night's sleep.

— MATTHEW T. HUSAR

MICHIGAN CITY, INDIANA — I am enjoying your programs of old time radio. Being a night owl who can't fall asleep easily, this program makes staying awake worth while.

— FRANCES N. KOHN

MUSKEGO, WISCONSIN — We have listened to your show for many years and are frustrated every time *Old Time Radio* is pre-empted by sports shows. So now — since we can't always guarantee we'll be awake at midnight — we tape your show and listen every night, one night later. Thanks for keeping the show on, although we wish it was earlier.

— LEV AND VIVIEN DE BACK

WESTERVILLE, INDIANA — Words are inadequate to express my thanks for your old time radio show. I am 71 years old and have been a long time steady listener. I recall most of the shows that you air. I for one am glad of the program change from 8 p.m. to 12 a.m. Often I was disappointed and upset when the 8 p.m. show was cancelled due to hockey games, etc. "Imagination" is the key word for radio. I had a recall of Digger O'Dell, the friendly undertaker in my mind's eye as tall, skinny, pale with a hawk-like face, wearing a black frock coat, pants and square hat. What a shock when I first saw that image on TV years ago as sort of fat or tubby wearing a pin stripe suit. I don't recall looking at the TV show a second time!

— RUSSELL W. BREWER

CHICAGO — I have been listening to Chicago radio since the early 1930s. You *Old Time Radio* and WBBM News is the best and worth listening to at midnight or any other time.

— WILLIAM RUMISEK

FAIRFIELD, IOWA — I enjoy listening to *Old Time Radio Classics*. I like the new Monday-Friday time slot of midnight. I work at night, and I get home around 10

p.m., and I enjoy listening to the radio as I end my day. I am in my 30's, so I am not old enough to have heard most of those radio shows the first time they were aired. I am listening more often now that you come on at midnight. Also your programs attract more listeners to WBBM, because I am more inclined to stay tuned for news as a result of tuning in to *Old Time Radio Classics*. Don't ever leave WBBM. We need this type of program.

— ROBERT MORGAN

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN — You always sound good and happy. You're doing a great job. Enjoy all your radio shows and comments. I'm retired, 64 years old. I'm still awake at midnight, but I dozed off one night and Jack Armstrong woke me up! Love that WBBM station; first Dave Baum, then you come on!

— DON AUGUSTINE

CHICAGO — I'm a one-eyed night owl with insomnia and a love of old time radio. Just heard your midnight broadcast and enjoyed it immensely.

— ANNE WILLIAMSON

HAMMOND, INDIANA — Enjoy your program at this time schedule. Wish you could extend it. Your programs prove once again that laughter can be found without losing or destroying respect, courtesy or dignity.

— MRS. M. E. WALCZAK

CHICAGO — I listen to your show every midnight during the week and also your weekend shows. I am at home. I was severely injured and 'til I recover, I can stay up late and not worry about getting up for work. I am 44 and just caught the very end of old time radio when I was a mere tot. Thanks for your great show.

— ROLLO ARLIN

SPRINGFIELD, IL — A huge complaint: we do not like your new hours. We're very, very early risers. Do sleep for a while before and after midnight, so we don't hear you so much anymore. We miss you, but your programming has not been "up to par" recently. We hope you get back to normalcy soon. We are retired people.

— MR. & MRS. LA RUE D. KANE

WAUKESHA, WISCONSIN — Love the show, been listening to it for a few years. Thanks for moving it. I was thinking maybe a rebroadcast around midnight, but you've moved the whole show and I think it's great, although I'm only 29 I've practically grown up on this stuff. You've broadened my radio horizons. Jack Benny is classic. I never knew Dennis Day was so funny. Your program is great. You remember the shows, you know the good ones to play and you're a good host.

— DANIEL BERG

DOWNERS GROVE, IL — Enjoy your shows very much especially the comedy. I am 84 years old and am really glad your show is at midnight because I am very wakeful.

— GENEVIEVE PHILLIPS

WE GET LETTERS

ROCKFORD, IL — Your new hours are perfect! I work the 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. shift on the Rockford Police Department and your program breaks up my work night perfectly. My favorite shows are the Six Shooter with Jimmy Stewart and the Jack Benny shows. Whatever hour you air, I'll be tuning in, but this spot is perfect.

— DEWEY RISENHOVER

CLINTON, IOWA — I've been listening for over three years and do enjoy it very much. But I don't care for the shorts (Jack Armstrong, etc.) where you only give a chapter out of a whole story. To me, that's just a waste of time. My idea of a good show is a complete program, not bits and pieces. Get it? And most of your commercials are too long. That's the bad. Now for some good news. You do cover about every program that I really like. As for your show going to midnight, you are going to lose a lot of the kids. I stay awake and record your show and listen to it the next day. I do wish I had the chance to meet some of the old radio stars like you have, but being a farm boy from the middle of Iowa, my chances aren't too good. Keep the shows coming, try to get a better hour and play complete shows.

— JOHN A. STOCK

NORRIDGE, IL — For the many hours of pleasure of listening to *Radio Classics*, I thank you. It appears that midnight schedule fits into my schedule right. I go to bed, relaxed and with happy memories of years of good radio programming.

— MRS. E. ZYDLO

FORSYTH, GEORGIA — Forsyth is located approximately 60 miles south of Atlanta, and I can pick you up on this cheap \$15 radio I own LOUD AND CLEAR! It is virtually impossible to pick up stations out of Chicago on my radio before 10 or 11 p.m. EST. However, when your program airs (1 a.m. down here) the signal is clear and strong. Anyway, I'm 55 years old and believe me, your program is a nostalgic treasure. I enjoy the various radio shows more now than I did when I was 10-14 years of age. I enjoy old time radio as much as I do a good novel. I appreciate the way the English language is used to heighten the suspense and the full range of human emotions . . . and the way the English language draws the listener into participation via the use of the imagination. Wheew! Hey, and who says humor has to be vulgar? I've been enjoying your program since the latter part of November, and I must tell you that this is the very first time since childhood that I've listened to old time radio programs on a regular basis! They are hard to come by on radio.

— JOHN M. POLK

CHICAGO — Having lived thru the "old times," your programs have a special meaning for me, conjuring up memories of the family taking their cup of coffee, after the Sunday evening meal, into the living room to listen to Jack Benny or Edgar Bergen and Charlie on the old

Philco or Atwater Kent. Being a "night person," I am able to listen at midnight, but it is not as convenient as your 8 p.m. slot when I was listening while eating supper. Good programs are worth listening to more than once. Quality will prevail over much of today's "popular culture."

— PRIMO TASSO

ZION, IL — It was quite by accident, catching you on my car radio late at night after getting off work at 11:30 p.m. Usually I'd tune into FM that late, but my favorite station has changed into some weird rock-rap experiment. I didn't realize your time slot was changed, but right now that's good listening for me again. I hope it doesn't signal the management's trying to gradually phase out old time radio. Me, and lots of others known to me, depend on radio for entertainment at home, as well as a news source. TV's vast wasteland, now turned vast dumping ground, hardly will become healthy again. I've noticed a few radio stations beginning to show signs of infection. It's such a pleasure to have something healthy and wholesome available still. Us TV dropouts have been very satisfied with radio as an alternative. Lately I'm driven more and more to WMBI, whose way is clean, but pretty narrow. Thanks for your many hours of fine entertainment. Thanks to WBBM management, too, for providing *Old Time Radio*, the best of their entire broadcast fare, not counting the news.

— MRS. B. BYLASKA

PALATINE, IL — I don't know how I've missed you all this time, but as soon as I find you, WBBM moves you to midnight. Needless to say, it makes it difficult to listen. I enjoy your Saturday broadcasts and tape some of them to send to a friend out of state. I grew up in Chicago in the 30's and 40's when radio and movies were a kid's only entertainment that didn't need an adult supervising. My favorites were The Hermit's Cave and Lights Out. My parents never knew I listened. I did, by listening with my ear to the crack below the door while lying on the floor in my bedroom! Got a nasty bump on the head one night when Dad came in to make sure I was sleeping! Whenever I listen to your program I feel like I should have a coloring book and some crayons! Thanks.

— EILEEN BENSTEIN

WALNUT, IL — I really enjoy your program and I have for years. When you went to WBBM I started listening to that station regularly again (I had gotten out of the habit). Isn't there some way you can get on at an earlier hour? Midnight is past my bedtime. How about 10 or 10:30 p.m., maybe like the old CBS Mystery Theatre (which I still miss)? Thanks for a lot of nostalgia and enjoyment, and lately, some loss of sleep.

— JIM WATSON

NEENAH, WISCONSIN — I am a 61 year old listener and I can't thank you enough for the pleasure your *Old Time Radio* program gives me. I have been listening since 1988. I also grew up with the radio programs, hearing them on my parents Philco floor model while

lying on the floor. We received the Milwaukee and Chicago broadcasts pretty clearly, as I recall it. I guess there was a lot less electronic interference in those days. Your Midnight to 1 a.m. time slot seems to come in a lot clearer; the co-station interference is a lot less. I don't stay up until midnight to listen. I plug my old Zenith Transoceanic and a tape recorder into a timer which is set for 12 until 1, then I play it back the next day or when it's convenient. I guess it would bother me to have to wait up until midnight to hear your show, but since I tape it, it's no problem. It's a lot better than no show at all.

— GORDY LYNCH

ROCKFORD, IL — Your time slot is not the best, but alarm clocks and automatic settings work wonders! Since I am 62, I can remember how, as a small child. I sat with my ear against the speaker. Oh, such happy memories! Please keep the programs coming. I often play them on my cassette player at work. It sure helps the mental attitude in stressful situations. I honestly don't think you will ever truly know how many people you've given hours of happiness to.

— MRS. JO IDA BAWINKEL

PULLMAN, MICHIGAN — I've been listening to your shows since 1985, but I've been collecting old time radio for 13 years. I have over 1,550 shows in my collection. I am a 28 year old factory worker at Comstock Canners in Finville, Michigan. I have over 120 episodes of The Shadow.

— PATRICK MC PEAK

CHICAGO — I had been a regular listener to your show at 8 p.m. Five months ago I began working at a job on which I worked the PM shift and therefore missed hearing your program. I arrive home from work shortly before midnight. I had developed the habit of listening to the news upon arriving home. I had not heard or read any announcement that your show was moved to midnight. I was very pleasantly surprised when your show came on instead of the news. I will be a regular listener.

— ERNEST M. PEMBROSE, SR.

CHICAGO — I now tape record your program (if I'm awake or not) and listen to them during the day at the office. An hour's worth of your old time radio programs breaks up the monotony of the day very nicely. At first, I was disappointed to learn that your program would be moved to a later hour; however, it's nice that you're no longer pre-empted by hockey, football, presidential news conferences, etc. Not everyone will stay up until midnight or record it, so I'm sure some of your listeners will not appreciate the time change. I listen to your Saturday afternoon show whenever possible. My tape machine was running the whole month of Saturday afternoons in February.

— ART GILFAND

BELOIT, WISCONSIN — When I read of the time change, I thought it was a disaster. I expected to lose my favorite entertainment because I go to bed at 10:30.

However, it has turned out to be a blessing. A friend suggested I get a timer. Before retiring each evening, I set my radio and tape recorder to kick in at midnight and shut off at 1 a.m. It works beautifully. I listen to your programs at my convenience. The switch has also been advantageous because there are no interruptions for sports. I have been a regular listener since *Radio Classics* started on WBBM. I also enjoy *Nostalgia Digest*.

— R.J. BACHMAN

CHAMPAIGN, IL — Perhaps WBBM will be the first radio station to have more tape recorders listening to it than people!

— HENRY G. SCHAPER

ST. JOSEPH, MICHIGAN — I would like to voice my opinion of the time change. I think your programming director made a huge mistake moving the show to such a late hour. It is the type of show that the family can listen to together and be truly entertained and explore the outer limits of one's own imagination. Now, due to the late hour of the show, this radio entertainment is no longer convenient or possible.

— C. DANDREA

CROWN POINT, INDIANA — I've been a fan of *Radio Classics* for a number of years. I recall listening on my way home from night classes and during graduate school. I love your program! I've gotten several people and teens listening in our area. I'm younger than you, so I missed much of the classic years of radio. When I heard you announce the move to midnight, at first I was disappointed. But it's nice not to lose the evening programs to some dumb sports game. Anyway, the date your program switched — November 26 — I had major surgery and during my recuperation, I've tuned in every single night, even while in the hospital. I set the alarm just so I won't miss your show and a lot of pain has been forgotten while laughing over Jack Benny skits and wondering if the good guys would win over the evil ones. When I'm well again and get a line on a new life, I won't be missing any programs, believe you me! I hope to be able to visit the radio broadcasting museum and enjoy all the things I've heard about on your show. So that's what I'm doing while listening to your show — getting well so I can go, go, go and never be found home! But never fear, my Walkman will bring your programs to me wherever I am!

— SUZANNE WRIGHT

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK — I have been a listener for a long time. I find your change in time a plus for me as I will be able to listen to you year round instead of just the winter months. I used to listen to Gary Hodson on WCAU, Philadelphia, but the station must have been sold. New format and no Gary. I would suggest that the folks at WBBM give you a plug at 8 p.m. I'm sure there are a lot of people who will follow you to the later hours.

— ORLO NOXON

CHICAGO — I listen to your program on WBBM quite frequently, but it's too bad it has been moved to

WE GET LETTERS

midnight because I will not be able to catch the show as much. I like the radio shows because I can do other stuff while listening. Generally I only listen to WNIB and WFMT, but I tune to WBBM to catch your show. I hope your show remains on the air.

— BRENT CROMZAC

BLOOMINGTON, IL — I am a Cop and love listening to *Old Time Radio Classics* while working the 11-7 shift.

— FRED MARTIN

HAMMOND, INDIANA — Your program not only entertains, it brings back many warm memories, especially when I hear a show that I recall hearing the original broadcast. Hope you continue to broadcast *Radio Classics* at midnight for many years.

— PARNELL BRENNAN

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND — I'm a die-hard Detroit (native) Red Wing fan. But I'm also a big hockey fan in general so I try to find a game to listen to every night. I'll listen to the nearby Washington Capitals, New York Rangers, and the Blackhawks as well as Detroit. So last night I listened to the Hawks—N.Y. Islanders game and shut off the radio after the game, but didn't change the dial. When I turned the radio back on a little more than two hours later, I was elated to hear a Shadow episode in progress. I'm barely old enough to remember some of these old time radio performers when they were on television in that medium's early days. Your time slot is perfect for me since it's 1 a.m. Baltimore time and the chance of hearing WBBM's signal clear is greater than if it were, say, 7 p.m. Chicago time. So atmosphere and work (I'm a Johns Hopkins college basketball statistician which sort of kills some of my nights, especially when we are on the road) willing, I plan to be one of your regular listeners.

— RICH MOSCARELLO

PALATINE, IL — You have created some sort of a problem for me. I am sure it is a problem for you also. With your time change to midnight, I find that I am fast asleep long before you come on. Even when I am up I doze off and can't remember the last half of the program I was listening to. I would like to record your shows and replay them the next day at a more reasonable hour. I have for years recorded your shows when I am going out for replay later. I have been all around trying to find a tape recorder that will automatically record your show. If you know of a recorder with this type of time function, please let me know. This time change has caused many problems in my listening habit.

— JIM PATTERSON

(ED. NOTE — We know of no audio tape recorders with a built-in timer, but, as so many listeners have suggested, try using a timer and plug the radio and the tape recorder into it.)

WHEATFIELD, INDIANA — Listened to you for several years at 8 p.m. and now at midnight. All of your programs are a delight. I am convinced that the old time radio broadcasts and the big bands helped make the United States and Canada the great countries they were in the 1930s and 40s. People's expectations were within reason and they were happy with what they had to work with. I am a 57 year old retired auto worker. I usually spend the winter in Florida and I have been able to listen to you in Ocala (Central Florida). One day about three years ago I had the portable radio out in the yard (in Wheatfield) and as usual I had the dial on WBBM. By mistake, I flipped the FM switch. As this was on a Saturday afternoon — I struck gold! There you were on WNIB. On the main system, I have remote speakers out in the garage and have spent many hours listening to you.

— JAMES GOURKO

BIG RAPIDS, MICHIGAN — Your program ends at 2 a.m., Michigan time. Not convenient, but I can catch it if I split my sleeping from 7-10, then get up, then sleep 2-7. Thanks for your program.

— JIM LEHNERT

DOWNERS GROVE, IL — Last year's Christmas was a very special one. I was given a gift of Paddy O'Cinnamon tapes, book and bear. I am a product of the 1940s, being born in 1943. And one of my fondest memories was the tuning in of the Adventures of the Cinnamon Bear. It was definitely a must for my brother (2 years older) and me to sit and listen to Judy, Jimmy and Paddy try to overcome all (and there were many) obstacles to retrieve that silver star. Just before Christmas we would be sitting at the table listening to the radio and cracking and shelling walnuts for Mom's great cookies and cakes. We lived in Berwyn and would make the trek up to the Wieboldt's store in Oak Park. Wow! Those were the days!! When I received my tapes, I could hardly wait 'til company left to listen and relive those memories and adventures. Thank you, thank you, thank you for the chance to be young (at heart) again.

— DIANA M. STADTLER

NAPERVILLE, IL — Still enjoy *Those Were The Days*, but would ask you put The Cinnamon Bear on again this year. It was very disappointing to find it missing in 1990's schedule. Thanks a lot for The Littlest Angel read by Loretta Young. I cried again just as I did when I first listened to the old records in my grade school reading class in East Chicago, Indiana in the 1940s. Thanks for all the good shows. I can recommend your program to all my friends and their children.

— GRACE ANSBURG

BARRINGTON, IL — Thank you for reopening the door to my childhood, the one filled with the excitement of my imagination. Because I use a self-timer and radio cassette recorder, your new time means more shows to record and listen to while I'm doing art work.

— ROBERT OLIPHANT

CHICAGO — Thank you for a most wonderful program. When you switched from 8 p.m. to midnight it is great! I usually nap and get up about 10:45 p.m. Now you're coming in at midnight is terrific.

— MRS. ALBINA JUNKROSKI

DARIEN, IL — I thoroughly enjoyed Gino Lucchetti's article on "Vintage Radio and the News" in the February-March issue. It brought back memories of my boyhood when I used to listen, with my dad, to Gabriel Heatter each evening with his news program describing the great events of World War II. I especially remember Heatter's account of the Siege of Stalingrad in the fall and winter of 1942-43. In place of his usual "There's good news tonight," I recall his using the expression, "There's bad news tonight." This was a time when it seemed as though Stalingrad might fall, and the Nazi armies just couldn't be stopped. Our current TV news programs might truly be improved with the knowledge and expertise of some of the old time radio news commentators and events analysts who helped us to understand what was happening around the world.

— REV. KEVIN SHANLEY

SOUTH HOLLAND, IL — I have been a listener primarily of your Saturday program, though not very faithful, for more than ten years. My problem is that for most of those years I have worked most Saturdays and because of the nature of my job, may not have a radio at work. I wanted to collect all the Jack Benny programs you played this February and, after reading a letter from one of your other fans, I thought that others might like to try my solution to the problem. Each Saturday morning, before leaving for work, I connect my radio to my video cassette recorder, turn on the radio and program the VCR to record your complete four-hour program. A 120 video cassette on SLP works nicely and with some adjustment of volume I can then transfer the programs I want to audio cassettes during the week and reuse the video tape again the following Saturday.

— SALVATORE C. RINELLA

PRESQUE ISLE, WISCONSIN — Thank you for printing my letter in a previous *Nostalgia Digest*. Since I no longer lived in Illinois, I had asked for help from one of your devoted listeners to tape the Saturday *TWTD* broadcasts for me. Several fellows responded to offer their assistance. I am now receiving copies of your Saturday broadcasts from a fine gentleman who lives in Batavia, Illinois. In return, I send him tape recordings of some of your earlier *TWTD* programs. I noticed a letter printed in your last "We Get Letters" column from a woman in Gepp, Arizona. I understand her dilemma regarding moving out of state and not being able to listen to you on WNIB. Since I am jobless and have plenty of time on my hands, I would be willing to provide a service of duplicating previous broadcasts for her or anyone else for that matter. My tape library consists of approximately 375 four-hour *Those Were*

The Days broadcasts from 1980 to present. If anyone is interested, they may contact me by letter.

— EDWARD SERMONTI, HC 1 Box 390,
Presque Isle, WI 54557

LANDRUM, SOUTH CAROLINA — Sure miss your programming, on Saturday afternoons, especially. There is nothing down here I can find to bring back "the good old days." Sure enjoy the *Digest* and the tid bits of yesteryear.

— LAURAL BROWN

CHICAGO — I love your show and can't believe two years have gone by and it is time to renew my subscription. I have young children that are starting to be interested in some of the old radio shows, like Superman. I bought the three tape set at Metro Golden Memories. Thank you for all the enjoyment you have given me, both with your program and from the *Digest* memories of my old school, Giles, and of Dr. Leigh, the principal.

— MARIE GAWNE

CAROL STREAM, IL — I've been listening to *Those Were The Days* for about eight years now and would like to say that there was never a Saturday in which I've been disappointed. I'm twenty-two years old and unfortunately missed radio by quite a few years. I thought that it might be interesting if you recreated an entire broadcast day from early morning news to afternoon soap operas to prime time radio to late night band remotes. I realize that this would take more than one week, but I thought it would be interesting for us younger listeners to hear what an actual broadcast day sounded like.

— HENRY TELOP, JR.

(ED. NOTE — Sounds like a good idea. We'll work on it! And, thanks for listening.)

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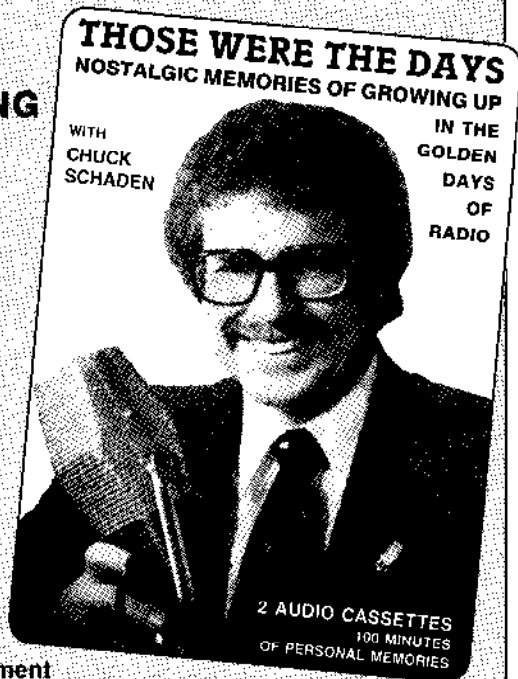
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Monday wash to the accompaniment of soap operas and Ma Perkins . . . running home after school to decode Captain Midnight's secret message. Chuck recalls Abbott and Costello, the Bickersons, Bergen and McCarthy, and fondly remembers Amos 'n' Andy's Fresh Air Taxi Company, Jack Benny's Maxwell, and Fibber McGee's closet.

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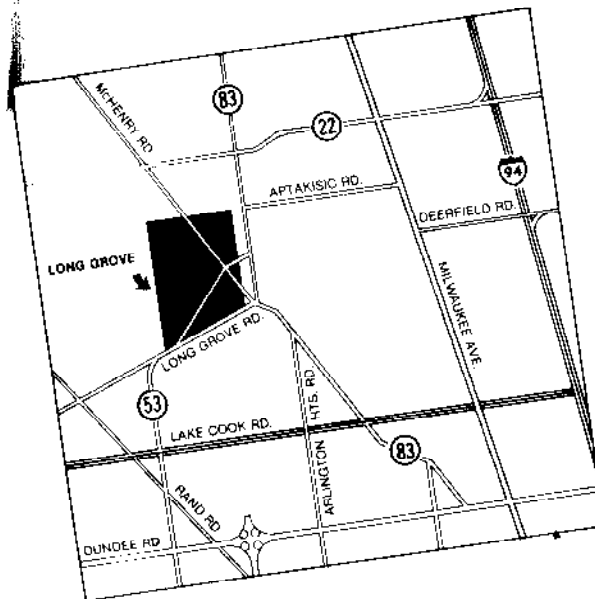


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INSIDE!

DRUMMER GENE KRUPA

was among the leaders of the big bands who decided to add a string section. Karl Pearson's Notes From The Bandstand reviews the trend on page 22.

ABBOTT & COSTELLO

By Clair Schulz
Page 2

THE TIMES, IT ARE A MEMORY

By Dan McGuire
Page 6

BATTER UP!

By Bob Kolososki
Page 10

GOLDEN AGE OF RADIO RECEIVERS

By Todd Nebel
Page 14

WE GET LETTERS

Page 24



PLUS WBBM *OLD TIME RADIO CLASSICS* CALENDAR Pages 16-17
WNIB *THOSE WERE THE DAYS* LISTINGS Pages 18-21