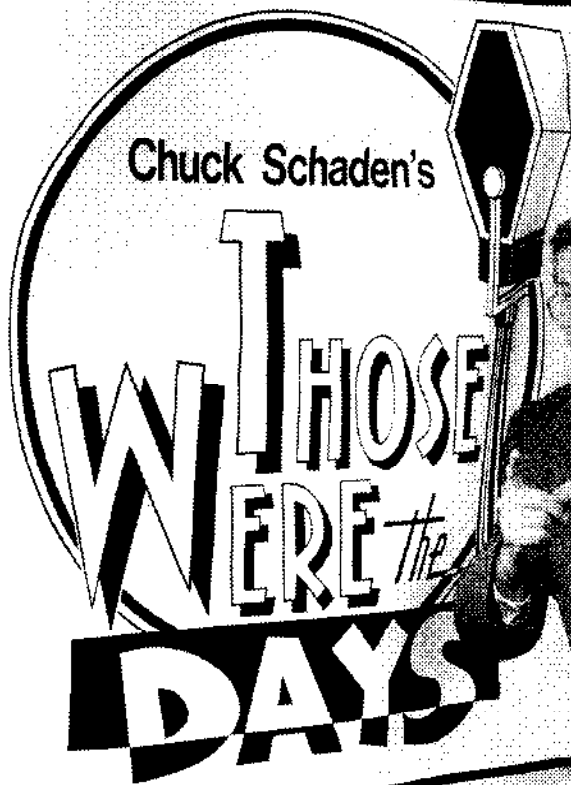


# NOSTALGIA DIGEST®

APRIL/MAY 2000

**30  
YEARS  
OF  
OLD  
TIME  
RADIO**

Celebrating Radio's Golden Age



**Wnib/FM**  
CLASSICAL 97



# Get the Best of *Those Were The Days!*

# CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

BOOK TWENTY-SIX

CHAPTER THREE

APRIL/MAY 2000

The Best of Chuck Schaden's

## THOSE WERE THE DAYS

\*\*\*\*\*  
★  
★ **DON MC NEILL'S** ★  
★ **BREAKFAST CLUB** ★  
★ **60th ANNIVERSARY SALUTE** ★  
\*\*\*\*\*

AS ORIGINALLY BROADCAST  
FROM 1:00-5:00 PM  
SATURDAY, JUNE 26, 1993  
WMB, CHICAGO 97.1 FM

COMPLETE 4 HOUR PROGRAM

Chuck Schaden hosts this program in honor of the 60th Anniversary of Don McNeill and the long-running program he created. Includes:

**DON MC NEILL STORY** (6-22-53) On the eve of the 20th Anniversary of the Breakfast Club, ABC radio offers an informal documentary on the radio life of Don McNeill and the Breakfast Club. Host is Dennis James and, from Hollywood, Chicago and New York, we hear Johnny Desmond, Peggy Taylor, Sam Cowling, Fran Allison, Eddie Ballentine.

**BREAKFAST CLUB** (6-23-53) From the Terrace Casino of the Morrison Hotel in Chicago, it's the program's 20th Anniversary Broadcast starring Don McNeill and Fran Allison. Sam Cowling, Peggy Taylor, Johnny Desmond and Eddie Ballentine and the orchestra. Features include the "Sunshine Shower," "Moment of Silent Prayer," March Time, "Fiction and Fact from Sam's Almanac," and a visit from

Aunt Fanny. Don's wife Kay and his sons visit the program and his mother and father are in the audience.

**BREAKFAST CLUB/DON MC NEILL SHOW** (12-27-68) From the Clouds Room of the Allerton Hotel in Chicago, it's the final broadcast after more than 35 years on the air as Don and the gang say goodbye to their listeners. Featured are Sam Cowling, Fran Allison, Cathy Taylor, Captain Stubby, Eddie Ballentine and the orchestra.

Chuck Schaden presents a program in honor of the 70th anniversary of the long-running radio program that premiered on WLS, Chicago April 19, 1924. **SPECIAL GUESTS**, reminiscing about their days as part of the Barn Dance family are **Maggie Atcher, Johnny Frigo, Rusty Gill, Dolph Hewitt, Patsy Montana, Lee Morgan, and Captain Stubby**. Includes:

**NATIONAL BARN DANCE** (4-30-60) "The oldest, longest, continuously broadcast program of any kind anywhere in the world -- the one and only National Barn Dance!" Master of Ceremonies Bob Atcher and the gang in the Old Hayloft present the final broadcast on WLS after 36 years on the air. Entertainment on this last show is provided by the "Queen of the Barn Dance" Grace Wilson, plus Dolph Hewitt, Tiny Murphy, Lee Morgan, Bob and Maggie Atcher, the Sage Riders, the Midwesterners, Johnny Frigo, Sy Burton, Davy Pitts, Uncle Newt Klatt and the Klattenjammers. The cast of the Barn Dance did not learn until a few hours before the broadcast that this would be the final show; the station was changing to a contemporary music format.

The Best of Chuck Schaden's

## THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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★  
★ **WLS NATIONAL** ★  
★ **BARN DANCE** ★  
★ **70th ANNIVERSARY SALUTE** ★  
\*\*\*\*\*

AS ORIGINALLY BROADCAST  
FROM 1:30-5:00 PM  
SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 1994  
WMB, CHICAGO 97.1 FM

COMPLETE 4 HOUR PROGRAM

Each complete 4-hour *TWTD* broadcast is reproduced on two C-120 audio cassette tapes in an attractive vinyl album. **\$25 each** PLUS \$5 SHIPPING & HANDLING

Use VISA, DISCOVER, MASTERCARD, AMERICAN EXPRESS or check

SEND TO: **TWTD TRANSCRIPTS**  
P.O. Box 421, Morton Grove, IL 60053

## Hello, Out There in Radioland!

It seems like only yesterday when we sat down before the microphone in the WNMP studio in Evanston to do our first *Those Were The Days* program.

Actually, it was thirty years ago, on May 2, 1970.

It was a beautiful spring afternoon. Who could possibly be listening to a 1000 watt suburban daytime radio station that had recently come under new management? We had no idea. Nevertheless, we came prepared with a handful of tapes of old-time radio shows, a fully-written script for the entire three-hour broadcast, and butterflies in our stomach.



Chuck Schaden, WLTD, 1970

PHOTO BY RON YATES

As the second hand on the old clock up on the studio wall approached 1 p.m., we took a sip of water, cleared our throat, and waited.

There was a station break: *This is Cummings Communications, WNMP, 1590, Evanston.*

A montage of vintage radio show openings played for a minute or so, followed by our theme song, "Those Were The Days." The engineer-announcer behind the glass window in the control room, introduced the program, and we were on the air!

*Thank you, Pete Irmiter and welcome to our new series of programs designed to bridge the sound gap between yesterday and today. Today is May 2, 1970... and yesterday was all the great yesterdays of the past. For example, the yesterday when radio was king. And so today, in a salute to National Radio Month, we'll hear a 1934 music and comedy program featuring two pioneer broadcasters: Billy Jones and Ernie Hare... we'll listen to an episode of Ma Perkins from the early 1940s... we'll hear Les Tremayne and Claudia Morgan as Nick and Nora Charles in a complete Thin Man story... we'll present an all-star Pepsodent Show from 1947 starring Eddie Cantor, Red Skelton, Fibber McGee and Molly, Amos 'n' Andy, Vera Vague, Jerry Colonna, and Walter Winchell... and we'll have a few surprises, too.*

The biggest surprise to us was that we got through that first show! But we made it and, thanks to our listeners, sponsors and two great radio stations, we've been on the air ever since.

When *Those Were The Days* first began broadcasting in 1970, our weekly three-hour program was interrupted five times by sports at 1:30, news at 2:00, 2:30, 3:00 and 3:30, all five-minute features from the Mutual Broadcasting System.

By the end of 1970 WNMP's call letters had changed to WLTD ("Your Mutual

## HELLO OUT THERE IN RADIOLAND

Friend in Evanston") and station manager Buddy Black had cleared out the Mutual news and sports breaks for us. In the spring of 1971 we added a fourth hour and were now on the air every Saturday from 1 to 5 p.m. During the 1971 football season we moved *TWTD* to Sunday afternoons so listeners could hear Northwestern Wildcat games broadcast on the Evanston station.

Late in 1972 we added two more series of broadcasts to our schedule on WLTD. We brought old time radio to "morning drive time" with *The Hall Closet* Monday thru Friday from 7 to 10 a.m. and an hour of *Radio For Kids* every Saturday morning at 10 a.m.

In 1973, in what was certainly a flattering vote of confidence, Cummings Communications appointed us General Manager and Program Director of WLTD, a position that would be in addition to our on-air responsibilities. We accepted, but in the long run we were more interested in *broadcasting* than in *managing*, having also started a series

called *When Radio Was Radio* on WBEZ, Chicago, and developed the *Fibber McGee and the Good Old Days of Radio* series that was heard on WGN, Chicago and on 50 other stations across the country in 1974.

In mid-1974 we resigned from the management post at WLTD, but continued with our *Those Were The Days* and other broadcasts on the station. By 1975 we were also producing and hosting a series of five-minute old time radio vignettes broadcast twice daily on WAIT, Chicago; a Monday evening series, *Hall Closet Special* on station WTAQ, LaGrange; and a Sunday evening series, *Old Time Radio and All That Jazz* on WWMM in Arlington Heights.

In 1975, Cumming Communications sold WLTD to a new owner who decided to "clean house" and change the format. Our last *Those Were The Days* program on WLTD was July 26, 1975 after 251 programs (the same day *Radio For Kids* ended after 120 weekly shows). Our weekday morning series, *The Hall Closet*, ended on July 31 after 689 broadcasts.



Chuck Schaden, WNIB, 1990

PHOTO BY CHARLES S. VALLONE

We were most fortunate to find an excellent outlet for *Those Were The Days*. Classical music station WNIB, Chicago agreed to carry our program in the exact same time period — 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday — and that's where we've been ever since. (Our 25-year anniversary on WNIB comes up on September 6, 2000.) The *Hall Closet* weekday morning program moved to WXFM, Chicago on September 1, 1975. The other series we hosted and produced continued on WAIT, WTAQ, and WWMM.

In 1977 our long-time sponsor, North West Federal Savings invited us to be part of their corporate world by becoming a vice president in their marketing department. We were flattered, and we accepted the offer when they agreed to allow us to continue our on-the-air radio work. The marketing position was a serious job which we enjoyed, but it required a great deal of our attention. So we gradually pulled back from our various broadcasts, keeping only *Those Were The Days* on WNIB.

With the early 1980s "merger mania" in the savings and loan business, we decided to leave the financial institution and concentrate our efforts on old time radio. In 1983 we added an 8-11 p.m. Monday thru Friday evening *Radio Theatre* on WCFL to our schedule. In 1984, after WCFL was sold to an

organization that broadcast only religious programming, we moved *Radio Theatre* to WAIT and were on the air weeknights from 7-11 p.m.

In 1985 the WAIT *Radio Theatre* came to a close on December 13 as the station was about to institute a format change. But we moved easily to WBBM on December 16 where we began a ten-year run of *Old Time Radio Classics*, presented Monday thru Friday evenings at 8 p.m. until 1994, then to seven nights a week at midnight.

In April, 1995 we celebrated the 25th anniversary of *Those Were The Days*.

We felt the time was right for us to reduce our radio activity. We had been on the air with vintage radio broadcasts six or seven times a week for most of those twenty-five years and by then had been looking forward to a little more free time and a little less responsibility. So we decided to end the WBBM *Radio Classics* series in December, 1995.

*Those Were The Days*, of course, continued and now we approach our 30th anniversary.

It's been a wonderful experience and we've been fortunate to have been able to turn a hobby into a career.

Our strongest supporters, from the very beginning, have been the listeners of old time radio. You have always been there for us and we appreciate it.

We are extremely grateful to the management at radio stations who gave us a chance, to sponsors who believed in what we were doing, and to family and friends who encouraged us.

We'll celebrate our 30th anniversary on the air on Saturday, April 29th.

And then, on Saturday, May 6, 2000 we'll start our 31st year of *Those Were The Days*.

Thanks for listening.

—Chuck Schaden

## Thanks to our Staff Behind the Scenes

Celebrating Radio's Golden Age

At the end of most of our broadcasts, we usually take a moment to thank those who have helped us "behind the scenes."

These are dedicated friends who are very important to our programs; most of them are or have become fans of the golden age of radio.

They have served from time-to-time as engineers, technicians, production assistants, and volunteers.

Without their help, we really could not have had our broadcasts on the air for these 30 years.

We express our sincere thanks for a job well done to:

Bob Abella	Mary Ellen Little Cooper	Mort Paradise	Mike Stosich
Jon Adams	Rick Garofalo	Karl Pearson	Mark Vail
Carl Amari	Kathy Garofalo	Larry Peters	Alex Wayne
Terry Baker	John Holzer	Patty Schaden Randstrom	Ted Weber
Neil Baskin	Len Kunka	Susan Schaden Sturm	Jeff Weigel
Mary Bolton	Todd Nebel	Gary Schroeder	Larry Youngberg
Dennis Bubacz	Mark Nelson	Koni Shaughnessy	Jim Zarembski
Scott Castillo	Todd Neumann	Matt Sonnenberg	and
Michael Cervone			Ken Alexander





# Thirty Years of Old Time Radio

BY STEVE DARNALL

In May of 1970, the Beatles were still just breaking up, Vietnam was a “work in progress,” and Chuck Schaden was going on the radio to play, of all things, old radio programs.

“I may have had a thousand broadcasts at that time,” Schaden recalls today from his Morton Grove home. “I rolled up my sleeves and was trading like a madman. I traded with anybody who had something I didn’t have. Some weeks I might’ve gotten a hundred reels of tape in the mail.

“I wanted to share them with others,” he continues, “just as a person who collects coins or stamps wants to show them off. I had enough people coming over to my living room, sitting and listening to these shows, and thought, ‘I’m running out of potato chips. Maybe I could do this on the air.’”

Thirty years later, the Beatles are a fixture on oldies station, Vietnam is the stuff of history books, and Schaden — whose collection of shows has grown to about fifty

*Steve Darnall is a freelance writer and actor whose father introduced him to Those Were The Days in 1977. His wife is dedicated to the proposition that because a woman is 35, or older, romance in life need not be over.*

*Portions of this article appeared originally in the Chicago Tribune on August 5, 1999 and are reproduced with permission.*

times its original size— is still hosting *Those Were The Days* every Saturday.

Since making his debut on a small station in Evanston (*TWTD* moved to its current home, classical station WNIB/WNIZ, in 1975), Schaden has showcased the era known as “radio’s golden age.”

Generally acknowledged to cover the late ‘20s to the early ‘60s, it was an age when a cornucopia of dramas, comedies, serials and swing music was available anywhere in America, all for free. Many of the shows and personalities Schaden features — Jack Benny, Bing Crosby, Edward R. Murrow, *The Shadow*, *Great Gildersleeve*, Orson Welles’ “War of the Worlds,” Herb Morrison’s eyewitness account of the Hindenburg disaster — have become history in their own right.

They’re shows, and days, Schaden recalls well: growing up in suburban Norridge in the 1940s, he used “to haunt the radio stations as a kid, long before I thought I would be doing anything like this.”

Occasionally, his father (a banker in the Wrigley Building) would introduce him to local on-air personalities like Ernie Simon (“A funny, zany, off-the-wall kind of disk jockey, for the times”) who doubled as bank clientele. Other times, he and a pal would take a Saturday and head into Chicago, searching radio stations for discarded scripts and sitting in the audience of Chicago-based programs like *Junior Junction*



Chuck Schaden, 1999

PHOTO BY DON POINTER

and *Curtain Time*. (The latter was sponsored by Mars Candy, which meant “a free Mars candy bar after the show, so you wouldn’t wrinkle wrappers.”)

They’re memories Schaden freely — and sometimes wistfully — shares with his listeners. Even so, he’s the first to admit that he’s living *with* the past rather than *in* it: you’ll never hear Schaden climb on a soapbox to say life was better before we had the polio vaccine or the Voting Rights Act.

“I don’t think anybody really wants to live in the past and say ‘Forget about all this,’” he says. “I think what they would like is the *gentleness* of those times — the simple courtesies. You go back and visit to see what it was, and hopefully, we can try to learn from the past and grab a few values while we’re there and bring them forward.”

It doesn’t hurt that many of those shows, like the whimsical *Vic and Sade*, the realistic western *Gunsmoke* and the long-running dramatic anthology *Suspense*, are still pretty entertaining decades after the fact.

Other shows may creak with age but still offer fascinating historical glimpses into an era when vaudevillians like Joe Penner, a serial like *The Romance of Helen Trent* (dedicated to the then-risky proposition “that because a woman is 35, and more, romance in life need not be over”) or *Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons* (which took the concept of expository dialogue to an extreme) kept the nation glued to their sets. Shows like *Easy Aces* or *One Man’s Family* may be an acquired taste, but they certainly provide a healthy overview of radio history.

“I’ve hardly met a radio show I didn’t like,” Schaden admits. “I’ve had many radio shows that I’ve liked less than other shows, and there are shows that I know are not anywhere near as popular with the audience but I feel they have to be played. I’m looking back at radio, and this was part of radio, so I’m going to play it. I know in advance I’m doing it for the greater glory of radio.”

Schaden cites *The Chicago Theater of the Air* as an example. Devoted mainly to light operettas, the show was “hampered by a lengthy speech in the middle of it all by [then-*Chicago Tribune* publisher] Colonel Robert R. McCormick, [who] speaks on the radio like he’s speaking at a banquet after everyone’s had cigars and brandy. It’s the longest 10 minutes...”

“But you have to play that show once in a while,” he says, “because it’s part of Chicago history and part of radio history.”

One might suggest that after three decades on the air, Schaden could say the same thing about *Those Were The Days*. In this era of shock-jocks, broadcast mergers, narrowcasting and baffling format changes (all-sports-talk?), *TWTD* has been a calm eye in the radio hurricane.

In the process, Schaden has enjoyed a longer run than practically any of the shows he features. Of course, a lot of that has to

## THIRTY YEARS

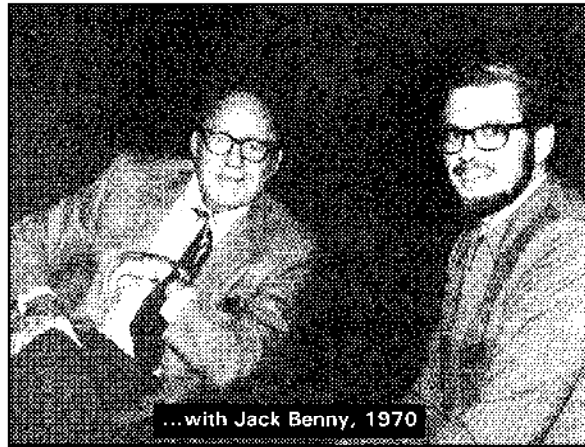
do with the shows themselves, but Schaden's engaging personality is a vital component.

"Chuck is infectious in that his interest in and enthusiasm for the subjects he's talking about, it just explodes through the radio," says Bruce DuMont, a longtime friend of Schaden's and the founder and President of the Museum of Broadcast Communications (and host of WLS Radio's *Beyond The Beltway*).

"There are programs that play old-time radio shows in other markets around the country. What's missing from those programs is the spark, the word pictures that Chuck creates. He's able to provide the context of those programs."

"I think what he did surrounding the 50th anniversary of World War II may be one of the most interesting and historically significant projects ever created for radio," DuMont says, referring to a four-year period (December 1991 to September 1995) when *TWTD* looked back at World War II, one week at a time. "It wasn't a quick, slapdash, 13-week series: you relived World War II!

"Chuck Schaden is on the radio and he



...with Jack Benny, 1970

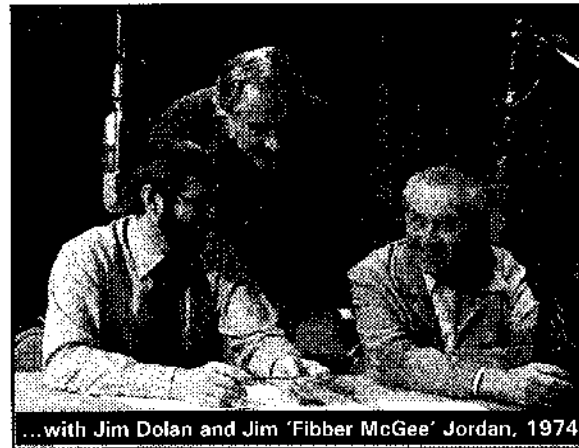
performs a service, and he loves being on the radio, but he's not on the radio to fulfill some ego need," DuMont continues. "He is on the radio to express his knowledge of radio history and he wants other people to be as excited about what he's excited about. I think that's one of the reasons he's been so successful. Here's a guy who loves his job, he loves what he talks about, and I think that's why people have so much affection for him."

"I knew before I went on the radio that I did not have the talent to be a disk jockey or an announcer," Schaden admits. "What I had, if anything, was the ability to communicate my enthusiasm for the subject. When it came time to do this I thought 'Well, maybe there'll be people who never heard these [shows]. I'm going to tell them a little bit about them.' What I've always tried to do is first, entertain; second, inform."

Whenever possible, Schaden has provided additional insight into those shows by interviewing the people who worked on them. Along the way, he's spoken to legendary performers like Jack Benny, Edgar Bergen, Rudy Vallee, and Jim Jordan, but he's also talked with producers, writers, musicians, band leaders, sound-effects men and veteran character actors like Lurene



...with Joan Benny and writer George Balzer, 1992



...with Jim Dolan and Jim 'Fibber McGee' Jordan, 1974

Tuttle, Parley Baer and Elliott Lewis.

"It was very satisfying for me in the beginning to play a program for you to hear," Schaden says, "but that wore off for me quickly. I wanted to know more about it. I wanted to tell you more about it."

Schaden recalls that not every subject came before the microphone willingly. "There were a few people who came to the interview thinking 'Oh, God, it's going to be another interview with somebody who doesn't know a thing about my career and I have to put up with this because I'm appearing in some play here.' And then, as they found out that I knew what I was talking about and I was asking questions that were appropriate to their careers and knew something about them, they warmed up and gave me wonderful interviews."

Such research is especially valuable when one realizes that actors of that era—many of whom are no longer with us—rarely received on-air credit, let alone recordings of their efforts. Actress Shirley Bell Cole, radio's *Little Orphan Annie* in the 1930s, recalls that "we never had access to copies of the program all the years that we worked."

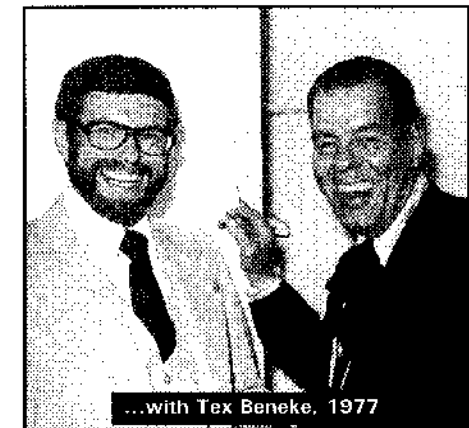
That changed for Cole decades later when Schaden "was nice enough to send me copies of maybe three or four tapes of

the *Annie* show that he had. He just sent them. I never could track them down. To have those tapes... they're priceless."

DuMont remembers receiving an even greater gift in the early-1980s. "[Chuck's] donation of his 50,000 hours of radio was, without question, the most significant early contribution made to the Museum," he recalls. "He wanted to have it preserved in one place, but he [also] wanted to be able to share it with his audience for

the rest of his life... As the Radio Hall of Fame evolved, Chuck was very much involved with that. In building the exhibit that we have, he's been there, and his fans have been there to provide funding for the creation of the Jack Benny exhibit, the Fibber McGee and Molly exhibit... He has intertwined a radio career, a successful business career, a philanthropic civic involvement career, into one terrific package."

Would it be a cliché to suggest that beside every successful man is a great woman? Schaden is quick to give credit to Ellen, his wife of almost forty-four years, for her support since day one of *Those Were The Days*. He recalls when, in 1974, he decided to leave his day job as a community



...with Tex Beneke, 1977

## THIRTY YEARS

newspaper editor and try to make a living from his radio work and from some free lance public relations clients. "The real key to all of that was my wife. I said, 'This is what I'd like to do, I think I can do this. We might be tight for a long time, or for a little time,' and she said 'Go for it.' I've always had that encouragement."

Bruce DuMont says, "I frequently say to Ellen, 'The other side of this is somebody's going to do a story about *you* someday. You have had a husband who, for thirty years, has avoided every single chore that everybody else has got to do on a Saturday afternoon!'"

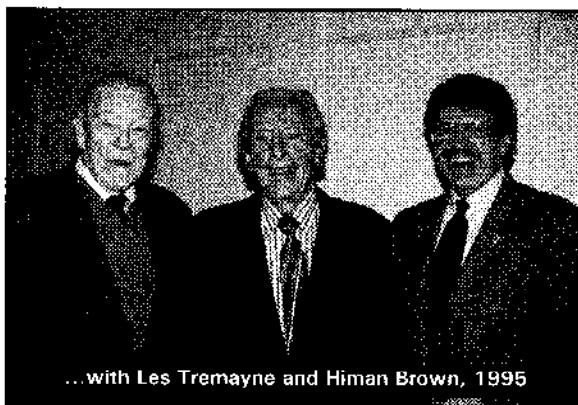
Since 1987, Schaden has avoided his weekend chores by broadcasting from the Museum's Radio Hall of Fame Studio making him, as he jokes, "a museum piece."

Although the public is welcome to visit the studio while *TWTD* is on the air,



Ellen and Chuck Schaden, 1999

PHOTO BY DON POINTLER



...with Les Tremayne and Himan Brown, 1995

Schaden's not far off when he sums up the scene as "a guy sitting behind a microphone, across from an engineer playing tapes, near a guy answering phones. There's not a lot to see."

Even so, "Some people come in and spend ten minutes, some people come in and spend two hours. It always amazes me, though, as the guy up there doing the show, that people come in five minutes before the end of a tape and they hear the end of an old show, and then they hear me talking about the show for a minute or two, and then I have a commercial. And at the point where I start the commercial, people get up and walk out!"

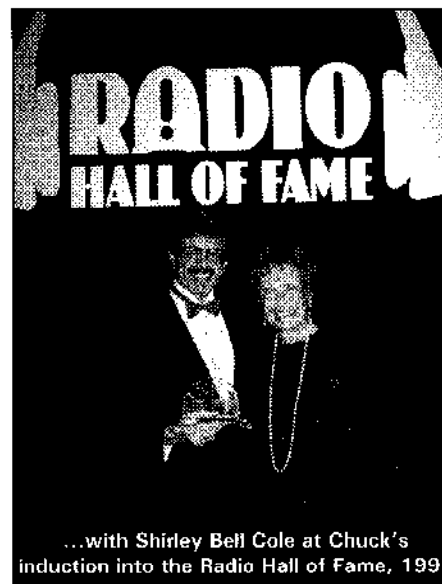
When they do, however, they're greeted by the banner commemorating Schaden's 1993 induction into the Museum's Radio Hall of Fame. It's a reminder that over the span of three decades, Schaden's gone from being a hobbyist to a successful entrepreneur (his Metro Golden Memories store, devoted to nostalgic merchandise, is in its 24th year of business) and a respected radio historian.

He's seen the old shows embraced by people who weren't even born when *Suspense* and *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* (generally acknowledged as the last exhibits of radio's golden age) went off the air in 1962. Clearly, for Schaden, these are the days, and there's no end in sight.

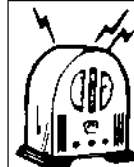


...with Willard 'Gildersleeve' Waterman 1993

"I'm a neat"—read that as *tidy*—"guy," he says. "When I do the first show of the 31st year, I'm committing myself to 35 years. I would be real unhappy to do thirty-one and a half years. I'm delighted to be here. I've gotten a sense of value in this community. I don't ever want to give this up." ■



...with Shirley Bell Cole at Chuck's induction into the Radio Hall of Fame, 1993



## HERE ARE SOME LONG-RUNNING OLD TIME RADIO PROGRAMS

- 5 YEARS**
- Life of Riley
- Life with Luigi
- Lights Out
- 6 YEARS**
- Abbott and Costello
- 8 YEARS**
- Jimmy Durante
- Phil Harris and Alice Faye
- 10 YEARS**
- Ozzie and Harriet
- 11 YEARS**
- Inner Sanctum
- Red Skelton
- 13 YEARS**
- Mr. District Attorney
- 16 YEARS**
- Fred Allen
- Eddie Cantor
- Dr. Christian
- Rudy Vallee
- 18 YEARS**
- Bergen and McCarthy
- Burns and Allen
- Cavalcade of America
- First Nighter
- Great Gildersleeve
- 19 YEARS**
- Bob Hope
- 20 YEARS**
- Suspense
- 21 YEARS**
- Lux Radio Theatre
- 22 YEARS**
- Fibber McGee and Molly
- 23 YEARS**
- Gangbusters
- Jack Benny
- 25 YEARS**
- Bing Crosby
- 27 YEARS**
- One Man's Family
- 30 YEARS**
- Those Were The Days
- Voice of Firestone
- 31 YEARS**
- Amos 'n' Andy
- 35 YEARS**
- Breakfast Club



# Hard-Boiled Radio

BY RICHARD W. O'DONNELL

Sure, radio had its share of hard-boiled detectives. And their shows attracted large audiences every week.



But the truth of the matter was radio's tough private eyes weren't as rough and tumble as their press releases made them out to be.

In fact, they were more soft-boiled than anything else. In the movies, Marlowe, Spade and Company could get away with their rugged shenanigans once or twice a year.

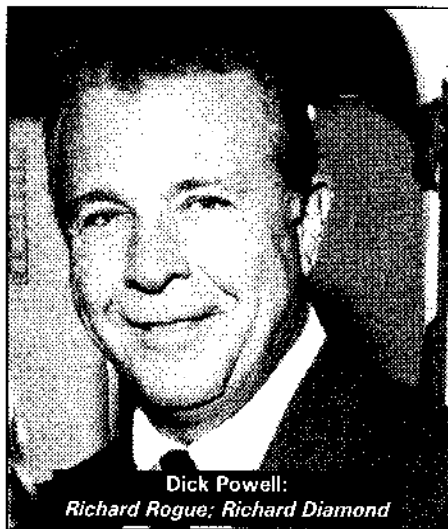
On radio, these two-fisted sleuths had to drop by your house for a half-hour every week. And who wants a battered and bruised specimen coming by regularly, especially one who snarls at senior citizens, picks on pretty females, and is liable to slug every second person who comes his way?

Radio's private eyes, no matter how tough they claimed to be, had to ooze charm whether they liked it or not.

Take Dick Powell. In his celebrated 1944 film, *Murder My Sweet*, the former crooner was mugged, drugged and slugged before he was able to toss a few punches and catch the murderer. Powell was a great Philip Marlowe on screen, but he had to calm down when he played private eyes on radio during its glory years.

For two years on the Mutual network, Powell starred in *Rogue's Gallery*. He was Richard Rogue, a private detective who vaguely resembled Philip Marlowe, except for the fact he had gone to charm school.

*Richard W. O'Donnell is a free-lance writer from Port Richey, Florida.*



Dick Powell:  
*Richard Rogue; Richard Diamond*

Then, in 1949, Powell launched *Richard Diamond, Private Detective*, which lasted, mostly on NBC, until 1952.

Diamond solved all his cases. No doubt about that. And he was tough every once in a while. Mostly, he was "happy-go-lucky," as one critic described him. On the show Powell usually celebrated nabbing a villain by singing a song from one of his old Warner Bros. movies, or whistling a tune. No doubt about it, Powell was kinder and gentler on radio.

Van Heflin, it should be noted, played *Philip Marlowe* on the airwaves during the summer of 1947. Gerald Mohr played the title role when the series came back on CBS in 1948. Most of the time it was on a sustaining basis until it went off in 1950. Marlowe tried to seem tough, but he was really lovable, was kind to children and patted dogs on their heads. Radio's Marlowe lacked the old film gusto.

No doubt Dashiell Hammett turned his radio off when *The Adventures of Sam*

*Spade* came over CBS every Sunday night during the late forties. Bogie probably trembled, too.

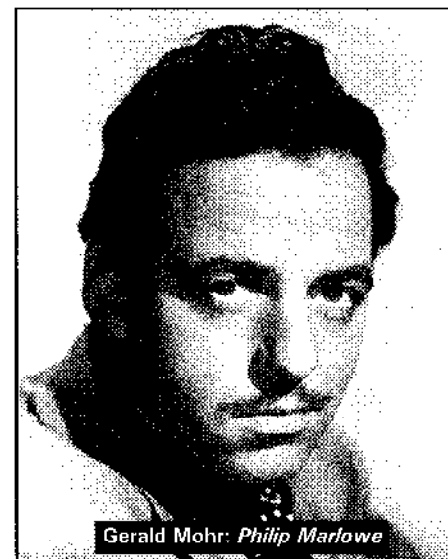
As played by Howard Duff, who had a magnificent speaking voice and was one of radio's all-time greats, Sam Spade was a whimsical soul who led the carefree life, loved chasing skirts and, in general, had a jolly old time before solving the case every week. Radio's Spade was more Duff, by a long shot, than Bogie, and, to be frank about it, he was a wonderful, but definitely different, character. Lurene Tuttle played his faithful secretary, Effie, on the show.

Hammett also created another popular private eye show, *The Fat Man*. It came on ABC in 1946 and lasted until 1949. J. Scott Smart, a pudgy actor with a tremendous voice, played Brad Runyon, the overweight crime solver. The character started out tough, but melted down to a nice guy after a couple of months. Overall, it was a good show.

Jack Webb of *Dragnet* fame had two private eye shows, *Johnny Madero*, *Pier 23* on Mutual in 1947, and *Pat Novak*. *For Hire*, mostly on ABC during the late forties. On both shows, Webb played a waterfront private eye who solved problems for a price. *Novak* established Webb as a



Howard Duff: *Sam Spade*



Gerald Mohr: *Philip Marlowe*

PHOTOFAST

radio actor of top quality. His staccato approach to crime solving lacked the warmth of Powell and Duff, but he was all-heart, when the script required, and it often did. The two shows were primarily primers for radio's *Dragnet*, which later hit the big time when it went to television.

There were a number of popular private eye shows. Remember radio's *Martin Kane*, *Private Detective*, *Michael Shayne*, *Boston Blackie*, *The Abbott Mysteries*, *Affairs of Peter Salem*, and Mickey's Spillane's *The Hammer Guy*? Mike Hammer obviously took a tranquilizer before he went on the air in this one. The show did not last too long on Mutual in 1953.

Two of the private eye shows were exceptions to the rule. They were *The Affairs of Ann Scotland* and *Candy Matson*. Both featured female private eyes. Radio veteran Arlene Francis played Ann on ABC in 1946 and 1947, and she did a fine job as a sweet-talking "quick on the uptake" detective. She tried, but hard-boiled she would never be. Maybe a soufflé.

As for *Candy Matson*, she was played by Natalie Masters in sultry fashion over NBC from 1949 to 1951. Candy was a

## HARD-BOILED RADIO

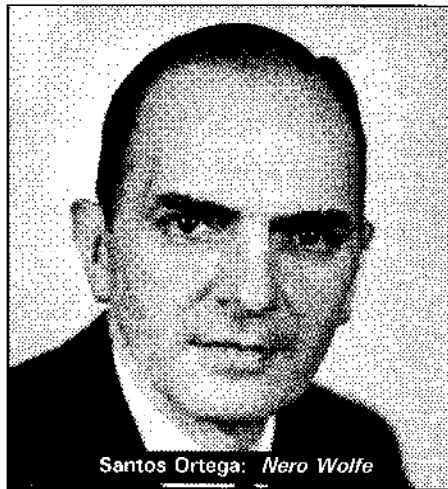
beauty and all the admiring males in the radio cast made that clear. But she was tough enough and always a lady. She was fearless and never let the flattery go to her head.

For some reason, Candy never switched over to television, and that was a shame. Her countless male fans, and there were millions of them, would have enjoyed watching the sexy sleuth on the video screen. Such is life. It was a great show. There is a possibility the TV picture could never have matched the image created by Candy's radio voice. Imagination can be a powerful thing.

Of all the private eye shows on radio, one did regularly feature a hard-boiled sleuth every week. Most of the time, this particular character had a nasty word for everybody who came close to him.

That would be Rex Stout's *Nero Wolfe*, who "rated the knife and fork the greatest tools ever invented by man." Nero could be mighty nasty when his meals were late.

Now it may be argued that Wolfe was not a detective of the Marlowe/Spade genre. True. But he was definitely a private eye and, in his own way, he was as



Santos Ortega: *Nero Wolfe*

hard-boiled as any of them.

It is true the orchid fancier rarely left his New York brownstone, and that his assistant, Archie Goodwin, had to do most of the legwork. Wolfe weighed a ton, and he was probably heavier than that other overweight private eye, *The Fat Man*.

Because of his weight, Wolfe did not go out among the populace. He evaluated all the clues, summoned the suspects to his office, or dining room table, and let the cat out of the bag.

From 1943 until it was last aired in 1951, *The Adventures of Nero Wolfe* was mostly on NBC. Early on Santos Ortega and Luis Van Rooten played the lead. Hollywood's Sidney Greenstreet also played the part for a while.

Along the way, Elliott Lewis, Herb Ellis and Lawrence Dobkin, among others, played Archie.

Wolfe, though he kept close to home, was slugged a few times but seldom tossed any punches himself. That was Archie's department. Nevertheless, Nero Wolfe was a tough has they make them. Never once did he ever abandon his hard-boiled image. He was true to the code. ■

*NOTE-- Tune in TWTD April 8 to hear some hard-boiled radio.*



J. Scott Smart: *The Fat Man*

## The Paperboy

BY ROBERT G. KEMPER

The 1940s are memorable for World War II, the *Lone Ranger* and "road pictures" with Hope and Crosby. I was there for all of those; my window to that world was from Jefferson Grade School in St. Joseph, Michigan, c. 1945.

St. Joseph, Michigan, one hundred miles from Chicago around the tip of Lake Michigan, was best known then and even now as "St. Joe," a vacation area with fruit farms and sand dunes; a vacation spot for Chicago area residents. Even as a child a hundred miles away, I was loyal to the Chicago Cubs, a listener to the "WBBM Air Theatre," and, thanks to my mother, a shopper at Marshall Field's.

One of my recollections of the 1940s is the hometown newspaper, *The Herald Press*.

*The Herald Press* was written, edited and printed on South State Street in downtown St. Joe. I know exactly where their printing plant was because I had to be there at 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and, like Gary Cooper, at High Noon on Saturday.

I had to be there because I WAS A PAPERBOY. I had to be there to deliver papers fresh off the press to the peoples' homes at the twilight of the day. There were about 40 citizens in St. Joe who counted on me to bring the paper to their door each day.

This was a job -- a first job -- a sacred trust, a daily responsibility, a nine-year-old's contribution to the advancement of society. It was also an effort for which we were paid. Yes, there was compensation for riding your bike around town.

*Robert G. Kemper of Western Springs, Illinois is a recently retired newspaper boy.*

I was not the only paperboy in St. Joe in the 1940s; there must have been a dozen of us. My longtime buddy (and still good friend) Bob Gerbel was a paperboy with me. (Today he owns a prominent accounting firm in St. Joe and I have been an ordained minister serving churches all around the country.) But our work ethic, our sense of responsibility, even our frustration with work comes from being paperboys more than 50 years ago. Neither of us thinks being a paperboy was "the best job we ever had" but it was a great job for grade school boys. There are several explanations for the goodness of the job.

First, you needed to understand the bond between a ten-year-old boy and his bicycle. My paper route bicycle was a new one, a middle-price two-wheeler, a Montgomery Ward Hawthorne bicycle with big balloon tires and a coaster brake. I had other bikes, but they were used and broken down -- it was wartime, you know, and parts were hard to come by. After the war every boy in America wanted a new bicycle.

Often "the job" was a great incentive. A boy and his bike learning to be the captain of his ship. Moreover, a paperboy with his bicycle is not only learning adult independence, he is also being paid for the learning. Or, more accurately, he is also learning the joys and burdens of managing money. Gerbel and I, flush with money from our paper routes, might be found at the local soda fountain. I was big on chocolate phosphates, a ten-cent indulgence which, on a hot day, made the pedaling worthwhile.

Of course, we were not only learning the joys of earning money for spending purposes, we were also learning the frustra-



## THE PAPER BOY

tions of the free enterprise system. For example, we were not really paid by the newspaper to deliver their papers. We were paid by our customers to deliver the papers TO THEM. That meant we had to collect from our customers to have money. My recollection is that we usually had just enough "difficult-to-collect-from" customers to keep us economically marginal most of the time.

Here is what we did for our money.

We were assigned routes, and once we were established, we could sell them. I was assigned my route and I kept it until I became a golf caddy. A route was in a more or less confined geographical area of forty or so homes.

We would arrive at the printing plant when the presses were finished with the press runs. We got a bundle of freshly inked newspapers.

Then we must fold each paper. We were taught how to do it "the *Herald Press*" way, but we were not prevented from innovation—if we could find a better way to fold the paper it was fine to do it.

The next part took skill. We each had a canvas bag with the logo of the paper printed on the side. The bag was designed to hang over the shoulder, much as a contemporary computer hangs over the shoulder. (The day of the newsboy on foot walking the streets, as they once did in the movies, shouting out the headlines, "Extra! Extra! Read all about it!" was over. We never did that. Not once. Not even when the war ended.) Our skill was to make this canvas bag with a strap over your shoulder fit on your bicycle handlebar in such a way that the pouch hung down holding all your folded papers.

The folded papers in your canvas bag were heavy, but I do not recall much effort required except where my route took me

up some steep hills. I knew my route very well and could follow the same routine day after day, virtually guaranteeing all my customers the delivery of their paper fifty minutes off the press. Not bad!

The way you delivered your papers was: 1) have the bag full of folded papers; 2) pedal the route; 3) as you flew by the front porch, reach inside the bag, grab a folded paper and then fling it in the direction of the front door. Admittedly, there was opportunity for error in each of steps 1, 2 and 3. However, an experienced and competent paperboy did all those separate steps in one great fluid motion and never missed landing the paper within two feet of the front door with a resounding "flop!" that let the subscriber inside know the paper had arrived.

The experienced, competent paperboy did this at great speed, swooping past his forty subscribers' front porches in about 30 minutes. This speed was important because the route had to fit between the close of school and the beginning of *Superman* on WGN.

Bad weather—it snows and rains a lot on that side of the lake—posed problems. Once in a great while you had to walk your entire route and even less frequently a parent had to drive you around. But I cannot remember any one time when the papers did not arrive on front porches.

Saturday morning was collection day. We circled the route, rang the doorbells and asked to be paid for a week's papers. We often did this in a hurry so we could get to the Saturday afternoon "show," an extravaganza of westerns, cartoons and serials.

The paperboys in that audience knew great satisfaction; they had earned their own money to pay for their admittance, buy a sack of popcorn and a box of Black Crow candy and still have money left over for the gathering at the soda fountain.

Work ennobles boys. ■

# B's, Please

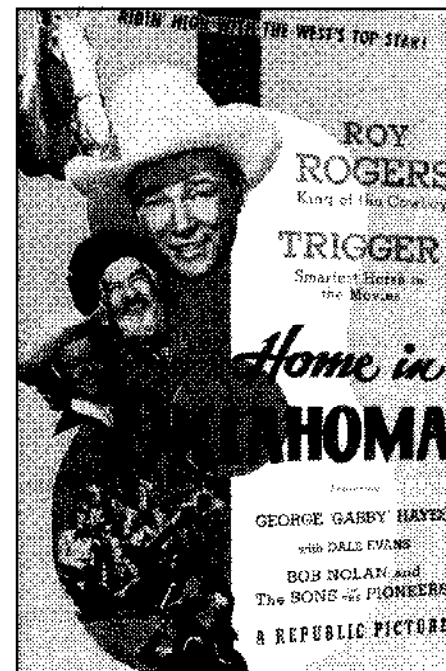
BY CLAIR SCHULZ

A primary benefit of going to theaters years ago was a bonus that many people took for granted: the double feature. A highly-touted A production would be teamed with a B picture that made up for its lack of big stars with fast-paced action, songs, or laughs. For some of us the bottom halves of these double bills were the tops.

During the golden age of movies the major studios like Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Paramount, Warner Brothers, Twentieth Century-Fox, Universal, and Columbia released a plethora of "quickies," black-and-white, low-budgeted films made in less than three weeks which ran for little over an hour. Because a number of the studios owned the theaters where their films were playing (Paramount and Warner's alone controlled over 4,000 movie houses), the moguls figured they might as well use the existing sets and the contract players they had to pay whether they were working or not to produce extra "magnets" to attract people to the ticket booths.

Fringe players on the Hollywood scene such as Monogram, Republic, and Producers Releasing Corporation rarely made it to the big leagues. Their product was almost exclusively B pictures (cynics claim some of their movies merited letters closer to the end of the alphabet). These companies earned profits because they could manufacture a package of thrills or chuck-

*Clair Schulz is a free-lance writer, movie historian and collector from Trevor, Wisconsin.*



CLAIR SCHULZ COLLECTION

les for \$100,000 or less. Republic rode on the steady shoulders of Gene Autry and Roy Rogers through outdoor settings which cost nothing and past facades of carpentered western main streets. At Monogram the Bowery Boys engaged in horseplay before backdrops that changed little from picture to picture. Although PRC had the reputation of being the bottom of movieland's barrel, it could from time to time issue a gem like the film noir classic *Detour* which was shot in six days with a cast of nine. But audiences didn't expect staggering production values from the economy line, just plots that didn't plod.

One of the sublime pleasures of a B pic-

ture was seeing those talented performers who were relegated to supporting roles in trumpeted features finally getting a chance to shine. The best parts of *Hold That Ghost* occurred when Joan Davis clowned with Lou Costello, yet she never appeared with Abbott and Costello again and rarely had such a juicy part in a big picture. But she starred in a number of B's for Columbia and Universal that allowed her to take pratfalls and throw her delectable double takes left and right. To see Joan and rubber-legged Leon Errol cavorting in *She Gets Her Man* might have made people holding their sides from laughter march toward the theater manager's office to demand that *She Gets Her Man* appear first on the marquee because of their unbridled slapstick alone was worth the price of admission. Anyone who remembers the way Joan could utter a funny line with a poker face can appreci-



CLAIR SCHULZ COLLECTION

ate one of her responses in this film: "That was a very intelligent question. Has anybody got any stupid ones?"

Keenan Wynn and Frank Morgan, members of the MGM stock company who rarely stepped into the spotlight, stood front and center in the 1946 fantasy *The Cock-eyed Miracle*. The twist in this comedy was that, while both actors played ghosts, dapper Ben Griggs (Wynn) who died young was the father of the gray-haired Sam Griggs (Morgan) which resulted in amusing dialog like when Ben admonished his son to "treat your father with more respect" to which Sam replied, "Why, I'm twice as old as you."

Hugh Herbert, who was often given little more to do in "A" movies other than to throw in a "Woo-woo" now and then, scored in leading roles in both *Ever Since Venus* for Columbia and Universal's *There's One Born Every Minute* which allowed him to not only drive the action but also provoke giggles with speeches such as "The other side has been robbing you for years. Why not give us a chance?"

In addition to giving the veterans an opportunity to flex their muscles B pictures also served as a training ground for Anthony Quinn, Jane Wyman, Glenn Ford, Elizabeth Taylor, Dan Dailey, Robert Mitchum, Rita Hayworth, Donna Reed, Dennis O'Keefe, Susan Hayward, and other performers who would soon graduate to the A team. O'Keefe demonstrated so much natural ability for physical comedy in *I'm Nobody's Sweetheart Now* and *Good Morning, Judge* that it seems almost a shame he moved into crime melodramas. Hayward, so breathtakingly beautiful in 1941 that she almost stole Republic's *Sis Hopkins* from Judy Canova just with her face, did top the star in one scene by perfecting intoning the Canovaism "You're telling I" after Judy admitted, "I'll be a real dummy."



CLAIR SCHULZ COLLECTION

But the B's that bring back the fondest memories are those which were released periodically as part of a series. The principals usually remained the same; just the villains, bit players, and story lines changed from year to year.

Sometimes the titles didn't even undergo much alteration. If the new movie advertised in store windows was *Spook Busters*, *Ghost Chasers*, *Spook Chasers*, *Spy Chasers*, *Jail Busters*, *Blues Busters*, *Fighting Fools*, or *Feudin' Fools*, we knew Leo Gorcey, Huntz Hall, and the Bowery Boys were on the loose again with their brand of knockabout comedy featuring Hall's inanities and Gorcey's malapropisms.

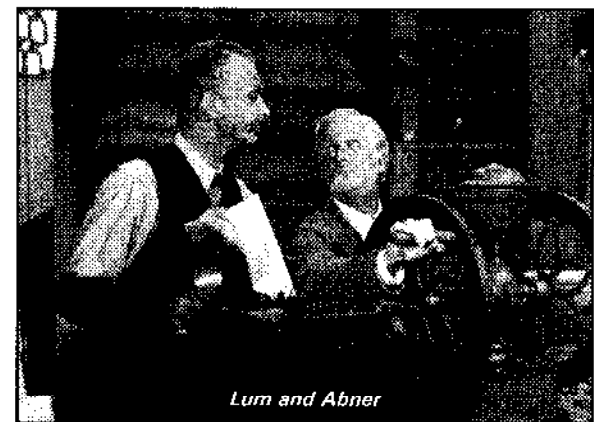
From 1938 to 1950 Penny Singleton and Arthur Lake starred in twenty-eight *Blondie* films for Columbia Pictures. It

didn't seem to matter if the large print on the posters told us Blondie would hit the jackpot, go to college, or take a holiday; we knew somehow she would have to correct the effects of Dagwood's bungling.

Two other comedy series with the name of the main characters in the titles became gold mines for Universal from 1949 -1957. Donald O'Connor played straight man to Francis, the talking mule in six movies before Mickey Rooney took over for the last heehawer, *Francis and the Haunted House*. After the rustic ways of Marjorie Main and Percy Kilbride provided a welcome dose of humor in *The Egg and I*, Ma and Pa Kettle rambled off on their own nine times as they headed for town, the fair, Waikiki, the Ozarks, and other locales.

Because the hijinks of the Kettles and Francis cost more to film and ran slightly longer than most programmers they might be classified as borderline features, but the set-bound productions and formula-written scenarios reveal their true status. Similarly, no matter how exquisitely designers at MGM dressed up the actors and surroundings or how long directors delayed their climaxes, the adventures of Dr. Kildare, Maisie, and Andy Hardy all bore the marks of having been B-stung.

Popular radio shows spawned a few series in the 1940s. Although Jimmy Lydon



Lum and Abner

## B's PLEASE

didn't have Ezra Stone's adenoidal quirki-ness, his Henry Aldrich stumbled through the same kinds of romantic entanglements and clouds of confusion that made each weekday visit with the Aldrich clan a night-marish scavenger hunt. Harold Peary appeared as the Great Gildersleeve in four RKO pictures made between 1942 and 1944. Columbia released eight films in the middle of the decade built around the Whistler who walked the streets by night tingling spines with the eeriest thirteen notes ever heard.

On six occasions the cameras rolled into the Jot 'Em Down Store and each time Chester Lauck and Norris Goff answered the call as Lum and Abner.

The lovers of belly laughs who knew when their favorite characters had returned just by checking the newspapers had no



CLAIR SCHULZ COLLECTION

advantage over the mystery fans who did not have to be great detectives to know a new case was afoot. They loved to tag along with the hawkshaws to see if the crime would be solved with brains or brawn.

In thirteen films Boston Blackie (Chester Morris) proved to be as quick with a wise-crack as with a gun. Sometime Blackie seemed more intent on twitting Inspector Faraday with comments like "those lousy cigars are ruining your wind" than in capturing the crook, but he always delivered the goods along with the gibes.

The Falcon as portrayed by George Sanders and his brother Tom Conway, used more urbane wit and less force than Blackie to crack sixteen cases. Ralph Byrd, who had been featured as Dick Tracy in four early serials for Republic, brought his square jaw and cleft chin to RKO in 1947 for more investigations involving those peculiar characters cartoonist Chester Gould created with hokey names such as Vitamin Flinthcart, L. E. Thal, and I. M. Learned. Ellery Queen sorted out the clues of seven mysteries in just three years. Peter Lorre's tenure as Mr. Moto was also a short one: eight movies for Twentieth Century-Fox from 1937 to 1939.

But another oriental detective, Charlie Chan, stands as the all-time champ of culprit-catchers. His record: 44-0 in bouts with sundry miscreants from 1931 to 1949. Warner Oland, Sidney Toler, and Roland Winters played the imperturbable Chinese sleuth who always had an apt maxim for any situation. The important lesson of this series could be stated as "Criminal who tangles with Charlie Chan like man who wants to serve drinks: both end up behind bars."

Just as for Sherlockians, "it is always 1895" so for many movie fans Basil Rathbone will forever be Sherlock Holmes. From 1939 to 1946 Rathbone and Nigel

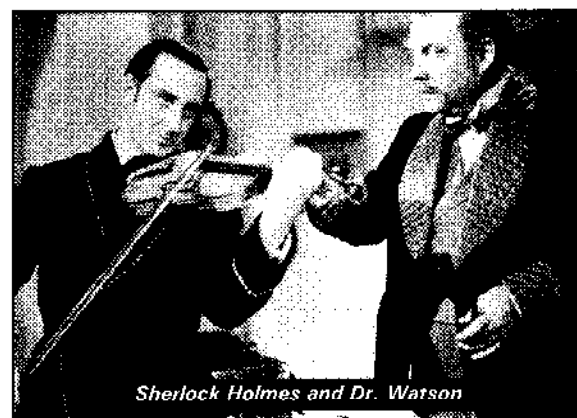
Bruce as Holmes and Dr. Watson battled a variety of foes from the Hound of the Baskervilles to the nefarious Professor Moriarty and wily Spider Woman.

After the first two films made for Fox which took place in Victorian England, Universal brought Holmes and Watson into a contemporary setting where they matched wits a dozen times with Nazis and spies.

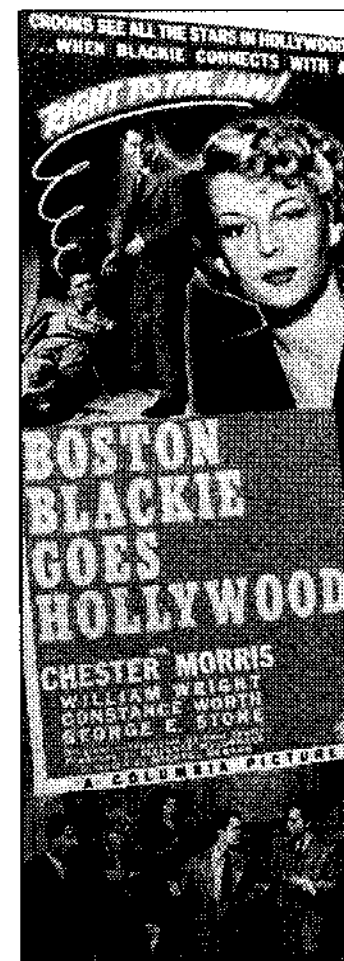
For those who craved more exotic adventure than cat-and-mouse games Monogram delivered a series about Bomba, the Jungle Boy, ex-Tarzan Johnny Weissmuller garbed as Jungle Jim rescued exploited natives and endangered damsels on Columbia's soundstage version of Africa, and Paramount and United Artists saddled up William Boyd sixty-six times as Hopalong Cassidy during the same years Cesar Romero, Gilbert Roland, and Duncan Renaldo were playing that western Robin Hood, the Cisco Kid.

The deluge of B movies that had flowed during the thirties and forties began to dry up after the studios were in essence told, as a hoodlum in a *Boston Blackie* film might say, "I got a message from the feds: 'If you know what's good for you, you better stop playing monopoly and sell your flick joints.'"

Once divested of their showplaces where they dictated booking policy, there was no longer any financial reason for these companies to churn out dozens of pictures in order to fill seats every night of the week. Since the downfall of the studio system many independent quickies have been made, but they don't have the same piquant flavor of those treats served by the moviemakers who followed the motto of Warner's B unit: "Make 'em fast, make 'em loud, make 'em fun."



Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson



CLAIR SCHULZ COLLECTION

And what fun we had. Whoever our favorite characters happened to be, whether they were goofy guys, gorgeous gals, galloping gunslingers, or glib gumshoes, bargain basement movies gave pleasant escapism every week. When they played at our local theater, it was like welcoming old friends back to town. Those films may have been B pictures, but for many of us who loved them they rated an A in entertainment. ■



Chuck Schaden's

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

APRIL 2000

THIS DAY, THAT YEAR  
SATURDAY, APRIL 1st

**LIFE WITH LUIGI** (4-1-52) J. Carroll Naish stars as Luigi Basco, with Alan Reed as Pasquale who plays an April Fool's joke to try to get Luigi to marry Rosa. Wrigley's Gum, CBS. (31 min)

**FORT LARAMIE** (4-1-56) "Lost Child" starring Raymond Burr as Captain Lee Quince of the U. S. Cavalry, with Vic Perrin as Sgt. Gorce. A settler's child is kidnapped in an Indian raid. Sustaining, CBS. (28 min)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (4-1-41) Jim and Marian Jordan star as the McGees of Wistful Vista. When Molly returns from a shopping trip she discovers her car is missing its left front fender. Cast includes Isabel Randolph as Mrs. Uppington; Harold Peary as Gildersleeve; Bill Thompson as Horatio K. Boomer; King's Men; Billy Mills and the orchestra; an-

nouncer Harlow Wilcox. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (30 min)

**YOUR HIT PARADE** (4-1-44) The top tunes of the week as presented by Frank Sinatra, Joan Edwards, the Hit Paraders and Mark Warnow and the orchestra. Kenny Delmar announces. AFRS rebroadcast. (30 min)

**SUSPENSE** (4-1-62) "You Died Last Night" starring Robert Readick and Santos Ortega. In the midst of the Atomic Age, a man meets up with a space traveler from a planet 15 Light Years away. Sustaining, CBS. (23 min)

**MEL BLANC SHOW** (4-1-47) Mel makes an April Fool phone call to his girl friend's father, telling him he is going to inherit a million dollars. Cast includes Alan Reed, Mary Jane Croft, Joe Kearns, Hans Conried, Jim Backus. Colgate products, CBS. (24 min)



Fibber McGee and Molly

SATURDAY, APRIL 8th  
HARD-BOILED RADIO

**RICHARD DIAMOND, PRIVATE DETECTIVE** (3-16-51) Dick Powell stars as Diamond with Ed Begley as Lt. Levinson and Virginia Gregg as Helen Asher. A madman threatens to blow up City Hall unless the Mayor jumps off the building. Sustaining, NBC. (28 min)

**ADVENTURES OF PHILIP MARLOWE** (1-8-49) "The Restless Day" starring Gerald Mohr as Marlowe with Edgar Barrier, Virginia Gregg, John Dehner, Jack Moyles. A cosmetics manufacturer is convinced he's the victim of a murder attempt. Sustaining, CBS. (30 min)

**CANDY MATSON** (1950) "Symphony of Death" starring Natalie Masters as Candy, a tough and beautiful San Francisco private detective who tries to help a composer who is waiting to die. Sustaining, NBC West Coast. (28 min)

**THE FAT MAN** (1-17-51) "The Nightmare Murder" stars J. Scott Smart as Brad Runyon. A mystery writer hires the Fat Man to find out whether or not he -the writer- is a murderer. Buick, ABC. (29 min)

**PAT NOVAK FOR HIRE** (4-16-49) Jack Webb is Novak, a San Francisco waterfront trouble-shooter. Novak becomes the prime suspect in a murder case. Cast includes Raymond Burr as Inspector Hellman and Tudor Owen as Jocko Madigan. AFRS rebroadcast. (30 min)

**ADVENTURES OF SAM SPADE** (6-19-49) "The Apple of Eve Caper" starring Howard Duff. Sam gets knocked out while trying to prevent two "ladies" from fighting. Lurene Tuttle is Effie. Wildroot Cream Oil, CBS. (28 min)

SATURDAY, APRIL 15th  
REMEMBERING RUDY VALLEE

**RUDY VALLEE SHOW** (3-4-47) Rudy's guests are comic Dave Barry, singer Jane Harvey, and three radio actresses: Barbara Luddy, Cathy Lewis, Lurene Tuttle, in a "Powder Room" sketch set on the night of the Academy Awards banquet. Rudy sings medleys of his most famous tunes over the years. Philip Morris Cigarettes, NBC. (29 min)

**SPEAKING OF RADIO** (9-9-71) Rudy Vallee talks about his career in a telephone conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded prior to a personal appearance in Chicago. (28 min)

**ROYAL GELATIN HOUR** (3-25-37) Rudy Vallee stars in one of radio's major variety programs. Guests include Tyrone Power, Bob Hope, Flo-

rence Desmond, and Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy who got their big chance on radio by being on Vallee's program in 1936 and 1937. Power appears in a scene from Noel Coward's "Shadow Play" and Bergen tells McCarthy the story of Robinson Caruso. Announcer is Graham McNamee. Robert Armbruster and the orchestra. Royal Gelatin, NBC. (24 min & 31 min)

**BURNS AND ALLEN SHOW** (6-14-49) George and Gracie welcome guest Rudy Vallee. Gracie believes her teen-aged house guest is in love with Rudy Vallee. Maxwell House Coffee, NBC. (30 min)

**RUDY VALLEE AND HIS CONNECTICUT YANKEES** (5-31-38) Broadcasting from the Roof Garden of the Hotel Astor in New York City, Rudy announces the entire program which features such musical selections as "Spring is Here," "I Married an Angel," and "Cry, Baby, Cry." Sustaining, NBC. (30 min)

SATURDAY, APRIL 22nd  
EASTER GREETINGS

**GREAT GILDERSLEEVE** (4-25-43) Harold Peary stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve. It's Easter weekend and a crate of rabbits is delivered to the Gildersleeve household. Cast includes Lurene Tuttle as Marjorie; Lillian Randolph as Birdie; Walter Tetley as Leroy; Shirley Mitchell as Leila Ransom; Earle Ross as Judge Hooker; Dick LeGrand as Peavy. Kraft Foods, NBC. (30 min)

**LIFE OF RILEY** (4-5-47) William Bendix is Chester A. Riley who vows to discipline his son Junior, but gets into trouble himself. Dreft, NBC. (30 min)

**LUX RADIO THEATRE** (5-16-49) "April Showers" starring Jack Carson, Dorothy Lamour and Robert Alda in a backstage story of a family of entertainers and their struggles in show business. William Keighley is host. Cast features Bobby Ellis, Alan Reed, Willard Waterman, Howard McNear. Lux Soap, CBS. (26 min & 17 min & 17 min)

**WELCOME TRAVELERS** (4-12-53) Tommy Bartlett hosts an interview program broadcast from the College Inn of the Sherman House in Chicago. Ken Nordine announces. Proctor and Gamble, NBC. (31 min)

**THE SHADOW** (3-28-48) "Death and the Easter Bonnet" stars Bret Morrison as Lamont Cranston with Grace Matthews as the lovely Margo Lane. Margo buys an expensive hat, but it was meant for someone else. Andre Baruch announces. Blue Coal, MBS. (29 min)



Chuck Schaden's

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

APRIL -- MAY 2000

SATURDAY, APRIL 29th  
Chuck Schaden's  
30th Anniversary Show  
"Thanks for Listening"

SATURDAY, MAY 6th  
RAILROAD RADIO

Celebrating Radio's Golden Age



As we complete thirty years of *Those Were The Days* broadcasts we'll express our appreciation with what we hope will be a very special program.

We'll be broadcasting "live" —as always on Saturday afternoons— from the Radio Hall of Fame studio in the Museum of Broadcast Communications at the Chicago Cultural Center on Michigan Avenue at Washington Street. You're invited to stop in and say "hello." There's no admission charge to the Museum or to the broadcast.

We're working hard to make this an extra-special program and are planning many things to entertain you. We'll share some memories of our thirty years on the air and, of course, include clips from our broadcasts.

Please join us at our studio... or tune us in on your radio... and don't touch that dial!

**SUSPENSE** (4-13-53) "The Great Train Robbery" starring Fred MacMurray as a man with money problems plans to rob a train. *AutoLite*, CBS. (30 min)

**PIONEER ZEPHYR** (5-10-34) Announcer Charles Lyon, on the platform at Chicago's Union Station, sets the scene for the arrival of the Burlington Pioneer Zephyr from Philadelphia and a northeast tour. Announcer Bob Brown, who travelled on the Zephyr from Fort Wayne, Indiana, describes his ride and introduces various dignitaries on hand for the occasion. *KYW*, Chicago. (15 min)

**READER'S DIGEST** (9-13-42) *Excerpt*. A folk song with a story about legendary Casey Jones. *Campbell's Soup*, NBC. (8 min)

**AUTHOR'S PLAYHOUSE** (4-21-43) "Dan Peters and Casey Jones." Continuing the railroading legend, this is the story, set in 1882, of a mislaid train! *Sustaining*, NBC. (29 min)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (10-16-45) Jim and Marian Jordan as Fibber and Molly. Fibber has promised to get Mrs. Carstairs a Pullman car reservation on the train to Florida. *Bea Benaderet* as Mrs. Carstairs; *Arthur Q. Brian* as Doc Gamble; *Shirley Mitchell* as Alice Darling; *Gale Gordon* as Mayor LaTrivia; *Harlow Wilcox*, *King's Men*; *Billy Mills* and the orchestra. *Johnson's Wax*, NBC. (30 min)

**YOURS TRULY, JOHNNY DOLLAR** (7-6-50) "The Bello-Horizonte Railroad Matter" stars *Edmund O'Brien* as the man with the action-packed expense account. *Dollar* travels to Rio de Janeiro to investigate extensive insurance losses on a policy issued to a small railroad company in Brazil. *Cast includes Francis X. Bushman*, *Martha Wentworth*, *Jack Kruschen*, *Ted DeCorsia*. *Wrigley's Gum*, CBS. (28 min)

**OUR SPECIAL GUEST** will be **CURTIS L. KATZ**, railroad historian, who will talk about railroading and Casey Jones. *Read the Curtis Katz article about Casey Jones on page 37.*

SATURDAY, MAY 13th  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY  
CLIFF JOHNSON

*Cliff Johnson, a CBS staff announcer at WBBM, Chicago for many years, is perhaps best known for his innovative family radio series, Breakfast with the Johnsons, broadcast every weekday morning from the breakfast table in his Oak Park, Illinois home to listeners across the United States from 1947-1957.*



Cliff Johnson

*On the eve of his 85th birthday, the veteran broadcaster will be our special guest as he reminisces about his long career in radio.*

**BREAKFAST WITH THE JOHNSONS** (4-11-52) *Cliff and Luella Johnson and family on the air from their home in Oak Park, Illinois. On this Good Friday broadcast, six year old Vicki tells the story of Jesus' crucifixion, as she learned it in school. Mom talks about safety with scissors while making Easter decorations. Broadcast Corned Beef Hash, CBS. (15 min)*

**CLIFF JOHNSON IN CATALINA** (9 4-46) *From Santa Catalina Island, "just off the coast of Southern California, overlooking Avalon Bay," Cliff Johnson interviews comedienne Vera Vague from the Bob Hope show. Krank's Shave Kreem, CBS. (15 min)*

**BREAKFAST WITH THE JOHNSONS** (4-24-52) *Cliff, Luella and daughters talk about the rummage sale the girls are planning to hold to raise some money by selling "dog statues, comic books, handkerchiefs, pot holders, etc." Broadcast Corned Beef Hash, CBS. (15 min)*

**BREAKFAST WITH THE JOHNSONS** (4-25-52) *Dad tries to get his girls to get a job this summer rather than having their planned rummage sale. He suggests the kids save to buy a savings bond. Mom tells how she earned money as a young girl by watching a family of six children six days a week for three dollars. Broadcast Corned Beef Hash, CBS. (15 min)*

**BURNS AND ALLEN SHOW** (5-15-40) *George and Gracie in a remote broadcast from Omaha, Nebraska to attend the convention of the "Surprise Party" where Gracie expects she will be nominated to run for the office of President of the United States of America. Cast features announcer Truman Bradley, singer Frank Parker, Ray Noble and the orchestra, Elliott*

*Lewis, "Bubbles" Kelly. This special Burns and Allen broadcast was produced by Cliff Johnson. Hinds Lotion, CBS. (30 min)*  
**BREAKFAST WITH THE JOHNSONS** (5-26-52) *Cliff and Luella and their daughters talk about a weekend slumber party and discuss the responsibilities of having a paper route. Broadcast Corned Beef Hash, CBS. (14 min)*

SATURDAY, MAY 20TH  
RADIO COMICS ON SUSPENSE

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (10-9-45) *Jim and Marian Jordan as the McGees. Fibber and Molly decide to buy an automobile, so they go to downtown Wistful Vista to check out the used car lots. Cast features Arthur Q. Brian, Bea Benaderet, Gale Gordon, Ken Christy, Harlow Wilcox, King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29 min)*

**SUSPENSE** (2-3-49) "Back Seat Driver" starring *Jim and Marian Jordan* in unusual dramatic roles. A couple returning from a Saturday night movie discover an unwanted passenger in their car. *Cast includes Joe Kearns. Harlow Wilcox announces. AutoLite, CBS. (30 min)*

**ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET** (3-27-49) *When Ozzie tries to compliment Harriet, his compliments don't seem to be received in the spirit in which they are given. David and Ricky Nelson play themselves, with John Brown as neighbor Thorny and Lurene Tuttle as Harriet's mother. Verne Smith announces. International Silver Co., NBC. (29 min)*

**SUSPENSE** (12-26-47) "Too Little to Live On" starring *Ozzie and Harriet Nelson* in unusual dramatic roles. A couple, caring for an invalid uncle, are anxious for him to die as they are in his Will. *Cast includes Joe Kearns, Wally*

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# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

MAY 2000

Maher, Frank Albertson, Jerry Hausner. Sustaining, CBS. (30 min)

**PHIL HARRIS-ALICE FAYE SHOW** (4-24-49) Twentieth Century-Fox is after Alice to make a film and the studio executives want to offer a small part to Phil so she will agree to do the movie. Rexall, NBC. (29 min)

**SUSPENSE** (5-10-51) "Death On My Hands" starring Phil Harris and Alice Faye in unusual dramatic roles. This story of an accidental death and an attempted escape is produced by Elliott Lewis. AutoLite, CBS. (29 min)

## SATURDAY, MAY 27th

**MY FAVORITE HUSBAND** (1940s) Lucille Ball and Richard Denning star as Liz and George Cooper, "two people who live together and like it" with Bea Benaderet, Gale Gordon, and Hans Conried. At the Bank's annual outing, George and Mr. Atterbury are captains of the two baseball teams. Of course, the wives want to play! AFRS rebroadcast. (24 min)

**MOLLE MYSTERY THEATRE** (1940s) "The Doctor and the Lunatic." Jeffrey Barnes tells "an exciting study in crime," the story of an unknown madman with a strange obsession.

Molle Shave Creme, NBC. (29 min)  
**FRED WARING SHOW** (12-5-47) *Excerpt.* Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians offer a salute to Disney films on Walt Disney's 46th birthday. Music includes songs from "Fun and Fancy Free," "Saludos Amigos," "Song of the South," and "Pinocchio." Fred takes a brief look at Walt's career. Green Giant Foods, NBC. (17 min)

**COUPLE NEXT DOOR** (12-11-58) Peg Lynch and Alan Bunce star. Mr. Piper has a problem with the plastic floor covering in the bathroom. Francine Meyers is Betsy. Jell-O and Good Luck Margarine, CBS. (16 min)

**MONITOR** (5-11-55) *Excerpt.* NBC's innovative weekend service, offering news, features, commentary, comedy and music. Segments feature John Cameron Swayze with the news; Bob and Ray; Art Van Damme Quintet; Roger Price; Bill Lawrence for the New York Times; John Chancellor; Frank Gallop. Sustaining, NBC. (29 min + 29 min)

**MYSTERY IS MY HOBBY** (12-17-47) "Death Has Blue Eyes" stars Glenn Langan as Barton Drake. A woman is accused of killing her stepfather. Cast includes Willard Waterman, Betty Lou Gerson, Ken Christie. Syndicated. (26 min)

...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 53rd year on the air! *WJOL, 1340 AM, Saturday, 11am-2 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.*

**RADIO HALL OF FAME**-- Carl Amari hosts this series (formerly the weekend edition of "When Radio Was") honoring many of the old time programs and performers who have been inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame. *WMAQ, 670 AM, Saturday and Sunday, 10pm-midnight.* Also heard in other cities; check the Internet: [www.radiospirits.com](http://www.radiospirits.com)

**SATURDAY SWING SHIFT**-- Bruce Oscar is host for this two-hour show featuring swing music on record performed by the big bands, pop singers and small groups. *WDCB, 90.9 FM, Saturday, 10 am-Noon.*

**METRO GOLDEN MEMORIES**-- John Sebert and Bob Greenberg host a program of old time radio broadcasts. *WNDZ, 750 AM, Monday, 3-4 pm.*

## "When Radio Was" -- WMAQ-AM 670 Monday thru Friday Midnight to 2 a.m. Host Stan Freberg

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

### April, 2000 Schedule

#### OUT OF AREA LISTENERS PLEASE NOTE

If WMAQ Chicago is out of your reception area, "When Radio Was" is heard on a great many other stations throughout the country. For a complete station listing, plus more detailed program information, and a steady audio stream on the Internet, visit [www.radiospirits.com](http://www.radiospirits.com)

<b>3</b> Damon Runyon Theatre Abbott & Costello Bostun Blackie	<b>4</b> Nightbeat Burns and Allen Have Gun, Will Travel	<b>5</b> The Shadow Vic and Sade The Whistler Favorite Husband Pt 1	<b>6</b> Favorite Husband Pt 2 Lone Ranger Suspense Gildersleeve Pt 1	<b>7</b> Gildersleeve Pt 2 Broadway is My Beat Columbia Workshop Superman
<b>10</b> Dragnet Fibber McGee Gangbusters	<b>11</b> Bold Venture Jack Benny Green Hornet	<b>12</b> Suspense Bill Stern Sports Texas Rangers Jack Benny Pt 1	<b>13</b> Jack Benny Pt 2 Box Thirteen Six Shooter Burns & Allen Pt 1	<b>14</b> Burns & Allen Pt 2 Have Gun, Will Travel Johnny Dollar Bob and Ray
<b>17</b> Gunsmoke Life of Riley Broadway Is My Beat	<b>18</b> Lone Ranger Aldrich Family Screen Guild Theatre	<b>19</b> The Shadow Sgt. Preston Green Hornet Burns & Allen Pt 1	<b>20</b> Burns & Allen Pt 2 The Whistler Nero Wolfe Fibber McGee Pt 1	<b>21</b> Fibber McGee Pt 2 The Shadow Jack Benny Unsolved Mysteries
<b>24</b> Texas Rangers Great Gildersleeve Dimension X	<b>25</b> Escape Life with Luigi Nick Carter	<b>26</b> Suspense Vic and Sade Suspense Abbott & Costello Pt 1	<b>27</b> Abbott & Costello Pt 2 Dragnet Lone Ranger Our Miss Brooks Pt 1	<b>28</b> Our Miss Brooks Pt 2 Gangbusters Texas Rangers Bob and Ray

### May, 2000 Schedule

<b>1</b> Rocky Fortune Phil Harris/Alice Faye Dragnet	<b>2</b> Escape Abbott & Costello Green Hornet	<b>3</b> The Shadow Bill Stern Sports Suspense Burns & Allen Pt 1	<b>4</b> Burns & Allen Pt 2 Dimension X Green Hornet Fibber McGee Pt 1	<b>5</b> Fibber McGee Pt 2 Lights Out The Shadow Bob and Ray
<b>8</b> Bold Venture Burns and Allen Gunsmoke	<b>9</b> Screen Guild Theatre Jack Benny Richard Diamond	<b>10</b> Suspense Sgt. Preston Jack Benny Life of Riley Pt 1	<b>11</b> Life of Riley Pt 2 Dragnet Family Theater Abbott & Costello Pt 1	<b>12</b> Abbott & Costello Pt 2 Boston Blackie Lone Ranger Sgt. Preston
<b>15</b> This is Your FBI Life of Riley Mr. District Attorney	<b>16</b> Lone Ranger Fibber McGee & Molly Nick Carter	<b>17</b> The Shadow Vic and Sade Gangbusters Charlie McCarthy Pt 1	<b>18</b> Charlie McCarthy Pt 2 Suspense Directors' Playhouse Stan Freberg Pt 1	<b>19</b> Stan Freberg Pt 2 Six Shooter The Shadow Lum and Abner
<b>22</b> Dimension X Great Gildersleeve Philo Vance	<b>23</b> Six Shooter Charlie McCarthy Black Museum	<b>24</b> Suspense Strange Dr. Weird Mysterious Traveler Our Miss Brooks Pt 1	<b>25</b> Our Miss Brooks Pt 2 Escape Box Thirteen Ozzie & Harriet Pt 1	<b>26</b> Ozzie & Harriet Pt 2 Green Hornet Burns & Allen The Bickersons
<b>29</b> Tales of Texas Rangers My Favorite Husband Frontier Gentleman	<b>30</b> Nightbeat Duffy's Tavern Boston Blackie	<b>31</b> The Shadow Johnny Dollar Nero Wolfe Fibber McGee Pt 1	<b>NOTICE!</b> WMAQ, Chicago now carries TWO When Radio Was broadcasts each night between Midnight and 2 a.m.	





HIS TIME WAS OUR TIME

# The Radio Life and Legacy of Rudy Vallee

BY ELIZABETH MC LEOD

The name of Rudy Vallee doesn't mean much to most people today.

Some might have seen him on TV late in his life, a survivor of some long-lost era in entertainment, unwilling to acknowledge that his time had passed.

If pressed, they remember him as an amusing character actor, specializing in pompous millionaire roles. Others might be aware that he was a singer, perhaps even conjuring up an image of the nattily dressed collegiate crooner, a symbol of the days of hip flasks and raccoon coats. The man who sang thru the megaphone. The very personification of the "roaring twenties."

But Rudy Vallee was much more than a campy relic of the past. And in his prime, he was much more than just a nasal-voiced crooner, more than the leader of a popular dance band. He was a genuine radio revolutionary — one of the first performers to break down the borders of formality that had existed between radio artist and audience. And he fronted the most influential variety program ever heard on radio — a program which launched the radio careers of many other famous names.

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*Elizabeth McLeod is a radio journalist and broadcast historian who lives in Rockland, Maine. She has specialized in the documentation of early 1930s radio for more than 20 years, and is currently co-writer of the CBS Radio Network program Sound-Bytes.*

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A program which became a monument to the accomplishments — and the high personal standards — of Rudy Vallee.

Hubert Prior Vallee was born in Vermont in 1901, and moved to the southern Maine town of Westbrook in early childhood. His father was a small-town druggist, who expected his son to follow in his footsteps. But young Hubert had other ideas, developing early on a fascination with music. He first performed publicly as a singer around 1913 in a Fireman's Benefit at Westbrook's Star Theatre. Although the performance was, by his own admission, wretched — it was enough to convince Hubert that he was destined for bigger things.

Hubert's interest in music was briefly shunted aside in 1917 by a bad case of war fever — he lied about his age and enlisted in the Navy, only to be discharged when his ruse was discovered. But he was determined not to spend his life filling prescriptions and mixing ice cream sodas — and he returned home with a growing determination to pursue a career in music.

His father unwittingly fortified this determination by adding a new product line at the family drug store — becoming the local distributor for Victor records. Hubert would spend hours studying the techniques of famous recording artists, becoming especially fascinated with the work of saxophonist Rudy Wiedoeft. Although Hubert

had already learned to play the clarinet with some proficiency, the instrumental tricks possible on the saxophone grabbed his imagination. He acquired his own sax, and wrote to Wiedoeft asking for lessons. Eventually, the musician responded, and instructed his eager pupil by mail.

By the time Hubert entered the University of Maine in 1921, he had become a skilled saxophone player — and by the time he transferred to Yale in 1922, his enthusiasm for Wiedoeft had earned him the nickname of "Rudy."

The newly-christened Rudy Vallee spent his college years building his musical skills, as an instrumentalist and as a singer. He approached music as he did any task — methodically and thoroughly, studying the techniques of successful performers, and analyzing what exactly it was that made them successful. He also studied audiences seeking to understand why they responded as they did to any given selection. For Rudy Vallee, showmanship would become an almost scientific discipline.

In 1924, Rudy took a year off from school to visit England, securing a job with the prestigious Savoy Hotel Orpheans Dance Orchestra. When he returned to Yale in 1925, it was as a mature, veteran performer, ready for the Big Time.

Rudy Vallee graduated from Yale in June

of 1927. During his last two years of college, Vallee had been a member of the Yale Collegians, a dance orchestra which had achieved a modicum of vaudeville success. After graduation, the group remained together, playing dance dates and vaudeville engagements throught the Northeast, and Rudy picked up additional income as a sideman in the bands of Vincent Lopez and Ben Bernie. It was during this period that Vallee encountered a colorful pianist by the name of Donald Dickerman, and struck up a friendship which would have far-reaching significance for both of them.



Dickerman was a promoter and talent-booker, handling orchestra engagements for nightclubs and dance halls.

One of his clients was a New York supper club called the Heigh Ho. This establishment was intended as the final word in Swank, but when the club opened for business on New Years Eve, 1927, the orchestra Dickerman had hired fell quite a bit short of the accepted standard. He contacted Bert Lown, who led one of the better dance bands of the day, and asked him for suggestions for a new group for the Heigh Ho Club. Lown, in turn, suggested Vallee as a potential leader.

Within a few days, Lown and Vallee had put together an eight-piece band — two

## RUDY VALLEE

violins, two clarinets, drums, banjo, string bass, and piano. Vallee would lead the group and play sax and clarinet as needed — but he wasn't to be the vocalist. A classically-trained baritone named Jules De Vorzon was engaged to fill that role. The new group carried on the old name of the Yale Collegians, and opened at the Heigh Ho on the night of January 8, 1928.

Dickerman sat at a table, scowling, as the band worked thru its first set. With each turgid vocal by De Vorzon, the scowl deepened.

Finally, the promoter summoned Vallee to his table, and gave his verdict.

"I don't like the singer."

Vallee was flustered, but quickly recovered his poise. Recalling a novelty singing routine he had done with the original Collegians in vaudeville, he returned to the band and called for a tune entitled "Rain," with Rudy singing the vocal thru a small megaphone. Dickerman was impressed, and told Vallee that from then on, he was to consider himself the vocalist. On that condition, the band kept the engagement.

Musically, the Collegians were a rather limited group — lacking brass, they couldn't use stock dance-band arrangements. But Vallee, with his characteristic ingenuity, turned this into an asset — seeking out songs suited to the intimacy of such a small group. The Collegians soon became well-known for their smooth, distinctive sound, for their light-hearted interpretations of novelty tunes — complete with



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funny hats — and for Rudy's megaphoned vocals.

Radio was a perfect match for the Yale Collegians — the intimacy of their style was ideally suited to the demands of the microphone. Rudy had made several broadcasts as an instrumentalist with the Savoy Hotel Orpheans in London in 1924 and 1925, but his tenure at the Heigh Ho Club brought his vocal talents to the attention of New York radio listeners. In a series of remote broadcasts over WABC and WOR, Vallee and the Collegians offered a new twist on the already-standardized format for such presentations — when Vallee himself took over the announcing duties. Speaking in a quiet, conversational voice, Rudy would introduce the selections with none of the flowery "announcery" language then considered appropriate for broadcasting, and audiences instantly responded.

Coupled with Vallee's judicious routing of musical tempos, the Collegians broadcasts offered a distinctive style quite unlike anything then on the air. Within three months of their Heigh Ho Club debut, the Vallee group was broadcasting twenty times a week, with the WABC broadcasts

having picked up the regular sponsorship of the Herbert Jewelry Stores.

They also acquired a new name. Around the middle of the year, Dickerman approached Vallee with a problem — it seems several Yale alumni had complained about the band representing themselves as "Yale Men" when they looked nothing like a proper "Yale Man" should look! Dickerman's club was doing well, but not so well that it could afford to offend paying customers — and the edict was clear: change the band's name.

Vallee thought it over — and when he happened to attend a matinee performance of the Rogers and Hart musical smash *A Connecticut Yankee*, he instantly knew he had found the name — one which suggested his New England background, and ever so subtly, maintained the Yale connection. Rudy Vallee and his Connecticut Yankees were born.

While still going by the Collegians name, the band had begun making recordings for the low-priced Harmony label, and between their discs and their local New York broadcasts, they had attracted the attention of a national sponsor. A manufacturer of medicinal preparations had hit upon a new marketing idea — cod liver oil in capsule form — and was planning a musical feature on the NBC Blue network to introduce the new product. The sponsor approached Vallee one evening at the Heigh Ho Club and recruited him for the new series.

But there were hitches. Vallee expected to have the same freedom in conducting the network series as he had enjoyed with his local broadcasts — but NBC's Program Department had rules, foremost of which was that only staff announcers were al-



lowed to announce. Rudy could conduct, and sing vocals — but the announcing on the new *Clopin Cod Liver Oil Hour* would be handled by Milton J. Cross, with the band to be billed as "The Clopin Eight."

And so it came to pass. And New York listeners immediately demanded to know why Rudy wasn't speaking for himself. And they were heard. As of the third program, Vallee began announcing for himself. Even so, Rudy couldn't save the *Clopin Hour*. The product was a flop, plain and simple — and after only seven weeks the venture collapsed, taking the radio show with it.

The Clopin affair did little to slow Rudy's momentum. In early 1929, the Yankees began to record for Victor, and churned out an astonishing number of successful

## RUDY VALLEE

records as one of the label's most prolific groups. And then — Hollywood called. Rudy and the Yankees were signed by the newly-formed Radio Pictures for a feature film, and traveled to Hollywood in the summer of 1929 to make *The Vagabond Lover*, as trifling a piece of early-talkie-musical-trash as was ever produced. Rudy himself was acutely aware of the film's artistic shortcomings as soon as he saw it — and the picture would remain something of an embarrassment to him for the rest of his life. But there was no time to brood — because network radio was beckoning again. And this time it was for real.

Standard Brands Incorporated was one of America's most prolific national advertisers as the twenties wound down — a vast conglomerate manufacturing dozens of well-known household products. One of the company's best known products was Fleischmann's Yeast — and it had fallen to the advertising wizards at the J. Walter Thompson agency to turn this humble kitchen staple into a mass-market item.

The Thompson staff did so by turning yeast into a health food — touting the vitamin benefits of eating raw yeast. Eating three cakes of Fleischmann's daily would fill you with pep, would help you sleep better, would rid your complexion of pimples and ugly blemishes. Full page magazine ads, trolley and subway cards, giant billboards — all proclaimed the new slogan: Eat Yeast For Health!

In October 1929, radio was added to the mix. The Thompson people wanted a radio star who epitomized the qualities of youth and vigor that only eating yeast could give. Several names were bandied about, but it was NBC executive Bertha Brainard who submitted the winning choice. And so it was that on October 29, 1929 — two days after the stock market crash — the

*Fleischmann Sunshine Hour* made its debut over WEAJ and associated stations of the NBC Red Network, with Rudy Vallee and his Connecticut Yankees.

Announcer Graham McNamee set the stage for the first broadcast by describing a nightclub setting, and listeners could hear the clinking of dinnerware and the hum of low conversation, as Rudy and the Yankees played their new theme — "On The Road To Sunshine," a hymn to the healing power of "sunshine vitamin yeast."

That didn't last long. Within a few weeks, the Sunshine song had been quietly shelved, and replaced by a tune closer to Rudy's own personal philosophy of what a radio program should be. The Collegians had used "Down The Field" as their theme, but "Fighting For Eli" had little relevance to the sort of show Rudy envisioned. Instead, "My Time Is Your Time" succinctly stated the purpose of the show in just a few brief phrases — "we're here to entertain you," the song seemed to say, "and we hope that you enjoy this time with us."

For three years, the *Fleischmann Hour* continued in basically the same format. The series was constructed in fifteen-minute sets of dance music, carefully routined and announced by Rudy. Advertising messages were restrained — McNamee had one brief commercial announcement during the first half hour, and there would be a one-minute health talk by Dr. R. E. Lee, "director of Fleischmann's Health Research" during the second half hour. It was a relaxing, dignified way to spend a Thursday evening, and the program quickly vaulted to the upper levels of the popularity charts.

Vallee and the agency quickly recognized, however, that there needed to be some flexibility to the format to keep the audience interested. By early 1930, the program was offering occasional guest artists, and soon settled into a pattern of one guest each week, usually a personality from

the Broadway stage. Helen Morgan, Ed-die Cantor, Ed Wynn, Olsen and Johnson — all these artists and others were among the guests during the early years of the *Fleischmann Hour*. But throughout this period, the spotlight remained on Rudy himself.

Until the fall of 1932.

Realizing that times were changing, that tastes were changing, that the day of the *Vagabond Lover* was passing, Vallee and the agency agreed to make a drastic adjustment in the format as the program entered its fourth season. Beginning in

October 1932, the new emphasis of the *Fleischmann Hour* would be on variety. Vallee would still be the master of ceremonies, and the Yankees would still provide the music — but the spotlight would shift to the guests themselves. The program would become, in Rudy's phrase, "The Palace Theatre Of The Air," a showcase for the very best that Broadway and vaudeville had to offer — and a showcase for important new talent on the way up.

The new format took radio by storm, at a time when there was a new focus on Big Name Entertainment on the air. Vallee was in the vanguard of this new trend, and the format of his show was set for the rest of

the decade.

The J. Walter Thompson staff combed the playbills for talent — and week after week, listeners were offered an astonishing parade of stars. Many legendary figures of the stage made their radio debuts on the Vallee program, and many future legends counted a Vallee appearance as an important early step up the ladder. Looking down even a partial list of guests featured on the Vallee program between 1932 and 1939 is to examine a roll call of some



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of the greatest names in show business.

*From Broadway:*

George Gershwin, Noel Coward, Gertrude Lawrence, Cole Porter, Josephine Baker, Tallulah Bankhead, the Barrymores, Willie and Eugene Howard, Ethel Merman, Libby Holman, Bert Lahr, Judith Anderson, Helen Morgan, Olsen and Johnson, Fannie Brice, Milton Berle, Bob Hope.

*From vaudeville and nightclubs:*

Howard and Shelton, Richy Craig Jr. (a sharp, topical monologist who greatly influenced Bob Hope), Nina Mac McKinney (a superb jazz-gospel vocalist), Professor Robert Wildhock (the "sneeze specialist"), Eddie Garr (father of Terri

## RUDY VALLEE

Garr, and an exceptional singing impressionist), Frank Fay (the first great vaudeville MC), the Duncan Sisters (true-life inspirations for the classic film *Broadway Melody*), Joe Laurie Jr (a comic and vaudeville historian who later turned up on *Can You Top This?*), Dr. Sigmund Spacch (*The Tune Detective*), Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy.

And, add to this dozens of film personalities who passed thru New York each year, standout personalities from the jazz scene like Duke Ellington, Earl Hines, and Stuff Smith, literary and cultural figures like Deems Taylor, Cornelia Otis Skinner, James Hilton, and J. B. Priestley, and even inspirational figures like Helen Keller. And it's important to note that Vallee was one of the few figures in 1930s broadcasting who was totally color-blind when it came to booking talent. African-American artists were regularly welcomed on his show, one of the very few programs on the mainstream network air to offer these too-often-excluded performers a microphone.

The Vallee variety hour continued thru the 1930s under Standard Brands sponsorship — with the parent company shifting from Fleischmann's Yeast to Royal Desserts in the fall of 1936, and then promoting both products in tandem for the program's final year. The end came in October 1939 — exactly a decade after the series began. Vallee himself decided to call it quits, convinced that the format had worn out its welcome, and looking forward to some time off to consider a new approach to radio.

Rudy was back on the air in 1940, for Sealtest Dairies. He returned his old Thursday night slot, but the new show was cut to half an hour — and was as drastic a change as could be imagined. Instead of the old variety show, the series returned to an em-

phasis on Vallee himself — but not as a crooner. Now, Vallee would be presented as a light comedian, in a series of original musical comedies. Top behind-the-scenes production talent ensured the quality of the scripts, and Vallee revealed a surprising feel for comedy, constantly poking fun at his own pompous New England image. Even so, there was still something missing: A stooge — a foil — a comedy character that could be distinctly identified with the series. A Mad Russian, a Rochester, a Parkyakarkus.

The production team thought and pondered. And then someone — it's unclear who — came up with an audacious suggestion.

How about John Barrymore?

The Great Profile? One of the most accomplished Shakespearean actors ever to tread the boards? John Barrymore???

It wasn't as ridiculous an idea as it sounded. Barrymore's drinking had worsened during the late thirties, and he had already been reduced to self-parodying roles in movies, most recently a series of RKO B-pictures where he played the fool opposite bandleader Kay Kyser. This new clowning Barrymore would be a perfect foil for Vallee's studied composure.

And he was. Barrymore was touted as "the Comedy Find of 1940," and for nearly two years was a regular on the *Sealtest Program*. His drinking continued unabated, and he was frequently absent — occasionally his brother Lionel would be tapped as a last-minute stand in. But when he was able to perform, he gave his all — and sometimes, in specially-adapted dramatic skits, he even offered a hint of the Barrymore that used to be.

John Barrymore died, ravaged by years of alcohol abuse, on May 29th 1942. And the second great era of the Rudy Vallee program passed with him.

Rudy took a leave of absence from ra-



dio in 1943, enlisting in the Coast Guard as the conductor of an excellent service orchestra. The moment had been prepared for, as Vallee had gradually turned the Sealtest show over to his new co-star, the brassy comedienne Joan Davis. For Rudy, his years as an influential figure in broadcasting were drawing to a close.

Upon his discharge, Vallee resumed his radio career, but it wasn't the same. His postwar series tried to recapture the comic tone of the Sealtest show, but his co-stars weren't in the same league with Barrymore or even Davis. Personality conflicts with sponsors added to the problems, and increasingly Vallee found himself on the margins of broadcasting.

Instead, he focused more and more on his career in films. His new comic personality on the air had brought him to the attention of director Preston Sturges — who featured Vallee as the "richest man in the

world, John D. Hackensacker III" in the sublime screwball comedy *The Palm Beach Story*. The success of the film made Vallee a star all over again — with his musical talents suddenly taking a back seat to his comedy. Vallee would play variations on the Hackensacker character for years after *The Palm Beach Story*, culminating with his smash success as J. B. Biggley in the 1962 Broadway success *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying*.

To the end of his life, Rudy Vallee was first and foremost a performer. When radio passed him by, he looked to other venues — to movies, to the theatre, to nightclubs, to television. He was a frequent and witty guest on TV talk shows well into the 1970s, and even toured college campuses with a wry, self-deprecating slide-show and musical presentation. But in the end, few people were paying attention, few remembered Rudy Vallee and the mark he had made in the entertainment world.

He died on July 4, 1986 — and many were surprised to learn that he had lived that long.

Rudy Vallee the man had some rather pronounced personality quirks.

His ego seemed boundless, he could often be combative and cold-blooded in his personal relationships, and he was caught up in a rather distasteful marital scandal during the mid-1930s. And he had a well-earned reputation as one of the tightest-fisted men in show business. All this combined to make him a rather unpopular individual with the press of his day — and as a result, he's often been overlooked by historians.

But Rudy Vallee the performer, Rudy Vallee the showman left behind a wonderful radio legacy — one that's ever worthy of rediscovery. ■

*NOTE-- Tune in to TWTD April 15 for an afternoon of Rudy Vallee on the air.*

# Remembering Easter

BY C. MACKEY

Artwork by Sharon Bartley

Now if someone were to tell you that a large white rabbit intended stopping at your house with a basket of tinted eggs and candy, you'd probably think you were talking with Elwood P. Dowd, alias Jimmy Stewart. But, when you're three years old and this extraordinary tale is being told to you by the two most important people in your young life, you accept it without question. As a reasonable adult, however, you begin to wonder how this fanciful Easter legend ever started. Rabbits don't even lay eggs; and it took many, many years before I was willing to believe that! You see, in our family, Easter was filled with treats and traditions; and, like any kid, I didn't want to bite "the hand that brought the basket."

Preparations began by finding an Easter outfit. All my family and friends had seen the movie *Easter Parade* with Judy Garland and Fred Astaire and therefore recognized the importance of being clothed properly on Easter Sunday. Finding something stylish and distinctive to wear, therefore, was crucial. Each girl desired a new dress with matching coat and hat and longed for new black, patent leather shoes. Most of the time, however, girls I knew had to be satisfied with just a new hat. Boys despised shopping and were, consequently, grateful if they escaped with *only* a new cap.

Egg dying was another pre-holiday duty and an art I took very seriously. Mom boiled eggs until they were hard and then helped my brother and me mix hot water

with food dye and vinegar in coffee cups, one for each color.

I usually kept my eggs in the cups for a long time so they would be smooth, bright, and beautiful. My younger brother, who was totally unsuited to producing a beautifully colored egg, didn't really care how his end-product looked. He would gaily dip eggs into whichever cup, or cups were empty—sometimes combining two colors that clashed horribly. His favorite trick was to place the same egg in each color, which resulted in an ugly, muddy green. He happily dubbed it his *army egg*.

Probably my most distinct memory of egg decorating was the year my family moved to another neighborhood, and I had to attend another school. I found it difficult to make friends and was lonely. Shortly before Clean-up Week, which occurred just before Easter that year, my mom and I made and decorated forty egg-shaped cookies. She put them in a large cardboard box from Peoples' Store, and I carefully carried them to school and into my classroom. They were an immediate hit, and making friends suddenly became easier.

When Easter morning finally arrived, it came early to our house. My brother and I awoke about 5:00 a.m. to a trail of jelly beans which led to Easter baskets filled with candy and small toys, like paddle ball, jacks, soldiers, and cars. (Once, at grandma's house, I remember following bunny footprints from bed to basket, which I later learned were made in flour by my creative grandmother.)

After a quick examination and taste of our Easter gifts, we'd place our baskets

over our arms—away from parental sampling—and search for the eggs we had colored and the Bunny had hidden.

Egg-finding was a science when I was young, and tips on finding hidden eggs were commonly shared between special cousins and friends. We learned to check under evergreens, in flower pots, behind books, and under upholstered furniture. My grandmother contributed the best hint; but, for a reason we never understood, it only worked at her house. She taught us to recognize Easter Bunny fur. "If fur is present," she shrewdly revealed, "the Easter Bunny's been there." This clue always resulted in finding a carefully concealed egg.

The most ingenious strategy for locating hidden Easter eggs, however, was practiced by my younger cousin Sharon. She would rise early while her family was asleep, search the house, note the locations of the eggs, and go back to bed. She'd rise later with her brothers and sisters and

amaze them by quickly finding most of the eggs. They'd brag about her success to the rest of us and predict that someday she'd be a famous detective. They were also wrong about her occupation; she became an insurance agent, which seems fitting to me.

One year, I remember my brother and I spotted the same egg at the same time and raced to claim the prize. Unfortunately, it was the one and only time an uncooked egg found its way into our hunt. The contest ended with fresh egg splattered all over our pajamas.

Another time, we searched and searched but couldn't find the army egg. Mom fi-

nally discovered it in an old gymshoe the following June. Both smelled pretty bad.

After church and parading in our holiday finery, all of our aunts, uncles, and cousins gathered at my grandparent's house for a traditional Easter dinner. Grandpa always made his famous shepherd's pie, which was loaded with a variety of cheeses and deli meats—tasty, but a true cholesterol nightmare. Aunt Buddy came with pepper pies stuffed with

fresh green peppers and tomatoes. My dad and I would

create a three layer, three

flavor cake complete

with filling, frosting,

and Easter decorations

all from scratch. A multi-

tude of side dishes, a

large ham,

and the biggest turkey

grandma could find

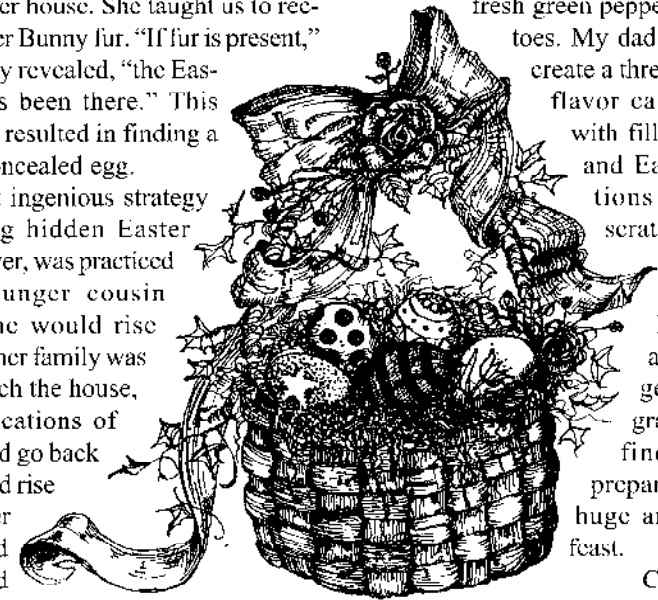
were also prepared; it was a

huge and delicious feast.

Colored eggs were exchanged between

families, and mom helped my brother and me make small nests of candy for our aunts and uncles. I'll never forget one holiday when my eldest cousin Nancy, who worked downtown at Marshall Fields, gave each of us a small, hollow egg made of white sugar and decorated with colorful icing. It had an opening at one end which revealed a tiny candy bunny in a garden of multi-colored sugar flowers. She bought them at Fields, and they were completely eatable but so beautiful that I never ate mine.

After dinner, my cousins and I would play Easter games, some of which we invented ourselves. A favorite contest was



*C. Mackey is a graphics designer and free-lance writer from Flossmoor, Illinois.*

## REMEMBERING EASTER

egg bowling. One hard-boiled egg was left white and rolled to the center of the room. Each of us took turns to see who could roll their egg closest to the white egg. The winners received a piece of candy, a coveted award even though our tummies and baskets were already full of sugary treats.

Other families probably celebrate the Easter holiday in ways different than mine did; but in most homes, the improbable pair of bunny and egg has a prominent role. Why have generations of adults perpetuated this implausible alliance? And, more puzzling, how did it ever begin?

The first writings connecting Easter and rabbits are found in German manuscripts of the 1500s. As the legend goes, a poor woman hid some dyed eggs in a nest outdoors as a holiday gift for her children. Just as the kids found where the nest was hidden, a large hare leaped away. The children believed that the hare brought the eggs, and their story grew and spread all over Germany. Other kids began building nests in secluded places in their homes, barns, or gardens. Boys used their caps and girls their bonnets.

German immigrants brought this custom to America but discovered that rabbits were more common than hares so the Easter Hare became the Easter Rabbit and later the Easter Bunny.

And, why eggs?

For thousands of years, people have thought of eggs as a symbol of new life, partly because they watched birds hatching from them. Colored eggs were used to celebrate Spring holidays in Ancient Persia in 3000 BC, and the first recorded use of colored eggs in Easter celebrations dates to the Christians of Thirteenth Century Macedonia. Crusaders returning from the Middle East spread the custom, and Europeans began to use tinted eggs to celebrate Easter and other warm-weather holidays.

Kids at Easter, however, never needed to know this history to enjoy the holiday; I certainly didn't then, nor do I now. As an adult, I no longer dye and hunt eggs or play games with my cousins; but the excitement and traditions of the Spring holiday remain with me and are preserved through the next generation, my grandchildren.

I recently told my daughter Mary Beth, mother of three, what I had learned about the origins of Easter customs. After politely listening to my explanations, she was silent a moment and then declared, "I'm sorry to disagree, but I believe egg-dyeing and egg-hunting was probably invented by a frustrated mother. It was an attempt to hold on to her sanity and keep her bored children busy and out of trouble on a dreary, wet Chicago morning."

Hmmmm. Perhaps she has a point. ■

## NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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The Nostalgia Digest is published six times a year by  
THE HALL CLOSET, Box 421, Morton Grove, IL 60053  
Phone/Fax (847) 965-7763

Annual subscription rate is \$15 for six issues. A two-year subscription (12 issues) is \$27.

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# THE BALLAD OF CASEY JONES

BY CURTIS L. KATZ

*Come all you rounders  
if you want to hear  
The story of a brave engineer.*

You don't have to be a railroader to know that the "brave engineer" introduced by this lyric is Casey Jones, probably the most famous name in railroad lore if not in all American folklore, ranking high with such legendary luminaries as Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill.

But unlike the fictitious lumberjack and cowpoke, Casey Jones was a real person, and the train wreck that climaxed his "farewell trip to the Promised Land" actu-

ally occurred in the wee dark hours of a rainy April 30, exactly 100 years ago.

Jonathan Luther Jones was born March 14, 1864, somewhere in the southern Midwest. He came of age in the Kentucky town

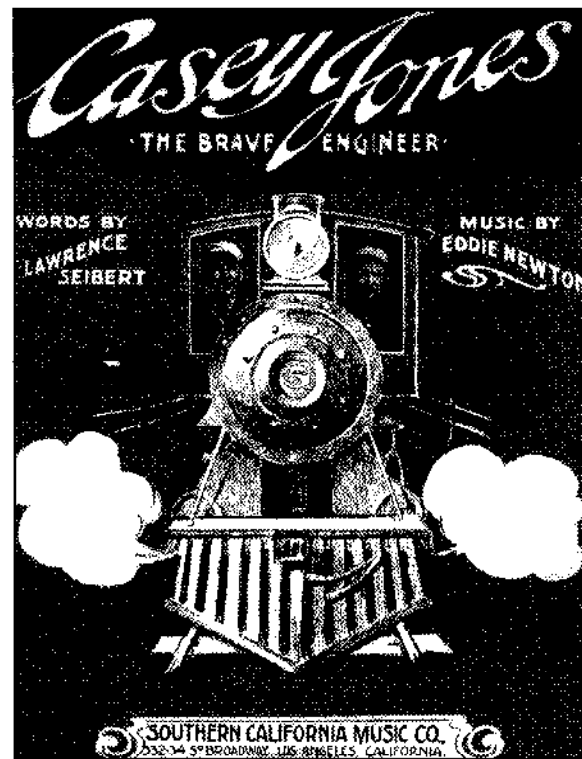
*Curtis L. Katz, Ranger of the Rails, is a railway historian and writer from Chicago, Illinois.*

of Cayce, the apparent source of his famous nickname. He worked for several railroads before coming to the Illinois Central in 1888; two years later he was made an engineer.

Casey was the "Gilded Age embodiment of "the right stuff," always "pushing the envelope" and bending the rules to bring his train in on time. He was disciplined nine times by the Company for rules infractions, but his derring-do, plus his sobriety and con-

scientiousness, won him the admiration of fellow railroaders up and down the Illinois Central.

On the rainy night of April 29, 1900, Casey Jones and his fireman Sim Webb had brought the northbound New Orleans-to-Chicago passenger express popularly known as the *Cannonball* into Memphis, Tennessee from Canton, Mississippi.



CURTIS L. KATZ COLLECTION



## THE BALLAD OF CASEY JONES

When they learned that the engineer scheduled to take the southbound *Cannonball* down to Canton had called in sick, and that no other crews were available, Jones and Webb agreed to make the run.

The *Cannonball* was already 95 minutes late when Casey "mounted to the cabin" in the first hour of Monday, April 30, but by "the orders in his hand," Casey knew where trains down the line would be waiting in sidings, and where he could open the throttle to make up time. By Vaughn, Mississippi, just a dozen miles from Canton, Casey had the *Cannonball* nearly back on schedule, and was sure the remaining trains down the line had plenty of time to get in the clear.

But this proved to be a fatal assumption.

The blind curve coming into Vaughn prevented Casey from seeing, until it was too late, that a southbound freight train had stalled on a siding with its last four cars fouling the main line. Excessive speed and the rain-slicked rails made it impossible for Casey to stop in time. At Casey's insistence, fireman Webb leapt from the cab, but Casey rode on "to the Promised Land."

His locomotive demolished an unoccupied caboose and three cars loaded with hay and corn before it rolled over and plowed into a ditch. The most serious injuries in the wreck were the bruises sustained by Webb and by a postal clerk who was working in the mail car that piled up behind the locomotive.

The only fatality was Casey Jones, whose mangled and scalded body was found, according to legend, with one hand still grasping the air brake handle.

Well-liked by many, Casey Jones was mourned the length of the Illinois Central. Wallace Saunders, an engine wiper at the IC's Canton shops, was heard to sing a mournful ballad about Casey, which he

may have adapted from "Jimmie Jones," another train wreck song, such songs having become widespread and popular through the 1890s.

Soon variants of the Casey Jones song were being heard in roundhouses and bunkhouses on railroads throughout the country. In 1902 the first published version of the song appeared, written and performed in vaudeville by Bert and Frank Leighton, brothers of Bill Leighton, an Illinois Central engineer.

But it was the 1909 version, "Casey Jones, The Brave Engineer," that is best remembered. Written by vaudevillians T. Lawrence Seibert and Eddie Newton, "Casey Jones" was curiously billed as "The Only Railroad Comedy Song." Apparently Seibert and Newton intended that their hyperbolic embellishments to the lyrics would lampoon the heroic excesses of folk music. Instead, they created the ultimate railroad folk song, and elevated Casey Jones from a local historical figure to a national folk legend.

First performed in an obscure café in Venice, California, "Casey Jones, The Brave Engineer" quickly became a national sensation. Ironically, the song's commercial success made the *name* Casey Jones synonymous with railroading and instantly famous, but its folkloric ambiguities of time, place, and detail—including a Western setting for the saga— instantaneously mythologized and obscured the *man* Casey Jones.

To assuage the curiosity of a public wondering whether there really had been a Casey Jones, magazines and newspapers of the era published letters and articles claiming any of numerous engineers lately killed in the line of duty all over the nation to be the "authentic" Casey Jones. But in the December 1911 issue of *Railroad Man's Magazine*, Seibert and Newton acknowledged Wallace Saunders as the

song's original source, and that "as near as we can trace it back it started about an old engineer named John Luther Jones..." And so that matter has stood.

By 1911 there were a half-dozen phonograph recordings of the Casey Jones song, the first of dozens to come. But if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then the true measure of a song's success is how quickly and frequently it is satirized. As early as 1912 there appeared at least two songs spoofing "Casey Jones": "The Ghost of Casey Jones" and "Casey Jones Went Down On The Robert E. Lee." Take-offs through the ensuing decades have included a British soldier parody, a political satire on FDR, the TV ad jingle for Good 'n' Plenty candy, and Allan Sherman's "J. C. Cohen," about a New York City subway conductor.

Casey Jones leapt from song to the visual media in the 1927 silent movie, *Casey Jones, or The Western Mail*. There followed several other equally unremarkable Casey Jones motion pictures, a 1938 stage play, a 1950 Walt Disney cartoon short, *The Brave Engineer*, and a 1957 *Casey Jones* TV series starring hefty Alan Hale, Jr. (The real Casey was a lanky 6'4"). Remarkably, none of these railroad adventure-melodramas had anything to do with either the actual or the folk song's legendary Casey

Jones.

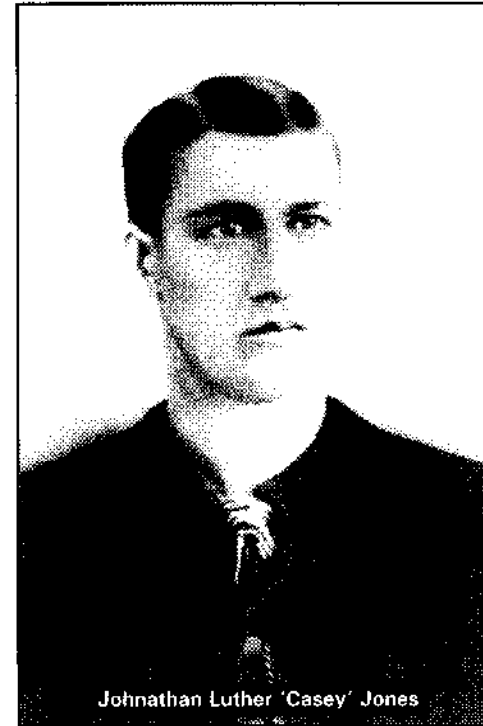
While Hollywood was further muddling the Casey Jones legend, belated efforts were being made to rediscover and memorialize the real Casey, impelled by the 35th anniversary commemorating his passing.

In 1938 a monument was unveiled at Cayce, Kentucky.

In 1947 the simple wooden cross that marked Casey's grave in Jackson, Tennessee was replaced with a granite memorial presented by noted rail authors Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg.

In 1956 the Jones residence in Jackson became the Casey Jones Museum.

At Vaughn, Mississippi in 1953, a roadside marker was placed near the site of Casey's death; in 1973 this "Casey Jones



Johnathan Luther 'Casey' Jones

CURTIS L. KATZ COLLECTION

Wreck Site" was put on the National Register of Historic Places, and in 1980 a Casey Jones Museum was at last established at Vaughn.

Though restored to service after the wreck, Casey's locomotive did not survive to become part of any of these memorials.

In its subsequent years, ten-wheeler No. 382 gained a sinister reputation as a "hoodoo" a jinxed engine. It was involved in several additional deadly accidents, including a fatal derailment while en route to the scrap yard in 1935.

Fortunately, much longer-lived were two people closely associated with Casey

## THE BALLAD OF CASEY JONES

Jones. Though he left railroading in 1919, Casey's fireman Sim Webb frequently appeared at Casey Jones tributes, and to the end of his life in 1957 he delighted in telling curious reporters the story of Casey's last ride.

And there was Casey's indomitable wife, Jane Brady Jones, who devoted the rest of her life to perpetuating the memory of "J.L.", as she called her husband.

Feisty Janie Jones could not abide the Seibert and Newton song that made her husband famous, her antipathy due mainly

to the slanderous innuendo contained in the last verse, in which the Widow Jones tells her children to "hush your cryin' / Cause you got another papa on the Salt Lake Line."

(In his "J. C. Cohen," Allan Sherman impishly parodies this indelicate line, depicting the subway conductor's widow as taking her son to Disneyland, and enjoining him, "Don't you weep or wail / Cause you got another papa on the Monorail.") When court action brought no satisfaction, Mrs. Jones collaborated with song writer Lysle Tomerlin and in 1938 set the record straight with her own tune, "My Husband, Casey Jones." It proved to be an unmemorable remedy.

But by this time, wiry spunky Janie Jones was widely regarded as a living link with railroading's romantic past. She was profiled in *Colliers*, *Life*, and *Reader's Digest*, feted at the New York World's Fair in 1939, and she appeared on radio programs ranging from *We The People* to *Ripely's Believe It or Not*. In 1948, she was grand marshal of the State Street parade that opened the Chicago Railroad Fair, and in

October of the following year, she quietly returned to Chicago to observe the Fair's closing.

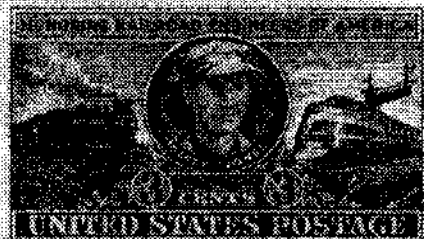
Mrs. Jones remained devoted to "J.L.", and to railroading, all the days of her life. She died in 1958, at the age of 92.

Janie Jones did not live to see the celebrations that attended the 1964 centennial of Casey Jones' birth, or the 75th anniversary of his death in 1975. But she was on hand for ceremonies in her home town of Jackson, Tennessee in 1950 when, coincident with the 50th anniversary of the famous train wreck, the U. S. Post Office Department issued a commemorative postage stamp, "Honoring Railroad Engineers of America." Representing those engineers on that stamp was a cameo portrait of Casey Jones.

Would Casey Jones be lauded as a hero had his wreck occurred today? No doubt the National Transportation Safety Board would conduct a lengthy and pricey investigation culminating in a thick report that would pillory Casey for reckless endangerment, while *USA Today* would print smarmy innuendo about his competence as an engineer and as a family man. Fortunately, Casey was the product of a more forgiving era, one of bigger-than-life adventure. Thus he survives as the heroic spirit of railroading, the ideal of the courageous working man, whose devotion to duty enables him to defy danger and adversity to get his job done.

This is the Casey Jones we remember and celebrate after 100 years. ■

*NOTE—Tune in TWTD May 6 for an afternoon of old time radio railroad stories, including some about the legendary Casey Jones.*



CURT S. KATZ COLLECTION



## Explore New Exhibits at the Radio Hall of Fame

BY MARGARET WARREN

Step into the Radio Hall of Fame at the Museum of Broadcast Communications and you're back in the 1940s. New exhibits all over the place. Stuff you remember as a kid.

Don McNeill is calling for a march around the breakfast table, Jack Benny is telling the thief that he's thinking it over, and there's FDR delivering a fireside chat.



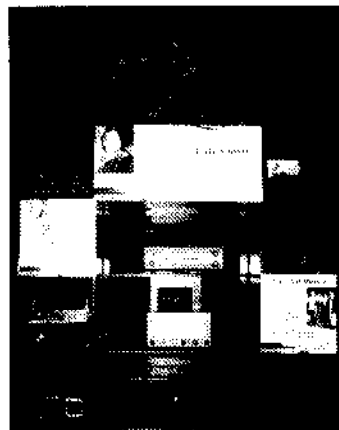
Look around and there are enough vintage radios on the shelves to overwhelm the Polk Brothers in their heyday. Point to the radio that looks just like the one your family had on the kitchen counter where mom probably listened to *Stella Dallas*.

Check out the plaques, banners, photos and biographies of many of the more than one hundred Radio Hall of Fame inductees. Learn more about Orson Welles, Don

Ameche, William Conrad, Les Tremayne, *The Lux Radio Theatre*, *One Man's Family*, Kate Smith, Arthur Godfrey. Open the door to Fibber McGee's hall closet. Smile at the real Charlie McCarthy and Mortimer Snerd. And the list goes on and on.

You can do all that any day (except major holidays) when you visit the Museum of Broadcast Communications in the Chicago Cultural Center at Michigan Avenue and Washington Street in Chicago. Phone (312) 629-6000.

Hours are 10 am to 5 pm Monday thru Friday, 10 am to 4:30 pm Saturday, and Noon to 5 pm on Sunday. Stop in soon.





← **RUDY VALLEE**

was a "genuine radio revolutionary... who fronted the most influential variety programs" on the air. Elizabeth McLeod's tribute to the legendary performer begins on page 26.

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