

# CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

JUNE - JULY, 1996

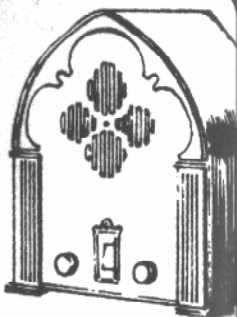


JACK BENNY and MARY LIVINGSTONE, EDDIE CANTOR, RUDY VALLEE  
GEORGE BURNS and GRACIE ALLEN, FIBBER MC GEE and MOLLY, MAJOR BOWES

**The THIRTIES**

## A Day of Radio from the 1930s

On September 21, 1939 radio station WJSV in Washington, D. C. recorded their entire broadcast day, from sign-on to sign-off. This set is a one-of-a-kind item. You will hear everything as it sounded the day it was recorded — the pops and crackles of the transcription discs, the station breaks and technical difficulties — along with all the music, comedy, drama, news and commercials that aired on September 21, 1939. This set includes a program guide with a description of each show and information about your favorite stars.



### A DAY FROM THE GOLDEN AGE OF RADIO CONTENTS:

6:30 am Sunrise with Arthur Godfrey	2:40 pm French Premiere Daladier
8:30 am Certified Magic Carpet	3:00 pm Address Commentary
8:45 am Bachelor's Children	3:15 pm The Career of Alice Blair
9:00 am Pretty Kitty Kelly	3:30 pm News
9:15 am Story of Myrt and Marge	3:42 pm Rhythm and Romance
9:30 am Hilltop House	3:45 pm Scattergood Baines
9:45 am Stepmother	4:00 pm Baseball: Cleveland Indians at Washington Senators
10:00 am Mary Lee Taylor	
10:15 am Brenda Curtis	5:15 pm The World Dances
10:30 am Big Sister	5:30 pm News
10:45 am Aunt Jenny's True Life Stories	5:45 pm Sports News
	6:00 pm Amos 'n' Andy
11:00 am Jean Abbey	6:15 pm The Parker Family
11:15 am When a Girl Marries	6:30 pm Joe E. Brown
11:30 am Romance of Helen Trent	7:00 pm Ask-It Basket
11:45 am Our Gal Sunday	7:30 pm Strange as It Seems
NOON The Goldbergs	8:00 pm Major Bowes Original Amateur Hour
12:15 pm Life Can Be Beautiful	
12:30 pm Road of Life	9:30 pm Columbia Workshop
12:45 pm This Day is Ours	10:00 pm Americans at Work
1:00 pm Sunshine Report	10:15 pm News
1:15 pm Life and Love of Dr. Susan	10:30 pm Music
1:30 pm Your Family and Mine	11:00 pm Albert Warner
1:45 pm News	11:30 pm Jerry Livingston's Orchestra
1:50 pm Albert Warner	12:00 am Teddy Powell Band
2:00 pm President Roosevelt's Address to Congress	12:30 am Louis Prima Band
	1:00 am Bob Chester Orchestra

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## CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

BOOK TWENTY-TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

JUNE - JULY, 1996

### Hello, Out There in Radioland!

#### The THIRTIES

Almost all of the old time radio shows we enjoy hearing today are from the 1940s.

Yes, we do hear quite a few shows from the 1950s — the early to middle '50s, that is — but, usually, only a small sampling from the decade of the 1930s.

Fewer shows from the 1930s have survived and obviously that's one of the reasons we don't hear as many from those years.

Some of the shows that have survived from the 1930s are difficult to *hear*, because of recording techniques of the era and the ravages of time upon those recordings. Some are hard to *listen to*, because the program content is somewhat more "primitive" than their counterparts from the 1940s and '50s.

A 1930s *variety show*, for example, is truly a *variety* show, often with symphonic music, popular music, a comedy sketch, a heavy dramatic sketch, an interview with a newsmaker, a popular song by a popular vocalist, and perhaps an aria from an opera performed by a coloratura soprano. All in a single hour-long program!

Dramatic shows could be "stuffy" and comedy shows could be "flat" by today's standards. An adventure show might be somewhat less than exciting when listened to some sixty years after the fact.

On the other hand, the 1930s gave birth to many of our greatest radio stars. Only audiences of the '30s would know some of them; their particular talent and style would have gone out of style by the end of the decade. Other stars would attract huge audiences and keep those audiences entertained into the great glory days of the 1940s, somehow managing to change and adapt their material, thereby keeping "up to date" with their listeners.

That's what radio was during the decade of the 1930s.

You'll have an excellent opportunity to tune in to a good cross-section of 1930s broadcasts when you listen to our *Those Were The Days* program during June.

We have decided to explore radio from a single year of the Decade of the Thirties. We will focus on the year 1936 and broadcast some rare and rarely heard programs from that year. You will get, we feel, an unusual *sound picture* of radio as it was sixty years ago.

To accompany our audio look at the thirties, this issue of our *Nostalgia Digest* is devoted almost totally to that period of time, giving you a special peek at the people and the times — from a nostalgia point of view.

We hope you will find our efforts both entertaining and interesting.

Thanks for listening.

—Chuck Schaden

# A DECADE OF RADIO

By B. ERIC RHOADS

The Great Depression began with the stock market crash of 1929, which set the tone for the early '30s. America was without jobs and money. All unnecessary spending in the average household came to a halt -- except radio.

Radio was booming in spite of the Depression. Perhaps it was because people could get their entertainment for free without purchasing tickets to the theater for a motion picture or a play. Perhaps the curiosity about radio and the momentum was so strong, nothing could kill it. If there was one purchase to be made, it was a radio set, something every home felt it had to have.

Yet, in 1931, listener boredom set in. America's top program, Amos and Andy, had seen its high water mark, and it began to lose listeners. Listener losses soon translated into revenue losses, which had to cease.

This sudden drop forced the networks to invent a new type of programming -- the dramatic series. NBC looked to litera-

*B. Eric Rhoads is author of A Pictorial History of Radio's First 75 Years, recently published by Streamline Press. This article is reprinted from that book with permission. Mr. Rhoads, of Palm Beach Country, Florida, is publisher of the trade magazine Radio Ink and participates in the ongoing preservation of radio history as a steering committee member of the Radio Hall of Fame. A Pictorial History of Radio's First 75 Years (460.9 x 11 pages, hard-cover) is available for \$34.95 plus tax from Metro Golden Memories in Chicago at 1-800-538-6675.*

## The THIRTIES

ture and film for established characters, launching programs like The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and Rin-Tin-Tin Thrillers. New forms of a dramatic series were created, incorporating romance, comedy, and mystery. This spawned programs like The Eno Crime Clues, The Shadow, The First Nighter Program, With Canada's Mounted and numerous others.

In spite of these efforts, radio listening declined. The only programs that seemed to survive were those featuring big-name established talent from the stage and the movies. The Rudy Vallee Show was one of the few that maintained huge success, built on the strength of its celebrity guests and Vallee himself.

The signal was clear. In order to keep the interest of advertisers, network executives had to get bigger talent in order to maintain listener interest in radio, so that's just what they did. Stars like Eddie Cantor and Ed Wynn were given their own programs. Radio saw a huge surge in popularity, with acts like George Burns and Gracie Allen, George Jessel, Fred Allen and Portland Hoffa, The Marx Brothers, Jack Benny, Mary Livingston, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Mel Blanc, Joe "Wanna Buy A Duck" Penner, Stoopnagle and Budd, and Jack Pearl.

Vaudevillians were given programs of their own, many of whom were great on stage but didn't seem likely to work on radio because of their visual acts. Yet radio grew with visual acts such as tap dancers, ventriloquists and even dog acts. Radio



FREEMAN GOSDEN and CHARLES CORRELL as AMOS 'N' ANDY

comedy soared in the '30s. In spite of its decline, Amos and Andy was so strong it became an industry unto itself, with candy bars, toys, comic books and phonograph records. They proved that comedy on the radio was appealing and set the stage for

more comedy acts to fill the airwaves with laughter

Leading the way was comedian Eddie Cantor, who held more than 50 percent of the listening audience. Comedy skits became the best way to keep the programs interesting from week to week.

There were also those like Will Rogers and James Thurber who used humor in their philosophy and political commentary. Rogers especially liked to target President Roosevelt, "The Houdini of Hyde Park," and his New Deal for America. Along with the surge in comedy talent came a vast array of talented singers like Al Jolson, Ruth Etting, Gertrude Niesen and Bing Crosby.

The craze for amateur programming began in 1934 with the introduction of Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour. Talent scouts roamed America looking for the next big stars to come on the show to win prizes, and possibly fame. The show received 10,000 talent applications per week. It became one of the top shows but spawned very few national successes. One of those discovered was Frank Sinatra, who ap-



COMEDIAN JOE PENNER AT REHEARSAL WITH ACTRESS GAY SEABROOKE

## A DECADE OF RADIO

peared with the Hoboken Four.

Before long the concept was airing on all the networks in one form or another and remained popular until about 1937, when quiz shows began to gain huge popularity. They included Professor Quiz, Kay Kyser's College of Musical Knowledge, Beat the Band, Spelling Bee, Cab Calloway's Quizzical, It Pays To Be Ignorant, Ben Bernie's Musical Quiz and Can You Top This? Pot o' Gold became one of the highest-rated quiz shows because of its huge cash prizes.

The '30s began a new age for radio, which now offered a huge variety of programs ranging from quiz shows and news programs to soap operas, melodramas, westerns and detective shows. Radio became the great escape from the problems of the Depression.

The demand for radio programming was high. Some of the hottest shows were the dramatic programs like True Romances and Redbook True Story. Additionally, the romantic comedies like The First Nighter Program, Real Folks, Grand Central Station and Curtain Time became popular.

But Hollywood still held the biggest fascination with the public, and the big-name talent brought the biggest audiences. Shows like Hollywood Hotel, Talkie Picture Time and D. W. Griffith's Hollywood were huge. Each incorporated major talent or gossip about Hollywood's biggest

stars. Hedda Hopper, Louella Parsons, Jimmy Fidler and Walter Winchell satisfied an appetite for information and gossip about Hollywood.

Perhaps the biggest and best-known program to incorporate Hollywood's biggest stars was Lux Radio Theatre. The program reenacted dramatic scripts using



BING CROSBY

Hollywood's top names, like Cary Grant, Clark Gable, Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney, Jimmy Stewart, Katharine Hepburn, Helen Hayes, Myrna Loy, Claudette Colbert and hundreds of others. The show was hosted by legendary film director Cecil B. DeMille.

After the success of Lux Radio Theatre, copycat programs like Warner Academy Theater, Cavalcade of America, Silver Theatre

and The Screen Guild Theatre emerged. None was as successful as the originator of the concept.

Serious drama also emerged in the '30s, with Shakespearean plays, Tolstoy and other literary works adapted for radio. This attracted a breed of high-brow theater actors and actresses who were often considered above doing films or radio. A breakthrough came in the mid-'20s when Ethel Barrymore, one of the top stage actresses, took the forbidden step into a radio studio. This allowed stage players to consider radio acceptable, although most still shied away from the garish world of Hollywood films.

In 1936, The Columbia Workshop

emerged as another important vehicle for serious works. CBS brought acclaimed writers like Dorothy Parker, Archibald MacLeish, James Thurber and others into radio, creating many radio classics.

One of the most memorable moments of The Columbia Workshop years was a young poet by the name of Norman Corwin. His captivating writing style exposed radio audiences to the classic arts of poetry and literature. He created many memorable radio plays, such as "The Plot To Overthrow Christmas" and "The Pursuit of Happiness." Corwin emerged as the greatest radio director and writer of all time.

Perhaps the pinnacle of radio drama was the Halloween broadcast of Orson Welles' "The War of the Worlds" on October 30, 1938, on Mercury Theater. His enactment of the H.G. Wells play sent fear through households across America, causing panic and hysteria. Even though disclaimers aired at the start and end of the program, people reacted to the supposed invasion. For months following the broadcast, Welles was chastised by the press for the re-creation.

The event took a third-rate program into the top ratings slot and elevated the young Welles to major star status. It also demonstrated the power of radio. After all, Mercury Theater was not a highly rated program, yet with the listeners it had, the broadcast caused a severe panic.

With the huge number of stations on the

air in the '30s, many were left with programming voids if unable to affiliate with NBC's Red or Blue Networks (there was also an Orange and a White network from NBC), or with CBS.

This left openings for new entries, and in 1934 The Mutual Broadcasting System was formed by pooling several large stations like WGN, Chicago; WXYZ, Detroit; WOR, New York, and WLW, Cincinnati, as sources for programming, along with the Don Lee Network on the West Coast. By 1938, Mutual already had secured 110 affiliates.

Even comedian Ed Wynn thought he could get into the act. He founded his own network -- Amalgamated Broadcast System -- acquired 100 affiliates and was bankrupt nine



ORSON WELLES

months later. In the meantime, CBS and NBC had become giants and names like NBC's David Sarnoff and CBS' William Paley were gold on Wall Street. NBC began building Radio City in the heart of New York and Hollywood, with new studios in Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit and several cities. CBS, too, broke ground for new facilities like Columbia Square in Hollywood, a massive facility to house West Coast network programming.

Control of programming content did not rest with the networks as much as the public believed. In reality, it was the advertisers pulling the strings. At least 33 percent of all radio programs were produced by advertising agencies, and talent contracts

## A DECADE OF RADIO

were often with the agencies themselves and not the networks.

Rudy Vallee, for instance, was an employee of J. Walter Thompson, the agency for Standard Brands. In fact, unemployed actors applied at the agencies, as did producers with new program concepts. The sponsors had the power, ranging from script approval to guest stars and success or failure of a program, no matter how much the networks liked or disliked it.

In fact, radio premiums were invented to track listening. If a program or star could generate a lot of mail requesting the free premium, the program was considered highly rated.

Audience ratings first came on the scene in 1930, when WLW, Cincinnati, owner Powel Crosley created the C.A.B. (Cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting). The station telephoned listeners in 30 cities, asking them to name programs heard that day. Interestingly, the same simple ratings procedure is still used today.

The "Hoopers" created by C.E. Hooper became the standard starting in 1935 and maintained dominance until A.C. Nielsen bought the company out in 1949.

Ratings afforded agencies information beyond asking listeners to mail in requests for premiums. They became the sole criteria by which programs were judged. Even the most popular programs were canceled if the ratings showed their popularity diminishing. About the only programs not sponsored and ratings-sensitive were educational programs, news programs and The Columbia Workshop.

For years, program commercialization was looked upon by some as downright inappropriate for the radio. At one time, the president created a commission to study the effects of commercials, and the effect of radio in general on the listening public.

What they found was an increase in interest in sports, enrollment in colleges with active sports teams with radio broadcasts and increased interest in the climates of California and Florida.

Most importantly, it was found that radio had improved communication to the American people, and had developed a national community of sorts. Most recognized was that radio listening had become the second-highest activity, second only to sleeping.

Toward the decade's end, radio no longer relied on bringing big stars to the radio dial to create radio listening; radio had made its own stars who did not come from Broadway, Hollywood or vaudeville.

People like Kate Smith ("the Songbird of the South"), Fannie Brice and Arthur Godfrey were household names whose careers were made from radio.

Radio also elevated the spirits of America with music, and the end of the decade brought with it a new way of hearing music: the record. Make Believe Ballroom, invented in Los Angeles by Al Jarvis and perfected in New York by Martin Block, brought a way to hear variety without having the artists make live appearances. These programs gained vast popularity, and Jarvis and Block were immortalized as the first disc jockeys.

But music wasn't only coming from discs. A new form of music called "swing" had emerged as a nation jitterbugged across the dance floors of ballroom broadcasts. Bands like Tommy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller popularized programs like Your Hit Parade.

For the first time in history, radio was having an enormous impact on record sales as teens and young adults flocked to record stores for the latest recordings.

Radio brought attention to Washington, and in return Washington realized the value

of radio in the '30s. Franklin D. Roosevelt was said to have been elected because of his great radio speaking voice, while his opponent had a horrible radio presence.

FDR was the radio president. His was the first inauguration ever heard on radio. He understood the power of the medium, and he knew how to work it to his advantage, gaining support for his "New Deal." Roosevelt

was the first president to regularly use radio when he introduced his Fireside Chats, each of which began with the words: "My dear friends ..."

The '30s also saw the beginning of the serious broadcast journalist, as newsmen Lowell Thomas, H.V. Kaltenborn, Gabriel Heatter and Graham McNamee described such events as the Hindenburg disaster, the abdication of Edward VIII, the kidnapping of Charles Lindbergh Jr, the election and reelection of FDR and the start of World War II. For the first time in history, people were able to hear a war unfold before their eyes as foreign correspondents gave detailed accounts of every move.

As the '30s were ending and the country was coming out of the throes of the Depression, radio was an important part of life. Radio had become the main form of entertainment in America, and other me-



KATE SMITH

dia were reacting.

Movie theaters had to schedule movies at different times so they would not start until the top radio shows were over; otherwise, they had empty theaters.

Newspapers, many of which also owned radio stations, were doing their best to bring the medium to its knees. They were in a difficult position, because they could bring readership to

their papers by printing radio listening guides, yet they were losing advertising dollars to radio. The newspaper publishers association met for the express purpose of developing a strategy to lessen radio's competitive threat to the loss of advertising dollars, a banner they have carried with them to the present day.

In a short 20 years, radio became the most powerful advertising and selling vehicle in the world. The radio was the most important piece of furniture in the home, and for some the most expensive. Big, high-quality radio sets became a status symbol, some costing more than automobiles.

The social structure of America had changed as radio brought families around the radio for their news, music, comedy, drama and their children's education. Radio had become a lifestyle. ■

Ken Alexander  
Remembers . . .

## The Great Depression



### The THIRTIES

When asked to reminisce about 1936, anyone old enough to remember that year will almost surely mention the Great Depression and the way it affected his or her life. That phenomenon dominated the entire decade of the '30s and, in one way or another, left its mark upon everyone.

I was only a child in the 1930s, but I'd like to share with you my kid's-eye view of the depression.

Just ten weeks after I was born, the stock market crashed and the Great Depression began soon afterward. When the depression finally ended, I was twelve years old. Thus, my childhood coincided exactly with the Depression Era.

People who had known the prosperity of the 1920s regarded the depression as a horrible aberration; they knew that something was terribly wrong. I, on the other hand, never having seen good times, regarded the depression as normal; there was nothing in my experience with which I could compare it.

To illustrate the point: Once, on a visit to the home of relatives, I wore a brown sweater with several large holes in it. It was a sweater which I often wore, probably the only one I owned. One of my aunts, in a good-natured way, kidded me about the sweater. Having seen better times, she was unaccustomed to seeing

company arrive at her home in tattered clothes.

I was not offended by my aunt's kidding, although I failed to see the point of it. To me, there was nothing remarkable about a sweater full of holes -- I had always dressed that way.

Like a large proportion of American families in the '30s, my family was poor -- but only in the sense that we had very little money. My childhood was a happy one. I had loving parents who provided a cheerful environment for me, and I never felt that we were poor.

The first thing I had to do on returning home from school in the afternoon was change my clothes. I wore my "good" clothes to school -- knickers, a dress shirt and tie, and my "good" shoes. To save wear and tear on my school clothes, I would change into an old shirt, a pair of bib overalls, and old shoes before I went out to play.

The soles of my shoes would often wear so thin that a hole would appear in the leather and my sock would show through. The purchase of a new pair of shoes being out of the question, and the cost of having the shoes resoled being prohibitive, it was necessary to improvise.

An insole made of a couple of thicknesses of cardboard from a breakfast cereal box would put me in good stead -- for a while. The cardboard was nowhere near as durable as leather, and soon it would need to be replaced.

When a child outgrew his shoes, of course, there was no alternative to buying a pair of larger ones. Sometimes, for economic reasons, this was not done soon enough, and I wonder how many children of that era developed podiatric problems later in life as a result.

A lot of penny-pinching was practiced in those days.

My dad would take his lunch to work wrapped in newspaper. My mother would always use the back page of the *Chicago Daily News*. This was the picture page, and it would be less conspicuous on the streetcar than a page covered with type.

These things were not done out of stinginess, but out of necessity.

In spring, boys would make kites to fly in the March winds. Over a frame made of scraps of wood, they would stretch newspaper. The affair was held together with a paste made from flour and water.

Now, kites were being sold at Woolworth's and Kresge's, probably for about a dime. But dimes were not easy to come by, and if a boy wanted a kite badly enough, he would make one.

I would often hear my relatives tell of neighbors or other acquaintances who had gone "on relief." That was the term used to mean public assistance for the needy. Today we call it welfare.

Although my father was out of work at times during the depression, we never went on relief. Before they were married, my dad's sister, and, later, his brother, both of whom were employed, moved in with us and helped defray household expenses.

All during my childhood and teen years, my father got his hair cut at a shop called

***"You could do quite a bit with a dime in the 1930s. You could buy a loaf of bread or two candy bars or two bottles of PepsiCola. You could make two local calls from a pay telephone, or mail three or four letters. If you were under 13, you could see a show at your neighborhood movie theatre."***

the Sanitary Barber Shop, which was owned by a man named Ted, who had immigrated to this country from Ukraine. Several times my family moved from one apartment to another, but my dad continued to go to the same barber.

Once in the late '40s I asked my dad why he went out of his way to patronize Ted's shop when there were other shops much closer to home.

My father told me that during the depression, there had been times when he had not been able to afford the 35-cent charge for a haircut. On these occasions, Ted would tell him not to worry about it and would cut my dad's hair free.

Out of loyalty to that kind barber, my dad continued to patronize his shop for years after the depression was over -- until we moved out of the city.

As in any era, some of the popular songs of the day reflected the mood of the times. I recall a few of them. One was written by Herman Hupfeld, who also wrote the standard, "As Time Goes By." A couple of the lines went as follows:

*No more money in the bank.  
No more babies left to spank.  
What's to do about it?  
Let's put out the lights and go to sleep.  
Irving Berlin gave us a song called "Let's*

## THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Have Another Cup of Coffee (And Let's Have Another Piece of Pie)." The message of this song was that "Just around the corner there's a rainbow in the sky" and that we shouldn't give up hope.

In those days, Eddie Cantor could be heard on the radio singing this song:

*Potatoes are cheaper.*

*Tomatoes are cheaper.*

*Now's the time to fall in love.*

But the song that epitomized the feeling of the times most accurately was E. Y. Harburg's "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?"

You could do quite a bit with a dime in the 1930s. You could buy a loaf of bread or two candy bars or two bottles of Pepsi-Cola. You could make two local calls from a pay telephone, or mail three or four letters. If you were under 13, you could see a show at your neighborhood movie theatre.

With a dime you could buy a copy of the *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, or you could buy the *Chicago Daily News* each day, Monday through Friday, for a week. Or you could take a ride on the streetcar, and transfer, and have three cents left over. You could get a cup of coffee at a diner for a dime.

Prices were low, and wages were commensurately low. I can recall a time when my father's full-time job paid him \$18.00 a week. When he received a two-dollar-a-week raise, he and my mother were ecstatic. But, my mother cautioned, "We'll have to be careful — we mustn't spend it foolishly."

No, there was no way that the extra two dollars a week would be spent foolishly.

After paying the rent of \$37.50, my parents had about \$40.00 left for the month; that had to cover the groceries, utilities, clothing, medical and dental expenses, and

any incidentals.

A relative later observed that my family would not have been able to get by had my mother not been a very effective manager. My mother prepared meals that were tasty and nutritious yet inexpensive. She made good use of leftovers. She had a non-electric Singer sewing machine which she used to make, and mend, clothing.

The fact of low prices and low wages was not in itself bad. The problem was the lack of jobs. It's my understanding that the rate of unemployment, nationally, was 25 per cent at times. In parts of the country it was twice that, or more.

With unemployment as high as it was, people had to settle for any kind of work they could get. For a while, my father had a job as a laborer for the CWA (Civil Works Administration), working on the street with a pick and shovel.

Years later, my dad told me that some men had refused to do that kind of work — they were too proud. Not my dad. As he told me, "I had a wife and kid to support and I wasn't going to let them starve."

My dad took jobs of several kinds, including one that involved selling plaster of Paris door-to-door. Like most people, he would take any honorable work he could find.

Probably all of us have at some time been approached on a downtown street by a man asking for money. During the '30s, in our West Side neighborhood — and, I assume, in other neighborhoods — men would beg door-to-door. They would come onto the back porch and rap on the door of each apartment, asking for a handout.

They were not looking for money to spend on drink; what they needed was money for food -- or the food itself.

I never knew whether these men had homes or families. Certainly, they did not have jobs. Some may have been hoboes

who rode freight trains from city to city. Most likely, many were veterans who had fought for us in World War I fifteen or twenty years before.

Surely, they had had jobs before the depression hit. I suppose that at some point they had given up looking for work and had gone on the bum. They would describe their situation as "down and out," "down on my luck," or "up against it."

My mother — and the other housewives in the building — would sometimes give one of them a sandwich.

The movies provided a welcome escape from the realities of the day. For the small price of admission, you could watch Fred Astaire in top hat, white tie and tails and Ginger Rogers wearing a rich satin gown whirling in a glittering ballroom. You could mentally project yourself into that scene and identify, for an hour or so, with the elegant people on the screen.

Merely being in the theatre itself — never mind the movie — must have been a form of escape. You might be worried about the rent payment on your shabby apartment, but you could leave those cares behind as you roamed through the opulence of the theatre lobby. It was a palace with its heavy tapestries, its fountains, its statuary, its thick carpets and its grand staircase. And for a couple of hours on that day, it was your home.

The prime home entertainment medium in the '30s was, of course, radio. There was the phonograph, but records cost money. Radio was free, and it brought the greatest actors, musicians, singers and comedians into our living rooms every day and every evening.

We would often listen to the radio in the dark — partly because the imagination functions more vividly in the dark and partly to save on electric bills.

This was the pre-transistor age, and radios contained vacuum tubes, which drew

a considerable amount of current. For that reason, if we wanted to hear the Jack Benny program, for example, we would turn on the radio at six o'clock and turn it off at six-thirty. We would have the radio on only to hear a specific program. This was another way we kept the electric bill down.

An important feature of radio in the Depression Era was the series of Fireside Chats delivered by President Roosevelt. In these talks, the President told the American people of the steps he was taking to combat the depression. He instituted programs which created great numbers of jobs, but the depression continued; to many people it must have seemed to go on forever.

The National Industrial Recovery Act was a federal program to combat unemployment; it was administered by the National Recovery Administration (N.R.A.). The N.R.A.'s symbol was a blue, stylized silhouette of an eagle, and these Blue Eagles could be seen on stickers and posters everywhere — in stores, shops, and factories. Underneath the Blue Eagle, as I recall, was the motto, "We do our part."

Very soon after Pearl Harbor, the economy recovered. Factories which had been nearly idle for years began operating on three shifts, seven days a week. Anyone who wanted a job could easily find one. The Great Depression lay behind us now — but only because a long and costly world war lay ahead.

Today, some of us who are of a certain age never leave a light burning in a room if there is no one in that room. We don't leave the radio or TV on for background. We won't discard a serviceable item of clothing simply because it is old. This is how we were brought up. "Waste not, want now" was our byword.

Our earliest memories are of the Great Depression, and those memories will never leave us. ■

## The THIRTIES

# A CHRONOLOGY OF 1936

Compiled by TODD NEBEL

*A quick look at Chicago newspapers from the year 1936 reveals the following:*

### JANUARY

- First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt begins publishing her syndicated newspaper column, "My Day."
- Throughout the country, the color red is popular with American women; matching rouge, lipstick and nail enamel has such varieties as "bright red," "gray red," "poppy," and "geranium."
- Nelson Eddy is currently appearing at Chicago's Orchestra Hall while Ted Weems and his orchestra are playing at the Empire Room of the Palmer House. Current new films are "Magnificent Obsession" at the RKO Palace and "Captain Blood" starring Errol Flynn at the United Artists.
- The *Chicago Tribune* runs an article releasing the names of executives who made in excess of \$25,000 working for Chicago firms. A few of the elite are D. A. Crawford, president of the Pullman Company, \$48,441; Henry P. Crowell, chairman of the board of Quaker Oats, \$46,795; A. E. Staley, chairman of Staley Manufacturing Company, \$94,352; Sewell L. Avery, president of Montgomery Ward, \$100,200; Dr. Albert Wander, chairman of the Wander Company, \$45,945; C. W. Wrigley, chairman of the Wrigley Company, \$63,630; P. K. Wrigley, president of the Wrigley Company, \$26,330.
- P. K. Wrigley, owner of the Chicago Cubs announces that he will reward every Chicago Cub player with a raise because of the spectacular pennant drive they displayed the previous fall.

### FEBRUARY

- A *Fortune* magazine poll reports that 67 per cent of respondents favor some sort of birth control.
- RCA begins television field tests.
- The federal budget deficit reaches the \$2 billion mark.
- Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians are appearing on the stage of the Chicago Theatre. The attraction on the screen is "Anything Goes" starring Bing Crosby.
- Major Bowes' Radio Amateurs are appearing on the stage of the United Artists Theatre; on screen Robert Donat stars in "The Ghost Goes West."
- The United Rubber Workers of America refuse to leave the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Plant Number 2 after being laid off from their jobs. This initiates the beginning of the first "sit down" strike.
- Run-proof mascara is invented.

### MARCH

- Hoover Dam is completed, making Lake Meade the world's largest reservoir.
- The Northwestern/Union Pacific Railroad's "Streamliner" is advertised in the *Tribune* as a Chicago-to-Portland route taking only 39 3/4 hours.
- "Mutiny on the Bounty" starring Clark Gable and Charles Laughton wins the Academy Award for Best Picture of 1935.
- The Detroit Red Wings win the Stanley Cup for the 1935-36 season.
- Jan Garber and his orchestra appear on stage, Mae West is on the screen in "Klondike Annie" at the Chicago Theatre.

● Screen star Jane Withers heads the stage show at the Uptown Theatre while Wallace Beery and Lionel Barrymore in "Ah, Wilderness" is the film attraction.

### APRIL

- Bruno Hauptman, the convicted kidnapper of Charles Lindbergh Jr., is electrocuted.
- Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II collaborate on music and lyrics for "On Your Toes" which opens at New York's Imperial Theatre. Ray Bolger stars.
- Chicago area Oldsmobile dealers are selling the Olds Six for \$665 and the Olds Eight for \$810.

### MAY

- The luxurious Super Chief locomotive leaves Chicago for the first time, reducing service to Los Angeles to just under 40 hours.
- Notorious bank robbers Alvin "Creepy" Karpis and Fred Hunter are arrested in New Orleans by J. Edgar Hoover and a small force of FBI agents.
- Eddie Cantor appears on the stage of the RKO Palace Theatre in Chicago; the movie attraction is "The Ex-Mrs. Bradford" starring William Powell.
- Cunard White Star Lines advertise a voyage to Europe and the Olympic Games in Berlin this summer for \$335, all expenses paid.
- Marshall Field and Company's Basement sells Ginger Rogers' summer fashion dresses in twelve choices of styles for \$3 each.
- Goldblatt's offers Cracker Jack and Wrigley's Gum for two cents each, Hershey's Kisses for sixteen cents a pound, and Bayer Aspirin for thirty seven cents for a bottle of 100.

### JUNE

- In New York, former alcoholic Bill Wilson and drinking companion Robert H. Smith found Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Max Schmeling knocks out undefeated

Heavyweight Champion Joe Louis in the twelfth round of their first fight with one another.

- Chicagoland A&P stores offer corned beef hash for fifteen cents for a 12-ounce can; a pound of Eight O'Clock coffee for a nickel; Grape Nuts Flakes, seven ounce package, for eleven cents; DelMonte corn, ten cents a can.
- Lou Gehrig of the American League and Carl Hubbell of the National League lead the balloting for the fourth annual All-Star game.
- "Fury" starring Spencer Tracy is playing at the Chicago Theatre; "The King Steps Out" with Grace Moore is showing at the United Artists.

### JULY

- Despite an improving economy, the 1936 Cadillac Series 60 is priced at \$1,645. That's \$700 less than the Cadillac's lowest priced 1935 model.
- Margaret Mitchell's book, "Gone With The Wind" sells a record one million copies in six months.
- The Chicago Cubs have the best record in the National League, with a .638 winning percentage.
- Jesse Owens and the U. S. Olympic Team set sail for Hamburg, Germany.
- Louis Armstrong is on stage at the Oriental Theatre; Milton Berle stars at the Chicago Theatre.

### AUGUST

- Backstroke champion Eleanor Holm (Jarrett) is dropped from the U. S. Olympic swim team for drinking, shooting craps and violating curfew while on board the ship carrying athletes to Germany. She is also barred from further amateur competition for writing daily stories for an American news syndicate.
- At the Berlin Olympics, the "Ebony Antelope," Jesse Owens wins four gold medals. Nine out of ten American blacks win gold medals and Hitler leaves the stadium before the awards are handed



## A CHRONOLOGY OF 1936

out to black Americans. Germany wins the most medals, with the United States coming in a close second place.

- In Chicago, "ace ventriloquist" Edgar Bergen is appearing with Henry Busse and his orchestra at the Chez Paree. Ted Weems is at the Trianon, and Ozzie Nelson and his orchestra are at the Empire Room of the Palmer House.

## SEPTEMBER

- The Chicago Cubs go into a huge skid and finish fourth for the season. The New York Yankees and the New York Giants win the American and National League pennants respectively.

- "Sing, Baby, Sing" starring Alice Faye and Adolphe Menjou is the big movie at the Garrick Theatre and, next door at the Apollo, William Powell stars on the screen as "The Great Ziegfeld."

## OCTOBER

- Striking maritime workers paralyze American shipping in a job action that begins on the west coast but soon spreads to every port in a strike that will last three months.

- The Republican Party produces a radio drama, "Liberty at the Crossroads" as part of Alf Landon's 1936 presidential campaign.

- "Stage Door" by George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber and starring Margaret Sullivan and Tom Ewell opens at New York's Music Box Theatre.

- Ethel Merman, Jimmy Durante and Bob Hope star in Colé Porter's "Red Hot and Blue" which opens on Broadway at the Alvin Theatre.

- The New York Yankees win the World Series over the Giants, four games to two, for the first of four consecutive World Series titles.

- Fred Allen and his "Town Hall Stars," from his popular radio program, are on stage at the State-Lake Theatre.

## NOVEMBER

- Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt is elected to a second term as President of the United States in a landslide victory over Republican Alf M. Landon of Kansas.

- After the election, Washington is a Democratic stronghold, with only 89 Republicans in the House and 16 in the Senate.

- As promised, following FDR's re-election, "radio priest" Father Charles Coughlin, a harsh critic of the Roosevelt administration, leaves the air.

- Henry Luce publishes the first issue of *Life* magazine.

- At Chicagoland Kroger stores, bacon sells for fifteen cents a half-pound; eggs are twenty-nine cents a dozen; pork sausages are nineteen cents a pound.

## DECEMBER

- United Auto Workers begin a strike against General Motors' Fisher Body plant in Flint, Michigan, employing the new sit down strike tactic, even though it is now in violation of the law.

- George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart's "You Can't Take It With You" opens at New York's Booth Theatre. It will run for 837 performances.

- Press and public alike thrill to British King Edward VIII's announcement that he is renouncing the throne in order to marry an American divorcee, Wallis Warfield Simpson.

- "The Big Broadcast of 1937" starring Jack Benny and Burns and Allen is playing at the Tivoli Theatre; "Love On the Run" is at the United Artists; and "Theodora Goes Wild" starring Irene Dunne is at the Chicago Theatre.

- Last minute Christmas shoppers at the Fair Store, State, Adams and Dearborn, offers baby dolls for \$2.98; 16 mm movie outfits for \$29.90; Westinghouse electric sewing machines for \$42.50; City of Portland train set for \$1.79; and Philco radios in walnut, cathedral shaped, for \$19.95.



# CHICAGO RADIO in the SPRING OF 1936

BY WILLIAM J. KIDDLE

Spring came early to Chicago in the first week of March of 1936. Moderate temperature readings were matched by the

Windy City's switch to Eastern Standard Time, a precursor to Daylight Savings Time. The fact that radio listeners could hear their favorite network radio programs at a new time was a subtle, yet important way to break out of the doldrums of a Midwestern winter.

Radio broadcasting of sixty years ago was a far cry from what it is today. Yet, radio was a "common experience that unified millions of oth-

erwise diverse Americans and helped them cope with the upheaval of the 1930s." On a more personal level, radio provided Americans with the cheapest and most var-

*Bill Kiddle is a retired high school teacher whose interest in radio dates to his undergraduate days at Lake Forest College and weekly theatre productions over WKRS, Waukegan. He is a reviewer of old time radio tapes for the North American Radio Archives and an occasional contributor to the Nostalgia Digest.*

## The THIRTIES

ied entertainment available during the Great Depression. With the turning of a dial people could enjoy dramas, musical programs, comedy and adventure series, as well as being informed of fast-breaking national and international news in the comfort and security of their homes.

The radio day, based upon The *Chicago Tribune's* daily feature "Today's Broadcast From Chicago," started at 7 am with a not too early wake-up call: "Morning Clock" greeted Chicagoans who turned their radio dial to 770, WBBM. A few clicks back on the dial was WGN (720) and its "Good Morning" program. WMAQ (670) had "The Suburban Hour." The "Voice of Labor," WCFL (970) opened the day with "Top of the Morning." WJJD (1130), with a large agricultural listening audience, had a "Farm Bureau Period." "Eye Opener" was on WAAF (920). Listeners with strong religious interests could set their radio dials to WMBI (1080), the Moody Bible Institute station and its "Sunrise Service."

The end of the broadcast day in March, 1936 came early as compared to modern standards and mostly "live" orchestra music ruled the "witching hour" of midnight to 1 am during the weekdays.

On Monday, WGN often closed with a long-time Chicago favorite, "The Midnight

## CHICAGO RADIO, SPRING 1936

Flyers" with Will Osborne and his orchestra. Fletcher Henderson's orchestra was a standard on WMAQ; WBBM had Harry Sosnik; Phil Levant and his orchestra were on WENR (870); listeners to WIND (560) heard "The Night Watch." Later in the week, the orchestras of Jesse Hawkins, Carl Schreiber, Ted Weems, Bernie Cummins and Henry Halstead provided musical sounds at midnight.

Most historians agree that comedy ruled radio in the 1930s. Author Norman Finkelstein wrote, "When the roaring twenties slid into the Great Depression of the 1930s something was needed to lift the spirits of the American people. Radio arrived just in time."

Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll created Amos 'n' Andy, a wildly popular program, the first situation comedy. It was heard at 7 pm on WMAQ.

The old comics of vaudeville days found a new home and a new life as radio comedians. Instead of costumes, props and grimaces, the comics of radio used their spouses, foreign-accented stooges or announcers as "straightmen."

In the spring of 1936 laughter came from the comedy shows of Jack Benny, Burns and Allen, and Fibber McGee and Molly. A Sunday night ritual for most Chicagoans was listening to Jack Benny over WLS (NBC) at 7 o'clock. Monday night favorites, at 7 pm on WLS, were Fibber and Molly, sponsored by Johnson's Wax.

Wednesday evening's hour of mirth started at 8:30 with Burns and Allen (also known as "Adventures with Gracie") broadcast over WBBM (CBS). At 9, many radio dials were switched to WMAQ for The Fred Allen Show which featured comedy sketches often lampooning other radio shows.

During the mid-1930s, weekly dramatic



JACK BENNY

anthologies, radio adaptations of popular classics from the stage, novel and silver screen, were given first-rate showcases and became prime time features.

On Sunday at 6:30, Chicago listeners tuned to WLS for the Blue Network production of Grand Hotel. This dramatic series, sponsored by Campana's Italian Balm, originated in 1930 and Arch Oboler wrote several of his early eerie scripts for this program.

On Monday at 9, WBBM (CBS) carried the Lux Radio Theatre, an hour-long drama hosted by producer Cecil B. DeMille. Tuesday's most significant dramatic offering was the Helen Hayes Theatre at 9:30 on WENR. Miss Hayes, the "First Lady of the American Theatre" starred in radio adaptations of many of her most famous stage successes in a program sponsored by Sanka Coffee.

The DuPont Corporation presented Cavalcade of America on Wednesday at 8 on WBBM, an interesting anthology of original dramas.

The radio column for Thursday listed



LOUELLA PARSONS

three lesser-known dramatic productions: Cinema Theatre on WENR at 8:30; True Tale Dramas on WJJD at 7:45; and Strange as it Seems on WCFL, also at 7:45.

On Friday evening, radio fans were confronted with a listening dilemma. Hollywood Hotel, an hour-long program of music and drama with Dick Powell and gossip columnist Louella Parsons was on WBBM at 9:30 while First Nighter, a Chicago favorite with Don Ameche and Betty Lou Gerson, was on WMAQ at 10. (The First Nighter program was successful enough to give the series an unprecedented 24 year engagement — 1930-1953 — making it the longest-running anthology series in radio history.)

Adventure-detective dramas started their rise to popularity in 1936, but remained a decade away from reaching a predominant place in the hearts and minds of radio listeners. However, several trend-setters were very well-received. From crime to punishment, radio covered stories taken from the pages of world literature or from the files of police and other law enforcement



DON AMECHE

agencies.

On Saturday night at 10:30 WGN (MBS) offered The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, with Richard Gordon and Harold West in the featured roles. Gangbusters, created by Philips H. Lord and sponsored by Palmolive soap, was heard Wednesday at 10 on WBBM. Famous Jury Trials, sponsored by Mennen, was on WGN twice a week, Sunday and Monday nights at 10.

Twenty Thousand Years in Sing Sing, a crime drama with Warden Lewis E. Lawes of Sing Sing Prison, was on WENR Wednesday at 9:30. WLS presented Eno Crime Clues on Tuesday at 8.

Escapism in the form of suspense and horror drama became popular in the mid-1930s and Lights Out, an original and daring series, was broadcast from NBC in Chicago over WMAQ at the late night hour of 12:30 am.

Western adventure came to Chicago listeners on WGN by way of WXYZ in Detroit in the person of The Lone Ranger. The thrilling adventures of the masked man and his faithful Indian companion were heard

## CHICAGO RADIO, SPRING 1936

three times a week — Monday, Wednesday and Friday — for Silvercup Bread. Death Valley Days, an anthology of western tales told by the Old Ranger for Twenty Mule Team Borax, was broadcast over WENR at 9 on Thursday nights. On Tuesdays, WBBM offered Renfrew of the Mounted with House Jamison as Inspector Douglas Renfrew of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Every day millions of American women tuned in for the latest episode of their favorite “soap opera” as tragedies, triumphs and life’s scandals unfolded. By 1936 there were two dozen of these daytime serials on the air for Chicago listeners.

Before noon, WGN offered We Are Four (9:15 am); Backstage Wife (9:45); Bachelor’s Children (10:30); Painted Dreams (11:00); Broadway Cinderella (11:45); and Lucky Girl (noon). Other morning favorites included Dan Harding’s Wife (WMAQ-10:15); Today’s Children (WLS-10:30); David Harum (WLS-10:45); and Just Plain Bill (WBBM-11:30).

In the afternoon hours, programming became more diverse, but fans could still find interesting tales told on The Story of Mary Marlin (WBBM-12:30); Romance of Helen Trent (WGN-1:30); Happy Hollow (WBBM-2:15); Ma Perkins (WENR-3:15); Vic and Sade (WMAQ-3:30); The O’Neills (WMAQ-3:30); Life of Mary Sothern (WGN-4:15); and Girl Alone (WMAQ-4:30).

In the late afternoon and early evening hours, family serial dramas continued to bring entertainment. The Goldbergs, a quarter-hour drama starring Gertrude Berg was heard five times a week on WBBM at 5:45. One Man’s Family, written by Carlton E. Morse, was aired in a 30-minute format on WMAQ at 8 pm. Myrt and Marge on WBBM and Easy Aces on WLS



VIRGINIA PAYNE portrayed MA PERKINS

were pitted against each other in the 7:00 time slot at least three times a week during the mid-thirties and both survived!

In the spring of 1936 many Chicago area kids raced home every day and turned their dial to WBBM to catch a full half hour of excitement. First came the Air Adventures of Jimmy Allen at 5:15, followed by Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy at 5:30. Girls wanted the radio dial tuned to WGN at 5:30 so they could hear Irene Wicker, known as the Singing Lady, followed by Little Orphan Annie. Other favorites were Tom Mix and his Ralston Straight-Shooters (WMAQ-5:30); Dick Tracy (WCFL-5:30); Buck Rogers (WBBM-6:00); and Popeye, the Sailor (WMAQ-7:15).

Radio provided a live “you are there” atmosphere for millions of Americans interested in the vast array of sporting events.

During the first week of March, 1936, in the absence of a major professional basketball league or a giant NCAA college basketball tourney, sports were all but consigned to the back burner of the old “hot stove league.” Noticeable exceptions to



IREENE WICKER, THE SINGING LADY

this rule for Chicago sports fans was the play-by-play broadcast of a national Hockey League contest between the Chicago Blackhawks vs. the Boston Bruins. The contest was aired over WGN with ace sportscaster Quin Ryan doing both the pre-game Sports Shots at 8:07 followed by the call of the game, in which the second place Hawks skated to a 2-2 tie with the Bruins.

Later that week Ryan, WGN’s jack-of-all-trades, presented a blow-by-blow description of the *Tribune’s* Golden Glove Finals from ringside in the Chicago Stadium. Listeners outside the Chicago area heard Clem McCarthy and Hal Totten report the fight for NBC.

Baseball fans were pleased to note that during the first week of March, WGN sports announcer Bob Elson left for California to visit the spring training camp of the Chicago White Sox in Pasadena and the Chicago Cubs at Catalina Island before returning to the Windy City.

WIND broadcast polo matches on Saturday nights at 10 and auto racing on Sunday nights at 10.



QUIN RYAN

Radio emerged as an important source of news and information. The 1930s was a grim time for most Americans caught in the icy grip of the Great Depression and fearful of the rise of fascist dictatorships in Germany, Italy and Japan.

Many Chicagoans listened every weeknight to The March of Time, a 15-minute documentary sponsored by Remington-Rand on WBBM at 10:30. Others carefully followed the news reports of Clifton Utley on WGN or Gabriel Heatter on WMAQ.

Listeners heard President Roosevelt’s Fireside Chats on all major stations and Father Coughlin, the “radio priest” from Royal Oak Michigan was heard in Chicago over WJJD (1130) on Sunday at 4:00.

To those of us accustomed to the many forms of audio-visual communication, the content and style of radio in 1936 might seem quaint or even amateurish.

But sixty years ago, as electricity finally reached almost every American home, it was radio that captured the nation’s hearts and minds. ■

Chuck Schaden's

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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

## JUNE 1996

**PLEASE NOTE:** The numerals following each program listing for *Those Were The Days* represents the length of time for each particular show: (28:50) means the program will run 28 minutes and 50 seconds. This may be of help to those who tape the programs for their own collection.

### SATURDAY, JUNE 1st RADIO IN 1936 — Part 1

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (3-2-36) Jim and Marian Jordan star with Hugh Studebaker, Isabel Randolph, Bill Thompson, Cliff Arquette, Harlow Wilcox, Rico Marcelli and the orchestra. The McGees go door-to-door selling encyclopedias. Marian "doubles" as Mrs. Wheedledick and as Sis. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:33)

**LOWELL THOMAS** (1-10-36) Excerpt from a musical program featuring the guest commentator who reviews — on this first program of 1936 — the biggest news stories of the last year: 1935. (5:56)

**HOLLYWOOD HOTEL** (12-18-36) Host Dick Powell stars with Hollywood columnist Louella Parsons, Frances Langford, and guests Arthur Treacher, Igor Gorin, Tony Martin, and producer Darryl F. Zanuck. This major variety hour is broadcast this week from 20th Century Fox Studios in Hollywood where listeners are treated to various movie sets ("On The Avenue" and "Seventh Heaven") and for a big party in honor of the new film, "One In A Million" starring Sonja Henie, Ritz Brothers, Adolph Menjou. Ken Niles announces, Raymond Paige and the orchestra. Campbell Soup, CBS. (15:20; 18:10; 24:41)

**UNIVERSITY BROADCASTING COUNCIL** (3-14-36) "Not For Ladies" a one act play about the Bronte Sisters and the prejudice they faced as women writers, trying to get their work published. Cast features radio students, members of the Northwestern University Drama Group. WNUR, Evanston. (14:15)

**BENNY GOODMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA** (2-3-36) "Let's Dance to a half-hour of Rhythm ... by the 'Rajah of Rhythm'." broadcasting from the Joseph Urban Room of the Congress Hotel in Chicago. Vocals by Helen Ward. Sustaining, NBC. (25:30)

**OLSON AND JOHNSON** (1936) The zany com-

## The THIRTIES

edy team of Ole Olson and Chick Johnson in a half-hour comedy show with music by Jimmy Grier and the orchestra and singer Gertrude Niesen. Announcer is Ben Gage. Richfield Oil Co., NBC. (29:00)

**BUGHOUSE RHYTHM** (12-28-36) Humorous musical program, treating popular music with a comical highbrow approach. Sustaining, NBC. (13:10)

### SATURDAY, JUNE 8th RADIO IN 1936 — Part 2

**MA PERKINS** (April, 1936) Isolated episode of the long-running daytime drama. Ma tries to have a heart-to-heart talk with Evy's husband Willie. Virginia Payne stars as "America's mother of the air." Cast includes Charles Egleston as Shuffle, Rita Ascot as Faye, Murray Forbes as Willie. Oxydol, NBC/CBS. (14:40)

**CALLING ALL CARS** (7-31-36) "A Chance Meeting" opens with the police call: "Be on the lookout for a man described as short, wearing dark suit, checkered cap. Wanted for murder. The subject is armed. Bring him in, boys!" Chief James E. Davis, chief of the LAPD introduces the drama. Frederick Lindsay narrates. Rio Grande Oil Co. (27:30)

**TIM AND IRENE** (9-20-36) Tim Ryan and Irene Noblette Ryan, the "sweethearts of the variety stage" star in this summer replacement program for Jack Benny, as they turn back the clock to the days of vaudeville. Don Wilson is announcer. Jell-O, NBC. (29:50)

**BOXING— LOUIS VS. SHARKEY** (8-18-36) From Yankee Stadium in New York, Ted Husing announces the broadcast with Charles Francis "Socker" Cole doing the blow-by-blow description as 34 year old Jack Sharkey, the "It Man" and 22 year old Joe Louis, the "Brown

Bomber" square off. After the fight we hear John Reed King in Sharkey's dressing room, Paul Douglas in Louis' dressing room. Scripps-Howard Newspapers, CBS. (29:30)

**FIVE STAR FINAL** (3-30-36) Dramatizations of news stories, "on the air to bring you the news of the world we live in ... to make vividly real to you the stirring events that make us all actors in the drama of life." Subjects include election day in Germany; Bruno Hauptman in prison for Lindbergh kidnapping. Remington-Rand Typewriters, WMCA, New York. (14:20)

**ZIEGFELD FOLLIES OF THE AIR** (2-29-36) First show in the new series, from the stage of the Winter Garden Theatre in New York. Fanny Brice and James Melton star with the Ziegfeld Chorus, Patti Chapin and Al Goodman's orchestra. A dramatic theme about a young girl who wants to be in the Follies runs throughout this variety show. Fanny Brice sings "My Man," appears in a comedy sketch, and also as Baby Snooks; Melton sings "I'm a Rovin' Cowboy." Palmolive Products, CBS. (16:45; 17:47; 23:42)

### SATURDAY, JUNE 15th RADIO IN 1936 — Part 3

**LUX RADIO THEATRE** (10-5-36) "Elmer The Great," based on the Ring Lardner play (1928) and the Warner Bros. movie (1933) stars Joe E. Brown in his original screen role as Elmer Kane, the modest baseball pitcher who signs with the New York Giants. Cast includes June Travis and Frank Nelson. Intermission guests are Carl Hubbell of the New York Giants and Lou Gehrig of the New York Yankees. Lux Soap, CBS. (20:06; 16:00; 22:45)

**TEXACO TOWN** (10-25-36) Eddie Cantor stars with announcer Jimmy Wallington, 13-year-old Deanna Durbin, 9-year-old Bobby Breen and guest, actor Leslie Howard. Cast features Harry "Parkyakarkas" Einstein, Jacques Renard and the orchestra. Cantor sings "If You Knew Susie;" Deanna sings "Someone to Care for Me;" Bobby sings "Rainbow on the River." Eddie wants Howard to perform "Hamlet" but the actor prefers to do comedy. **Note: This program is preceded and followed by news reports on the "British crisis" — speculation on the abdication of King Edward so he can marry the American, Mrs. Wallis Simpson.** Texaco Gasoline, CBS. (30:20)

**KING EDWARD VIII** (12-11-36) In a speech by short wave transmission from Windsor Castle, His Royal Highness Prince Edward

speaks on his abdication, a few hours after discharging his last duties as King of England. He has been succeeded by his brother, the Duke of York. BBC and ALL U.S. NETWORKS. (8:32)

**KEN MURRAY SHOW** (4-22-36) Excerpt starring comedian Ken Murray, star of "Blackouts" in Los Angeles, with singer Phil Regan, comedienne Eve Arden, stooge "Oswald" (Tony Labriola), Russ Morgan and his "Lifeboys." Announcer is Fred Utaal. Ken takes the cast to the circus. "Golf Widow" sketch. Rinsolifebuoy. (19:10)

**FORD V-8 REVUE** (1936) "A transcribed program of popular music featuring Bob Crosby and his Swing Band with the Freshmen Trio." Ford Motor Co., Syndicated. (15:15)

**JOE PENNER SHOW** (12-13-36) Comedian Joe Penner stars as the Black Sheep of an aristocratic family, The Park Avenue Penners. In this episode, the family plans a trip to Russia. Joe sings "Woe Is Me" with additional vocals by Joy Hodges and Gene Austin, music by Jimmy Grier and the orchestra. Announcer is Bill Goodwin. CocoMalt, CBS. (28:50)

**PASSING PARADE** (10-11-36) John Nesbitt presents "the entertaining and dramatic side of the news." Stories about former Olympic swimmer Helene Madison; the Ponselle Sisters; the "poisoning DeMedici Family; counterfeiter William Harris. Announcer is Dresser Dahlstead. The DuArt Co., NBC. (14:25)

### SATURDAY, JUNE 22nd RADIO IN 1936 — Part 4

**LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE** (June, 1936) An isolated episode in the long-running kids' adventure series. Annie and Joe try to save a friend's show boat! Shirley Bell stars as Annie. Announcer Franklin MacCormack urges listeners to send in names for "Billy's Airedale dog." Fifty dogs will be given away! Ovaltine, NBC. (14:44)

**JACK BENNY PROGRAM** (10-11-36) Jack Benny stars with Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris and the orchestra, Kenny Baker. The cast does their version of Warner Bros. hit film of 1936, "Anthony Adverse" with Jack in the title role, played on the screen by Fredric March. They run out of time, so the drama must be continued next week. **(Note: And we'll have the next consecutive Benny program next week.)** Jell-O, NBC. (29:38)

**CAVALCADE OF AMERICA** (9-2-36) A musical Cavalcade "tracing the tuneful develop-

**Chuck Schaden's**  
**THOSE WERE THE DAYS**  
WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 P.M.

**JUNE and JULY 1996**

ment of American operetta and musical comedy from the turn of the century to this very moment." Don Voorhees and his orchestra. Music by Victor Herbert, Rudolf Friml, Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, George and Ira Gershwin. DuPont, CBS. (28:06)

**RUDY VALLEE SHOW** (12-3-36) The "Vagabond Lover" stars in his big-time variety show with guests Noel Coward and Gertrude Lawrence (in a comedy sketch from "Tonight at 8:30"); Ed Wynn ("the Perfect Fool"); Eddie Peabody (banjo player); the Don Cossacks (Russian singing organization); and John Guenther (author and correspondent). Music by the Connecticut Yankees. Royal Gelatin and Pudding, NBC. (15:51; 24:16; 19:28)

**DEATH VALLEY DAYS** (8-27-36) "Outlaw Sam Bass." The Old Ranger narrates the true story of Sam Bass, called by some the "Robin Hood of the Old West." Twenty Mule Team Borax, NBC. (29:35)

**LEO IS ON THE AIR** (December, 1936) A "cavalcade of musical hits" starring hit tunes from MGM musicals of 1936, including "You" from "The Great Ziegfeld," "Did I Remember" from "Suzy," and "I've Got You Under My Skin," from "Born to Dance." MGM Pictures, Syndicated. (14:40)

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**SATURDAY, JUNE 29th**  
**RADIO IN 1936 — Part 5**

**SHELL CHATEAU** (1-25-36) Al Jolson — the world's greatest entertainer — presents a variety show with actor Herbert Marshall; comedienne Helen Troy; ski jumper Ivan Nelson; singers Jack Stanton and Peggy Gardner; and Cab Calloway and his Hi-De-Ho Boys! Music by Victor Young and the orchestra. Announcer is Robert Sherwood. Shell Oil Co., NBC. (16:45; 15:58; 23:24)

**BURNS AND ALLEN SHOW** (1-15-36) George and Gracie with announcer Ted Husing, singer Milton Watson, and Jacques Renard, his magic violin and his orchestra. Gracie plays Sadie Thompson in a spoof of the 1932 movie "Rain." Campbell's Tomato Juice, CBS. (28:35)

**MAJOR BOWES' ORIGINAL AMATEUR HOUR** (9-17-36) "Around, around she goes, and where she stops nobody knows." Major Edward Bowes presents truly amateur talent as listeners call to vote. This is the first show for Chrysler Motors, so this week's "host city" is Detroit, Michigan. Chrysler Corporation, CBS. (28:10)

**CHILDREN'S FOLLIES** (7-4-36) New York daily Mirror columnist Nick Kenny presents a kids' show featuring New York talent plus an interview with Irene Wicker, radio's "The Singing Lady" who talks about her career which began in Chicago. WMCA, New York. (17:25)

**SINGING LADY** (7-10-36) Irene Wicker tells a true story about a "great American composer," John Alden Carpenter of Park Ridge, Illinois. The Singing Lady offers a premium for listeners: a Singing Lady sunsuit! Kellogg's Cereals, NBC. (13:45)

**JACK BENNY PROGRAM** (10-18-36) Jack Benny stars with Mary Livingstone, Kenny Baker, Phil Harris and the orchestra. Jack talks about his new movie, "The Big Broadcast," which establishes him as a "great screen lover." The cast continues their version of the blockbuster film of 1936, "Anthony Adverse." Jell-O, NBC. (29:36)

**SATURDAY, JULY 6th**  
**MORE BY MORSE**

**ONE MAN'S FAMILY** (4-23-51) We begin another summer-long series of One Man's Family programs by the great Carlton E. Morse. We pick up where we left off last year, and begin with Chapter 1 of Book 85 in the continuing saga of the Barbour family. Chapter 1: "The unhappy co-ed." Miles Labs, NBC. (15:00)

**ONE MAN'S FAMILY** (4-24-51) Book 85, Chapter 2: "What is Joan up to?" Miles Labs, NBC. (15:00)

**ONE MAN'S FAMILY** (4-25-51) Book 85, Chapter 3: "Claudia has doubts about Joan." Miles Labs, NBC. (14:40)

**ADVENTURES BY MORSE** (1944) "A Coffin for the Lady." Writer Carlton E. Morse shows his I-Love-A-Mystery-style in this three-part adventure. On an uninhabited island on the Canadian pacific coast, Captain Bart Friday and Skip Turner are on an intelligence mission for the military. Chapter 1 of 3. Syndicated. (26:34)

**ADVENTURES BY MORSE** (1944) "A Coffin for the Lady." Chapter 2 of 3. Syndicated. (24:16)

**ADVENTURES BY MORSE** (1944) "A Coffin for the Lady." Chapter 3 of 3. Syndicated. (26:01)

**ONE MAN'S FAMILY** (4-26-51) Book 85, Chapter 4: "Nicky asserts himself." Miles Labs, NBC. (14:50)

**ONE MAN'S FAMILY** (4-27-51) Book 85, Chapter 5: "Joan takes matters into her own hands." Miles Labs, NBC. (14:38) *Note: Chapters 6 and 7 of Book 85 are missing from our collection, but the story picks up with Chapter 8 next week on Those Were The Days.*

**PLEASE STAND BY — A History of Radio** (1986) Lesson 5: **Law and Order.** The Radio Act of 1927 was the first real attempt to govern broadcasting, creating the Federal Radio Commission to administer the new law and to bring order out of chaos. (30:00)

**SATURDAY, JULY 13th**

**MY FAVORITE HUSBAND** (1940s) Lucille Ball and Richard Denning star as Liz and George Cooper. Liz borrows the new neighbor's baby to make George look like a family man for a prospective employer. AFRS rebroadcast. (23:46)

**ACADEMY AWARD** (9-11-46) "Shadow of a Doubt" starring Joseph Cotten and June

Vincent with Jeff Chandler in a radio version of the 1943 Alfred Hitchcock film. A young girl slowly comes to realize that her beloved uncle is really a murderer. House of Squibb, CBS. (30:00)

**ONE MAN'S FAMILY** (5-2-51) Book 85, Chapter 8: "Clifford and Toots." Miles Labs, NBC. (14:55)

**ONE MAN'S FAMILY** (5-3-51) Book 85, Chapter 9: "Joan's plan for her apartment." Miles Labs, NBC. (14:46)

**SPOTLIGHT REVUE** (6-18-48) Spike Jones and his City Slickers star with Dorothy Shay, the "Park Avenue Hillbilly" in a program of music, mirth and madness. Featured are George Rock, Sir Frederick Gas, and Doodles Weaver as Professor Feedlebaum with the William Tell Overture. Guest is singer Buddy Clark. Coca-Cola, CBS. (29:23)

**INNER SANCTUM** (6-19-45) "Dead Man's Holiday" starring Myron McCornick. A man is told that he has been dead for six years. Lipton Tea, CBS. (29:10)

**PLEASE STAND BY — A History of Radio** (1986) Lesson 6: **Days of Discord** reviews a 25-year period in radio's history marked by disputes and disruption over the use of live and recorded music. (30:00)

**SATURDAY, JULY 20th**

**JIMMY DURANTE SHOW** (4-7-48) The Schnozz himself is joined by Peggy Lee, Alan Reed, Howard Petrie, Roy Bargy and the orchestra and guest Dorothy Lamour. Jimmy wants Dorothy to run for president of the United States. Rexall, NBC. (29:09)

**SUSPENSE** (12-7-50) "After the Movies" starring Ray Milland with Cathy Lewis and William Conrad. A juror finds a large sum of money attached to a note asking for a hung jury. Auto-Lite, CBS. (29:00)

**ONE MAN'S FAMILY** (5-4-51) Book 85, Chapter 10: "Joan cancels a date." Miles Labs, NBC. (14:50)

**ONE MAN'S FAMILY** (5-7-51) Book 85, Chapter 11: "The boy in the case." Miles Labs, NBC. (14:45)

**GREAT GILDERSLEEVE** (1-18-50) Harold Peary stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve, with Walter Tetley, Mary Lee Robb, Lillian Randolph, and Cathy Lewis. Gildy needs an excuse to get his nurse-girlfriend over for dinner. Kraft Foods, NBC. (30:30)

**HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE** (6-10-48) "The Devil and Daniel Webster" starring Alan Reed and John McIntire. A luckless farmer bargains his

**Chuck Schaden's**  
**THOSE WERE THE DAYS**  
 WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 P.M.

**JULY 1996**

soul away to the devil for seven years of prosperity. Host is James Hilton. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (29:12)

**PLEASE STAND BY — A History of Radio** (1986) Lesson 7: **Growing Pains**, showing how advertisers, who had not warmed to small, individual groups of radio listeners scattered around the country, found new interest in the medium when networks made available audiences that stretched from coast to coast. With the emergence of networks, the struggling radio industry began to prosper. (30:00)

**SATURDAY, JULY 27th**

**FLYWHEEL, SHYSTER AND FLYWHEEL** (1994) The final program in the 18-part series of re-enactments of the 1932 Marx Brothers radio show. Michael Roberts stars as Groucho Marx as Waldorf T. Flywheel, with Frank Lazarus as Chico Marx as Emmanuel Ravelli, with Lorelei King as Miss Dimple. BBC. (27:25)  
**THE WHISTLER** (7-9-43) "Eye For an Eye." A scientist traps four people he suspects of murdering his brother. Sustaining, CBS. (29:00)

**ONE NIGHT STAND #431** (11-19-44) "The gay rhythms of Gay Claridge and his orchestra" in a remote broadcast from Chicago's Chez Paree night club. Vocals by Jack Milton. Selections include "Dance with a Dolly," and "The Very Thought of You." AFRS. (31:42)  
**BOB HOPE SHOW** (1950s) Guest Richard Widmark joins Bob and Margaret Whiting, Bill Goodwin, Joe Kearns, Sheldon Leonard, Les Brown and his orchestra. Bob tells of his encounter with a bully called Mugs Widmark. AFRS rebroadcast. (24:40)

**ONE MAN'S FAMILY** (5-8-51) Book 85, Chapter 12: "Jack lays down the law." Miles Labs, NBC. (14:50)

**ONE MAN'S FAMILY** (5-9-51) Book 85, Chapter 13: "Toots in pursuit of knowledge." Miles Labs, NBC. (14:45)

**PLEASE STAND BY — A History of Radio** (1986) Lesson 8: **A Word from the Sponsor**, discussing radio advertising from the first record plugs on experimental station 8XK in 1919, through the tentative experimentation of early stations and networks, to its present-day status as a billion-dollar-a-year industry. (30:00)

*...and for more good listening...*

**ART HELLYER SHOW**-- Music of the big bands and the big singers with lots of knowledgeable commentary and fun from one of radio's legendary personalities, **now in his 50th year on the air!** *WJOL, 1340 AM, Saturday, 9 am-1 pm; Sunday, 2-4 pm.*

**DICK LAWRENCE REVUE**-- A treasure trove of rare and vintage recordings with spoken memories from the never to be forgotten past. *WNIB, 97.1 FM, Saturday, 8-9 pm.*

**REMEMBER WHEN**-- Host Don Corey calls this his "four-hour nostalgia fest" with the emphasis on old time radio musical and variety shows, plus show tunes and interviews. *WAIT, 850 AM, Sunday, noon-4 pm.*

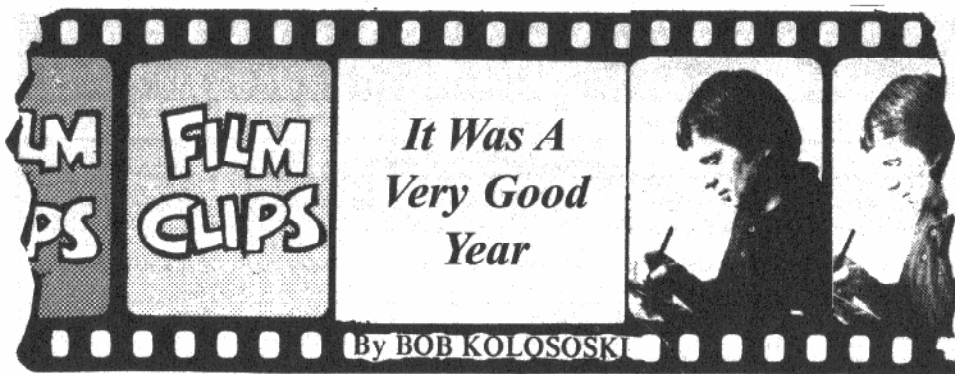
**WHEN RADIO WAS**-- Carl Amari now hosts two, two-hour editions of the series each weekend, featuring old time radio broadcasts and interviews. *WMAQ, 670 AM, Saturday and Sunday, 10pm-midnight.*

*...old time radio in cyberspace...*

Visitors to Chicago writer-newsman **Rich Samuels'** website... <http://www.mcs.net/~richsam/home.html> ...can now take a virtual tour of NBC's state-of-the-art studios in Chicago's Merchandise Mart as they appeared at the time of their opening in 1930. You'll access many unpublished photos and read text based on material direct from NBC's archives. Eventually you'll be able to follow this facility's evolution from 1930 to 1989.

**"When Radio Was" -- WMAQ-AM 670**  
 Monday thru Friday 11 pm - Midnight Host Stan Freberg

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<i>June, 1996 Schedule</i>				
		<b>29 May</b> Lights Out Life of Riley Pt 1	<b>30 May</b> Life of Riley Pt 2 Hermit's Cave	<b>31 May</b> The Shadow Unsolved Mysteries
<b>3</b> Escape Abbott & Costello Pt 1	<b>4</b> Abbott & Costello Pt 2 Boston Blackie	<b>5</b> Lone Ranger Burns & Allen Pt 1	<b>6</b> Burns & Allen Pt 2 The Whistler	<b>7</b> Jack Benny Vic and Sade
<b>10</b> Have Gun, Will Travel Duffy's Tavern Pt 1	<b>11</b> Duffy's Tavern Pt 2 Suspense	<b>12</b> Casebook Gregory Hood Charlie McCarthy Pt 1	<b>13</b> Charlie McCarthy Pt 2 Dragnet	<b>14</b> The Shadow Bickersons
<b>17</b> Gangbusters Aldrich Family Pt 1	<b>18</b> Aldrich Family Pt 2 Dimension X	<b>19</b> Green Hornet Fred Allen Pt 1	<b>20</b> Fred Allen Pt 2 Gunsmoke	<b>21</b> Stan Freberg # 11 Strange Dr. Weird
<b>24</b> Lone Ranger Fibber McGee Pt 1	<b>25</b> Fibber McGee Pt 2 Box Thirteen	<b>26</b> Six Shooter Great Gildersleeve Pt 1	<b>27</b> Great Gildersleeve Pt 2 The Shadow	<b>28</b> Suspense Lum and Abner
<i>July, 1996 Schedule</i>				
<b>1</b> The Saint Burns & Allen Pt 1	<b>2</b> Burns & Allen Pt 2 Mystery In The Air	<b>3</b> Broadway is My Beat Abbott & Costello Pt 1	<b>4</b> Abbott & Costello Pt 2 Dragnet	<b>5</b> Jack Benny Guest Star
<b>8</b> Lone Ranger Johnny Dollar Pt 1/5	<b>9</b> Suspense Johnny Dollar Pt 2/5	<b>10</b> Life of Riley Johnny Dollar Pt 3/5	<b>11</b> Green Hornet Johnny Dollar Pt 4/5	<b>12</b> The Shadow Johnny Dollar Pt 5/5
<b>15</b> Gangbusters Duffy's Tavern Pt 1	<b>16</b> Duffy's Tavern Pt 2 Gunsmoke	<b>17</b> Pat Novak For Hire Stan Freberg #12 Pt 1	<b>18</b> Stan Freberg #12 Pt 2 The Whistler	<b>19</b> Box Thirteen Vic and Sade
<b>22</b> Six Shooter Charlie McCarthy Pt 1	<b>23</b> Charlie McCarthy Pt 2 Sgt. Preston of Yukon	<b>24</b> Suspense Fibber McGee Pt 1	<b>25</b> Fibber McGee Pt 2 Damon Runyon Theatre	<b>26</b> Lone Ranger Lum and Abner
<b>29</b> The Shadow Great Gildersleeve Pt 1	<b>30</b> Great Gildersleeve Pt 2 Hermit's Cave	<b>31</b> Boston Blackie Our Miss Brooks Pt 1		



## It Was A Very Good Year

By BOB KOLOSOSKI

### The THIRTIES

Major stars on the horizon in 1936 would have missed their chance at cinematic immortality. At the head of that list is Humphrey Bogart who played Duke Mantee "the world-famous killer" in *The Petrified Forest*. Without that career boost, he would never have signed a Warner Bros. contract and George Raft might have played Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon* and, in a case of real off-beat casting, first-choice Ronald Reagan would have become Rick in *Casablanca!*

Deanna Durbin's star might have flickered out without her feature film debut in *Three Smart Girls*. So successful and pivotal was that film that the profits from her next four projects, including *100 Men and a Girl*, saved Universal Studios from bankruptcy.

And, if 1936 never existed, we would not have enjoyed all the jokes and fun poked at Dorothy Lamour and her sarong in *The Jungle Princess*. Alice Faye fans would have been denied the pleasure of her breakthrough film if *One The Avenue* was suspended in the 1936 blackout and Tyrone Power's career might never have materialized. He was signed by Fox specifically to co-star in *On The Avenue* (although he ended up starring in *Lloyds of London* instead). If 1936 had been bleeped he

wouldn't have been considered for either role and then what dashing swashbuckler would Darryl Zanuck have chosen to enliven *The Mark of Zorro* and dozens of other great movies?

Similarly, Henry Fonda's movie career would have ground to a halt if 1936 was spaced out because his first big hit was *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, which led to his being cast in four 1937 productions. (And it is hard to imagine anyone else as Mr. Roberts.)

Fortunately for us stargazers, there wasn't a warp in time and 1936 arrived on schedule with the

cameras rolling as planned in Hollywood.

It was a great year on Broadway as well, because several plays that opened in 1936 went on to become memorable movies. These included *The Women*, *You Can't Take It with You*, *Brother Rat*, *Stage Door*, *Idiot's Delight*, *Night Must Fall*, and *Tovarich*. They were all filmed within three years of their 1936 Broadway openings.

On the publishing front, several books debuted in 1936 and were eventually made into major motion pictures. *Drums Along the Mohawk* was an exciting account of the American colonists' struggle to survive hostile elements and savage Indians. It was directed by John Ford and shot in the state of Utah (substituting for upper New York state). A huge wooden fort was erected and was required by the state authorities to be



SHIRLEY TEMPLE: NUMBER 1 AT THE BOX OFFICE

demolished at the end of shooting. Ford seized the opportunity for a spectacular ending and wrote in the burning of the fort as part of an Indian attack.

Authors Norduff and Hall were household names in 1936 because of their book *Mutiny on the Bounty* published several years earlier. They published *The Hurricane* in 1936 and promptly sold the film rights to Samuel Goldwin who funneled a fortune into special effects and blew the competition away at the box office. Hundreds of Hawaiians were hired as extras and were told to climb to the top of palm trees and tie themselves to the trees to escape the tidal waves. A few years later the same Hawaiians had to repeat the maneuver when a real tidal wave swept their island.

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## IT WAS A VERY GOOD YEAR

The most famous book published in 1936, and the one to cause the most ripples in the Hollywood current, was *Gone With the Wind*. Margaret Mitchell's runaway best seller was purchased by producer David O. Selznick soon after its publication. It took three years and dozens of ulcers to bring it to the big screen, but it was worth the wait.

Perhaps the most impressive film of 1936 was not a feature made in Hollywood, USA, but rather a documentary shot at the summer Olympics in Berlin, Germany by the woman director Leni Riefenstahl. *Olympia* was a not-too-subtle celebration of the Nazi ideology presented to the world through brilliant filmmaking. It is a classic piece of cinema.

Back in America, the public decided to spend its movie dollars on a variety of

Hollywood fare. The stars who topped the money-making list in 1936 were (in order of drawing power):

1. Shirley Temple
2. Clark Gable
3. Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers
4. Robert Taylor
5. Joe E. Brown
6. Dick Powell
7. Joan Crawford
8. Claudette Colbert
9. Jeanette MacDonald
10. Gary Cooper

Although Claudette Colbert was not Number One at the Box Office, she was Number One with the Internal Revenue Service, because she was the highest paid person in America that year.

Ginger Rogers may have netted the most tabloid publicity in 1936 when it was revealed that she had received several death threats from an unknown person. She went into hiding for two weeks protected by a bevy of bodyguards hired to guard her body. Nice work! The local police and the FBI investigated and came up with nothing more than autographed pictures of the star. No one was ever arrested for sending the dastardly notes, and it all seemed to cool off as fast as it had heated up.

The Academy Awards went through a few changes in 1936 with Academy president Frank Capra taking control of the award process away from the studio moguls. Prior to 1936, studio chiefs more or less decided on who would win and who would lose. Academy membership was down but hopes were high that fair voting procedures would reinforce the trust in the Academy. It did

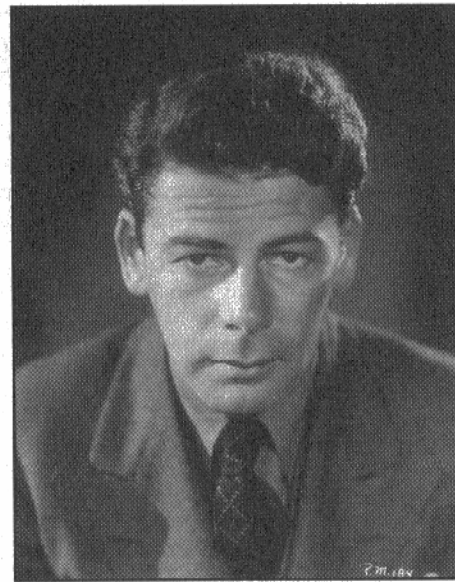


GINGER ROGERS: NUMBER 1 IN PUBLICITY

and the Academy never looked back. That year, Best Supporting Actor and Actress awards were initiated and, for the first time, members of the Academy could vote for foreign films.

Big films seemed to be the norm that year and it almost seemed that the big studios were trying to outbig each other. As usual, MGM had the most films with *A Tale of Two Cities*, *San Francisco* and *The Great Ziegfeld* topping that studio's production list. The latter film won Best Picture of the Year, followed closely by Warner's *Anthony Adverse* and *Story of Louis Pasteur*. Other super films of 1936 were *The Good Earth*, *Dodsworth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*. Paul Muni was voted Best Actor for *Story of Louis Pasteur* and Luise Rainer won the Best Actress award for her small role in *Great Ziegfeld*.

The Awards Ceremonies were held at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles, with George Jessell as the evening's toastmaster. Jessel upset Bette Davis when he forgot to let her present the Best Actress award



PAUL MUNI: NUMBER 1 WITH OSCAR

and did it himself. Later that evening he received a verbal lashing of epic proportions from the agitated Miss Davis.

The highlight of the evening was the announcement by Capra that the Academy had created the Irving G. Thalberg Award, to be given to the producer with the most distinguished body of work in a given year. The MGM producer had died of pneumonia a few months earlier at the age of 37. His widow, actress Norma Shearer, was on hand to approve of the great honor.

Great stars emerged in 1936, great movies were written and filmed and, upon reflection, we're glad that the space-time continuum was not jarred on December 31, 1935.

Because 1936 was a pretty good year. In fact, it was a very good year. ■

Many of the year's best movies are available on video tape. To enjoy your own 1936 Film Festival check out the list on the next page.

CLAUDETTE COLBERT: NUMBER 1 WITH THE IRS



# 1936 FILM FESTIVAL

Here is a list of some three- and four-star movies (according to critic-reviewer Leonard Maltin in his Movie and Video Guide) that will help you if you'd like to have a 1936 Film Festival in your home. Each of these films has been released on video and is currently available (along with Maltin's Guide) at Metro Golden Memories in Chicago.

**ANTHONY ADVERSE**— Frederic March and Olivia deHavilland co-star with Donald Woods, Anita Louise, Edmund Gwenn, Claude Rains, Louis Hayward, Akim Tamiroff, and Gale Sondergaard (who won an Oscar in her film debut). The story of a young man who gains maturity through adventures in various parts of early 19th century Europe. Directed by Mervyn LeRoy.

**BOHEMIAN GIRL**— Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy star with Thelma Todd and Mae Busch in this comic opera about gypsies who adopt an abandoned girl who turns out to be a princess. Directed by James Horne.

**BORN TO DANCE**— Eleanor Powell and James Stewart, with Virginia Bruce, Una Merkel, Sid Silvers, Frances Langford, Buddy Ebsen. Cole Porter musical with great songs like "Easy to Love" and "I've Got You Under my Skin." Directed by Robert Wise.

**BULLETS OR BALLOTS**— Edward G. Robinson stars with Joan Blondell, Barton MacLane, Humphrey Bogart, Frank McHugh. A cop pretends to leave the police force to crack a city-wide mob ring. Directed by William Keighley.

**CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE**— Errol Flynn and Olivia deHavilland co-star with Patricia Knowles, Henry Stephenson, Nigel Bruce, Donald Crisp, David Niven, Spring Byington, J. Carrol Naish. Romantic adventure based on Tennyson's poem, with the immortal charge into the valley of death by British 27th Lancers cavalry. Directed by Michael Curtiz.

**GREAT ZIEGFELD**— William Powell stars as the legendary showman with Myrna Loy (as Billie Burke), Luise Rainer (as Anna Held in Oscar-winning performance), Frank Morgan, Fanny Brice, Virginia Bruce, Reginald Owen, Ray Bolger. Spectacular biography with spectacular production numbers, this film won Academy Award for Best Picture of 1936. Directed by Robert Z. Leonard.

**GREEN PASTURES**— Rex Ingram, Oscar Polk, Eddie Anderson, Frank-Wilson and all-Black cast in a fable of life in heaven. Directed by William Keighley and Marc Connelly (who also wrote the story).

**MODERN TIMES**— Charlie Chaplin's last si-

lent film (with musical sound track and effects) attacks the machine age and pokes fun at other social ills and the struggle for survival in these modern times. Cast includes Paulette Goddard, Henry Bergman, Chester Conklin. Directed by Charlie Chaplin.

**MR. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN**— Gary Cooper stars with Jean Arthur, George Bancroft, Lionel Stander, Mayo Methot, Raymond Walburn, Walter Catlett, H. B. Warner. A man inherits 20 million dollars and wants to give it away! Directed by Frank Capra.

**PETRIFIED FOREST**— Leslie Howard and Bette Davis co-star with Dick Foran, Humphrey Bogart, Genevieve Tobin, Charley Grapewin, Porter Hall in this film adaptation of the Robert E. Sherwood play. An escaped gangster holds hostages at a roadside restaurant. Directed by Archie Mayo.

**RHYTHM ON THE RANGE**— Bing Crosby stars with Frances Farmer, Bob Burns, Martha Raye (in her feature film debut). Fun out west with plenty of songs, including "I'm an Old Cowhand." Directed by Norman Taurog.

**ROSE MARIE**— Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy co-star with Reginald Owen, Allan Jones, James Stewart, Alan Mowbray, Gilda Gray. An opera star searches for her fugitive brother as a mountie pursues the same man. Music features "Indian Love Call" and other classics. Directed by W. S. Van Dyke II.

**SAN FRANCISCO**— Clark Gable, Jeanette MacDonald and Spencer Tracy with Jack Holt, Jessie Ralph, Ted Healy, Shirley Ross. Fun, excitement, music and an incredible earthquake climax provide first-class entertainment. Directed by W. S. Van Dyke II.

**SHOW BOAT**— Irene Dunne, Allan Jones, Helen Morgan, Paul Robeson, Charles Winninger, Hattie McDaniel in an outstanding production of the Kern-Hammerstein musical. Directed by James Whale.

**THREE SMART GIRLS**— Deanna Durbin (in her feature film debut) stars with Binnie Barnes, Alice Brady, Ray Milland, Mischa Auer, Charles Winninger in a musical comedy about a match-making young girl who tries to bring her parents back together. Directed by Henry Koster.



## NOTES FROM THE BANDSTAND

### 1936 and the Big Bands

BY KARL PEARSON

The year 1936 was a significant one for the music industry and for big bands in particular. Although the country was still suffering from the effects of the depression, the economy was starting to show signs of improvement. Inexpensive forms of entertainment such as movies and radio saw increased popularity, while phonograph record sales, which had almost bottomed out a few years earlier, was on a steady upswing. The repeal of Prohibition in 1934 changed the live entertainment scene as new restaurants and nightclubs opened up around the country. The nation's ballrooms also experienced a surge in business as customers came out in record numbers to "dance their cares away." The big bands were a significant part of all of these areas.

The several hundred new songs that arrived on the scene during 1936 made the

### The THIRTIES

year one of the best in popular music. Dreamy ballads such as "Moon Over Miami," "Red Sails In The Sunset," "Until The Real Thing Comes Along," and "There's A Small Hotel" became big favorites with the American public. Fun novelty numbers such as "Rhythm In My Nursery Rhymes," "Wah Hoo," "Big Chief De Sota," "Goody Goody" and "I'm An Old Cowhand," helped the public forget their troubles. Moviegoers were treated to songs such as "Let's Face The Music And Dance" from "Follow The Fleet," "You" from "The Great Ziegfeld," "A Fine Romance" from "Swing Time," "Easy To Love" from "Born To Dance," and "Pennies From Heaven" from, as radio announcers used to say, "the picture of the same name." Numbers such as these were a part of the repertoire of every orchestra.

Big band instrumental numbers also enjoyed renewed popularity during 1936. One example is "Stompin' At The Savoy," as recorded by Benny Goodman. Chick Webb's band had recorded the number two years earlier, but with little success. Goodman's was among the top-selling records of 1936. Another instrumental that became popular that year was "Christopher Columbus," recorded by Fletcher Henderson and his Orchestra. (Benny Goodman also recorded a "cover" version of this tune, which sold equally well.)



## 1936 AND THE BIG BANDS

Henderson, a veteran leader who had experienced occasional success over the years, encountered renewed interest.

Perhaps the biggest hit of 1936 was a number recorded by Mike Riley and Eddie Farley's small orchestra. The tune, titled "The Music Goes 'Round and Around," described the various musical effects that occurred when Riley pressed the different valves on his trumpet. The number was recorded by many groups, including Tommy Dorsey's Clambake Seven and Hal Kemp's orchestra. While Kemp's Brunswick record and Dorsey's Victor release sold well, the Riley-Farley Decca recording is credited with saving the fledgling Decca Record Company from financial ruin!

The year 1936 could also be described as a transitional one for the big bands. "Sweet" bands, which played in a much smoother, melodic style, were still in vogue. Hal Kemp's orchestra, with its warm, intimate sound, was very popular with dancers, as was the well-established Casa Loma Orchestra. Although both groups played their share of uptempo numbers, the dancers still preferred the slower, dreamier numbers played by both bands.



FLETCHER HENDERSON

Eddy Duchin, Richard Himber and Jan Garber also experienced a great degree of popularity. And let's not forget Guy Lombardo, the perennial dance band favorite!

A number of new bands came on the scene during 1936. Vibraphonist Red Norvo formed a small group that by year's end had grown into a much larger orchestra. Much of the band's success was due to Norvo, who led the group with exceptional taste, and his equally talented wife, vocalist Mildred Bailey.

Another new group which came on the scene during 1936 was the Hudson-DeLange orchestra. Lyricist Eddie DeLange had originally organized the group, but after several weeks turned to his song writing partner Will Hudson for assistance. Hudson and DeLange, who had collaborated on numbers such as "Moon Glow," co-led the band for brief but successful two-year period.

A young clarinetist and saxophonist from the CBS studio orchestra also organized a band of his own during 1936. Earlier in the year this individual had as-

sembled a small group for a swing concert held at New York's Imperial Theatre. The group, which featured the unorthodox jazz instrumentation of clarinet, strings and rhythm, was the highlight of the evening. Several weeks later the musician was persuaded to form a similar group on a full-time basis, and several weeks later Artie Shaw made his first recordings as leader.

Two groups that had been formed during 1935 experienced their first taste of success during 1936. Tommy Dorsey, who had formed a band of his own during the Summer of 1935, was starting to draw attention to his group. Dorsey had landed a record contract with RCA Victor a few months earlier, and several of his releases were doing well, including his version of "The Music Goes 'Round and Around." The Dorsey orchestra also landed a summer radio series for the Ford Motor Company, filling in for the vacationing Fred Waring orchestra. The programs were broadcast live from the grounds of the 1936 Texas Centennial in Dallas, which gave Tommy greater national exposure. By November of that year the Dorsey band landed a series of its own for Raleigh and

Kool Cigarettes, sharing the microphones with Jack Pearl's "Baron Munchausen" character.

The year 1936 was also a much happier one for the members of the Bob Crosby band. Most of the musicians had worked for Ben Pollack, and after a bitter disagreement, had left Pollack in late 1934. After several months of scuffling, the group reorganized and incorporated, with each member receiving a financial stake in the orchestra. Bob Crosby, younger brother of Bing, was brought in as vocalist and leader. The group landed a record contract with Decca, but the first recordings were in a more commercial vein and sounded uninspired. The year 1936 was a turning point for the Crosby group, as a number of its Dixieland-inspired sounds were finally heard on records. Decca also began to use the group with several of its vocalists, such as Connee Boswell and thirteen year-old Judy Garland.

Clarinetist Woody Herman began his 50-year career as a bandleader during 1936. When composer and bandleader Isham Jones suddenly disbanded his group, a number of his musicians decided to reor-



THE HUDSON-DE LANGE ORCHESTRA with vocalist NAN WINN



## 1936 AND THE BIG BANDS

ganize as a cooperative unit, along the lines of the Bob Crosby band. Woody Herman, vocalist, saxist and clarinetist with the Jones orchestra, became the new leader, and the orchestra made its New York debut during November of 1936.

The radio industry had long recognized the value of big bands and dance orchestras in selling a sponsor's product. During the year 1936 Ray Noble's orchestra was sponsored by Coca-Cola, while Hal Kemp's group helped sell Chesterfield Cigarettes. Jimmy Dorsey's orchestra was heard with Bing Crosby on the Kraft Music Hall, while Ted Weems and his band appeared with Fibber McGee and Molly on the Johnson Wax Program. Ozzie Nelson's group was heard on "Believe It Or Not" with Robert Ripley, and Red Nichols and his band appeared with Bob Hope on the Atlantic Oil program. Other sponsored programs featured the orchestras of Abe Lyman, Paul Whiteman, Horace Heidt ("for Alemite"), Wayne King, and the Casa Loma Orchestra.

Late night unsponsored network opportunities were also available for the big bands. The national radio networks (CBS, Mutual and NBC's Red and Blue) usually concluded their sponsored programming at 11 pm Eastern time, and the balance of the evening's fare often consisted of various dance remotes or "pickups," emanating from various ballrooms or hotels scattered across the country. NBC and CBS carried these "sustainers" until 1 am Eastern time, while Mutual continued their programming until 2 am.

Although eastern network affiliates ended their network schedules at this point, stations in the other time zones continued carrying remotes until their designated signoff. Dozens of hours of network time were devoted to big bands, from locations

such as the Astor Roof of the Hotel Astor in New York City, the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago, and the Cocoanut Grove of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles.

One of the most popular and successful bands during 1936 was the one led by Benny Goodman.

The Goodman orchestra began the year with an engagement at the Joseph Urban Room of Chicago's Congress Hotel. The band's engagement at the Congress was such a success that the initial four-week run became a six-month stay! Nightly broadcasts over WGN, WMAQ and the NBC network brought the band's music to an even larger audience. During March a swing concert was held at the Congress, and the Goodman band shared the stage with Fletcher Henderson's orchestra. (Henderson's arrangements had been an integral part of Goodman's success, and Benny returned the favor by bringing attention to Fletcher's own band.) Another concert was held at the Congress on Easter Sunday of 1936, this one featuring the Goodman orchestra along with a trio consisting of Benny, drummer Gene Krupa and guest pianist Teddy Wilson.

The Congress Hotel engagement ended in May, and the band returned to New York, where it finished up its short-lived radio series for the Elgin Watch Company. The Goodman band appeared made its first film appearance that summer in Paramount's "The Big Broadcast of 1936."

Goodman's fortunes continued to climb as the year progressed. The band landed a new radio series for Camel Cigarettes, along with a long engagement at the Madhattan Room of New York's Hotel Pennsylvania. Teddy Wilson joined Goodman on a full-time basis, and in the fall, vibraphonist Lionel Hampton also joined, enlarging the Goodman Trio into a Quartet.

The big bands WERE big in 1936! ■

# OLYMPICS CENTENARY THE FIRST U.S. OLYMPIC CHAMPION

BY FR. KEVIN SHANLEY, O.Carm

Sixty years ago it was Jesse Owens of the United States who emerged as the star of the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, Germany.

But 100 years ago, at the first modern Olympics held in 1896 at Athens, Greece, it was an athlete from South Boston, Massachusetts who was hailed as the very first U. S. gold medal winner.

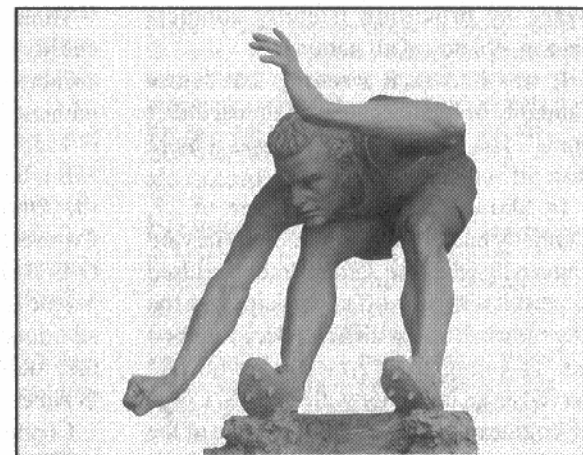
He was James Brendan Connolly, and his accomplishment is even greater in view of the great sacrifices he had to make to achieve his goal.

Connolly's feat as the first U.S. Olympic champion was in the authentic tradition of both the modern and ancient Olympics. The original Olympiad, held every four years, began in 776 B.C. as part of a religious festival dedicated to the god Zeus who ruled over all the other gods on Mt. Olympus in ancient Greece.

The games were held in the sacred valley in Ellis, with 40,000 spectators seated on the grassy slopes around the stadium which measured 643 feet long and 97 feet wide. The first 13 Olympiads consisted of only one race of some 200 yards. Coroebus of Elis, a young cook, won the only race on the program that day in 776 B.C.

Considered by many sports enthusiasts

*The Rev. Kevin Shanley, a staff member of the Carmelite Spiritual Center in Darien, Illinois is a regular Digest contributor.*



*James Brendan Connolly Memorial*

*Sculptor: Thomas Haxo*

"James Brendan Connolly should live forever as an example for the young people of our city. He taught us that self-respect, hard work and dedication to a goal can make it possible for any child to reach a dream. A memorial to James Connolly is a testament to our highest aspirations in academics, in sports—in life, for our children."

*Raymond L. Flynn*

Raymond L. Flynn  
Mayor of Boston

October 31, 1987

as the world's most important athletic contest, the Olympics were held regularly for some 1,000 years. Only the conquest of Greece by foreign invaders brought a halt to the games.

But in 1896 an enthusiastic Frenchman, Baron Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937), revived the Olympic spirit. Through his great efforts, joined by others, the first modern Olympiad was held in Athens, Greece. A total of 285 men from 13 nations competed in the 42 events held. According to the dream of Baron de

## FIRST U.S. OLYMPIC CHAMPION

Coubertin, the modern Olympics were designed to build individual character through athletic training and discipline. Another hope was the promotion of world peace by providing friendly contacts among athletes of all nations.

It was into such a setting that James Connolly of Boston came, or almost didn't come! His journey to Athens was a more than difficult one.

In March of 1896, at the age of 27, Connolly had to quit his studies at Harvard University when the administration refused to permit him time off to participate in the Olympics. It was a difficult decision for a not-so-young Irish American who had served as an inspector with the U.S. Corps of Engineers before enrolling as one of the few Catholics then at Harvard.

"I'm not a vain man," Connolly said to Fr. Daniel O'Callaghan, pastor of St. Augustine's parish in South Boston. "I'm not out for glory. All I want to do is go over to Athens and compete in that sports competition they are having there next month."

Many thought Connolly foolish to risk his Harvard education and chance for future success to enter a then almost unknown competition in far-away Athens.

"Maybe someday I'll regret quitting Harvard," admitted Connolly. "But I have to go. I'm the only athlete from South Boston going over. I wouldn't want to disappoint the people at the Suffolk Athletic Club."

But the risk of losing his place at Harvard wasn't the only difficulty being faced by the intrepid Connolly. Although he was sponsored and somewhat trained by the Suffolk Athletic Club, the group had only limited funds and couldn't even help Connolly pay his boat fare to Europe.

The Boston athlete had saved \$250 by

his own efforts, and thought this would be enough for the trip. Imagine his disappointment, then, when the captain of the German freighter taking the American athletes to Europe announced that the fare would be \$75 more than anticipated.

Three athletes from Princeton University and six more from the Boston Athletic Association were able to pay the extra amount without difficulty.

That left only James Connolly.

But before his dream of participating in the Olympics was shattered forever, Connolly received help from Fr. O'Callaghan, an avid sports fan, and the people of his parish. They helped raise the additional funds. Whether he won or not, they wanted Connolly to have his chance in Athens.

Connolly and his nine other team members spent 16 1/2 days sailing to Naples where he again experienced financial problems when his wallet was stolen. But this was not the major problem.

When the American team finally arrived in Athens by train on April 5, they had planned to spend 12 days in training before the Olympics opened. To their consternation, they found out that the Greeks used a different calendar, and that the Olympics would actually begin the following day! But even this set-back didn't prevent them from joining in the pre-game festivities.

On April 6 at 2 p.m., the first of the modern Olympiads began. The first event was the triple jump, or as it is more commonly called, the double hop and jump. Connolly, the last to participate in the event, sized up the mark of the leader and knew he could do better. To reassure himself, he placed his cap a yard beyond the leader's mark.

With a great effort of 45 feet — three feet and three inches ahead of his nearest opponent — James Connolly won the first-ever Olympic gold medal for the U.S., and

also became the first Olympic champion since the boxer Barasdates in 369 A.D.

"A band of 200 pieces was grouped at the lofty flagstaff in the center of the arena," Connolly recalled years later. "Before I woke up to what the band was playing, I saw a group of San Francisco bluejackets from the good ship U.S.S. Liberty which was in Greece at the time. They were standing at attention and saluting.

"I came wide awake then. That big band was sounding the opening notes of 'The Star Spangled Banner' and two Greek sailors were slowly hoisting an American flag to the top of that high staff. The thousands and thousands of spectators sat or stood in hushed attention.

"It was a moment in a young man's life. South Boston, I though happily, would be pleased to get word of it."

Not only South Boston but sports enthusiasts all over the U.S. rejoiced over the first-ever Olympic gold medal. It was both a struggle and a triumph that Connolly and others could re-tell for many a day.

Connolly's feat, being a first, overshadowed the efforts of another Irish American, Thomas Burke, who later in the same Olympics won gold medals for the 100-meter dash (12 seconds), and the 400-meter race (54.2 seconds).

Following the Olympics, Connolly returned to a hero's welcome in South Boston's Irish community and elsewhere. One wonders if he could have foreseen all the great triumphs for the U.S. that would follow his initial gold medal. He risked much but won more.

True to his nature, Connolly didn't permit himself to rest on his Olympic laurels. He became a noted journalist and war correspondent, in addition to writing 25 novels and 200 short stories. He continued his distinguished career until his death in 1957 at the age of 88. He was a champion to the end! ■



## Our Readers Write WE GET LETTERS

**WILMETTE, IL**— I'm 60 and have been listening to *Those Were The Days* for 20 years. I hope you continue for many years to come. None of the others who play the old shows do it as well as you. Playing the programs straight thru with commercials is the real classy way to do it. You are the GURU of old time radio! —**BARNEY MC GUIGAN**

**EVANSTON, IL**— It really seems appropriate to renew my subscription this month (February) — my favorite radio month. I'm taping practically everything as you haven't played any 1945 Jack Benny programs for a long time (or I would have some of them!). Thank you for listing other stations in the *Digest* because it makes up partially for missing you at night during the week. Hearing Stan Freberg, however good he was in his early years, it is really obvious that your style and love of old time radio fits in so well with your listeners. You always sound enthusiastic and you don't put yourself ahead of the programming. You are our "representative" and you do it very well. Here's hoping we can listen together for many more years! —**PAULA RUEL**

**RACINE, WISCONSIN**— Thanks for the two great articles about my favorite, Stan Freberg, in the April-May *Digest*. I am happy to have voted for him to be inducted in the Radio Hall of Fame. —**EVELYN GOEBEL**

**SAN BRUNO, CALIFORNIA**— Just received the April-May issue of *Nostalgia Digest*. Very disappointed. (Disappointed I haven't been a subscriber for the past 20 years!) Great publication. Thanks! —**ROGER HILL, Nothing's New Vintage Media.**

**GLENVIEW, IL**— Enclosed is my renewal for *Nostalgia Digest*. I sure enjoy reading it because of all the interesting stories and pictures. I discovered your Saturday program about six years ago while flipping around the FM dial. I thought, "I hope this isn't a one-time thing" but then discovered you would be on every Saturday. I had stumbled on a real gem! I also listen at



## MORE LETTERS

midnight on WMAQ now and am glad that all the programs did not disappear from the air. I always listened when you were on WBBM at midnight. —**ROSEMARY ZAMBUTO**

**DARIEN, IL**— It was such a joy to listen to the fine St. Patrick's Day programs that you aired on March 16. Although I had originally listened to some of the programs many years ago, it was such a delight to enjoy them again. As with so many of the old-time programs, they were so well written, and had not lost their great humor. In the name of your many Irish listeners, I'd like to say "thank you." I'd also like to share another pleasant experience of your Saturday afternoon shows. A while ago I was asked to give a lecture in Rockford. I wasn't really looking forward to the long drive from here, and meeting an early schedule. However, on the trip back Saturday afternoon I found your *TWTD* program. It may seem impossible, but the trip back from Rockford was only half as long in time due to Old Time Radio! —**(REV.) KEVIN SHANLEY, O.Carm.**

**(ED. NOTE)**— We extend our congratulations to Fr. Shanley, who recently received his Doctor of Ministry degree from the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois. He is communications director of

### NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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the Carmelite Order in the U.S. and Canada and for the past 35 years has edited a monthly newspaper, "The Carmelite Review" with readership in some 30 countries. Fr. Shanley is a true fan of the good old days. He is a long-time listener of our old time radio shows, a member of the *Those Were The Days Radio Players*, and a frequent contributor to the *Nostalgia Digest* (see page 35 in this issue.)

**WEST CHICAGO, IL**— Thank you for all the grand programming — the many happy memories from childhood and up. When I was little, I listened to Fibber and Molly and since I was ready for bed, I assumed that Molly was also wearing her nightie (and it was pink). Sunday nights were, of course, Jack Benny. We listened to others, but these were special. It delights me that you came to know many of the people who were so much a part of our lives. Thank you for making it possible to greet and thank Jim Jordan, Dennis Day, Gale Gordon and others. And let me tell you, it means something special when you are referring to someone like Gale Gordon (and I'm getting teary-eyed) to know that you are also moved by the memories. Because of your program, another generation delights in the good old radio shows. In our family, Christmas is in December, but February is Jack Benny Month! —**NANCY STROEBEL**

**(ED. NOTE)**— Along with her letter, Nancy Stroebel included a February, 1996 clipping about bandleader Orrin Tucker who, in a fire, lost all the recordings he made for Columbia Records, along with many films and photographs. "Back in 1939," according to the clipping, "Tucker and singer Bonnie Baker were invited to do the first recording session for the newly-formed Columbia Records. (Benny Goodman and Harry James did the second and third sessions, to give you some idea of Tucker's stature.) The tunes, among them Tucker's trademark 'Oh, Johnny!' were top selections on juke boxes around the country. He and his band went on to record 74 sides for Columbia." If you have a Tucker record, picture or film in your attic, Mr. Tucker would be grateful if you'd contact him by calling 818/441-6573 or write to him at 1425 Lyndon Street, Apt. B, South Pasadena, California 91030. We suggest you call or write *before* sending any material.)



### SCENE: The Pearly Gates, on the morning of March 9, 1996.

#### Enter George Burns.

*Standing in front of the Gates is Jack Benny, misty-eyed, with a smile on his face. George pauses in front of Jack and wordlessly puts his cigar in his mouth. He reaches into the breast pocket of his suit and extracts a small elegant velvet box. Silently, Burns opens it, takes a small piece of white thread and places it on Jack's lapel. Burns puts the box back into his pocket and walks away, leaving Benny rolling on a cloud with laughter. Burns puts his hands into his pockets and disappears into the crowd, singing, "There's a love nest... for Gracie and me... and in that love nest..."*

— **Nick Deffenbaugh**

**GRIFFITH, INDIANA**— I found out about the great loss the world suffered today (March 9, 1996) when I tuned in *Those Were The Days*. I think the death of George Burns came as a shock to us all, especially so soon after his 100th birthday. That may sound strange, but for most of us there has always been a George Burns. We've come to believe that he was immortal — that he'd live forever, just as we came to believe that Jack Benny was forever 39. And, in that respect, we were right.

People will remember George Burns for his various accomplishments. Some will remember him as Gracie's straight man in radio and television. Others will remember him as the star of "Oh, God!" I will remember him for the laughter and joy he brought into the world. He was a *star* of stage, screen, radio, TV and life. An accomplished writer, he provided us with over two thousand pages of humor, warmth, sadness and advice. As an actor and comedian he brought us countless hours of entertainment. And even as a singer he gave us humorous and nostalgic ballads such as "All Dogs and Children and Watermelon Wine." I will also think of him as the man who made Jack Benny laugh the longest and loudest.

George Burns was born on January 20, 1896 as Nathan Birnbaum, one of twelve children born to Polish immigrants who settled on New York's Lower East Side. At the age of seven, after the death of his father, he had to go to work to support his family.

Nathan used various names in his early vaudeville career, but by 1928 when he teamed up with an Irish step-dancer named Grace Ethel Cecile Rosalie Allen, his name was George Burns. The two went on to radio and television to enjoy great success. Gracie asked to retire in 1958, so George had to work alone. He once explained, "I

was retired when I worked with Gracie. I did nothing. I asked Gracie, "How's your brother?" and she talked for forty years."

In his book, *All My Best Friends*, George said, "When I find myself looking back, there are only three times I remember crying. When my wife Gracie died, I cried. The second time was when I was playing the Catskills and in the front row was sitting my old partner, Billy Loraine, who I had not seen for a very long time. The third time was when Jack (Benny) died." Gracie died of a heart attack in 1964; Jack died ten years later of pancreatic cancer.

Even with these losses, George Burns continued to entertain us. His didn't believe in retirement. In 1975 he made his first movie since 1939, "The Sunshine Boys" starring as an old vaudevillian in a role intended originally for Jack Benny. George won an Academy Award and went on to make other films, records and personal appearances. He also wrote several books, including one called "How to Live to Be 100 — or More."

His career spanned ninety-three years and he worked in nearly every conceivable area of entertainment.

I share your feeling of loss at his passing, Chuck. He was loved by millions and will sorely be missed. But because of the legacy he has left behind, he will always be with us.

He led a full life, fuller than most people and that is a sure sign of success. The Nathan Birnbaums and the Benny Kubelskys will never be forgotten.

After being separated from Gracie for 32 years and being away from Jack for 22 years, George Burns has now gone to them, perhaps to find that "Love Nest" again.

Bob Hope said this about Jack Benny and I'd like to apply it to George Burns: God keep him, enjoy him. We did, for a hundred years. —**NICK DEFFENBAUGH**



Museum of Broadcast Communications

## museum pieces

Reported by Margaret Warren

So many candidates, so tough to decide. Another election and decisions... decisions... decisions. No, not that one in November! I'm talking about the **1996 Radio Hall of Fame** inductions. Voting is already underway. If you are a Museum member, you are among the lucky radio fans who will decide if Eddie Cantor makes it this year. Or, will this be the year for Bing Crosby to join the ranks? Or William Conrad or Kate Smith?

You get to help choose. Chicago's own Jack Brickhouse is on the ballot as well as former Chicago disc jockey Eddie Hubbard. Boston radio talker Jerry Williams (a former WBBM host) is a hopeful as is Milwaukee veteran Gordon Hinkley.

If you are a Museum member, then you have received your ballot in the mail and you've probably looked over the array of stellar nominees, in four categories, wondering where to place your "x's."

The Radio Hall of Fame Advisory Committee found it no simple task to sift through the names of dozens of worthy radio performers to arrive at this year's

roster. Think about all those great radio performers you listened to years ago and you listen to today. The Radio Hall of Fame honors them. Pretty neat idea!

We often talk about the benefits of Museum membership here in this space and what better benefit for you as a fan of radio than to have a hand in deciding which great stars will receive this honor. Membership is still just \$30. Phone Stephanie Nelson at (312) 629-6024 for full details. There's still time, "polls" don't close until August 1.

This year's big star-studded Radio Hall of Fame induction ceremony is set for Sunday, October 27 with Hall of Famer Casey Kasem coming to town to host. It will not only be a glittering black-tie event to attend at the Museum in the Chicago Cultural Center, but the evening becomes its own radio program as the festivities go out to a listening audience nationwide.

Call the Museum for details.

And when you have a chance, come on down and take a look at all the radio and TV exhibits. Admission is free.



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