



← **STAN LAUREL**

Read Jeffrey S. Miller's article about Mr. Laurel's solo career on page 28.

HELLO, OUT THERE IN RADIOLAND!
Page 1

**A FEW MOMENTS WITH...
PATTY McCORMACK**
Page 4

O CHRISTMAS TREE
by Jim Dohren, Page 6

**RAY MILLAND
CELEBio**, Page 10

WE COULD BE HEROES...
by Steve Darnall, Page 14

AFRICAN-AMERICAN RADIO
by Ryan Ellett, Page 23

RADIO PROGRAM GUIDE
Those Were the Days, Pages 32-39
Radio's Golden Age, Pages 40-41

PHIL HARRIS AND ALICE FAYE
by Jordan Elliott, Page 42

**FLYING POPCORN
AND SATURDAY MATINEES**
by Wayne Klatt, Page 48

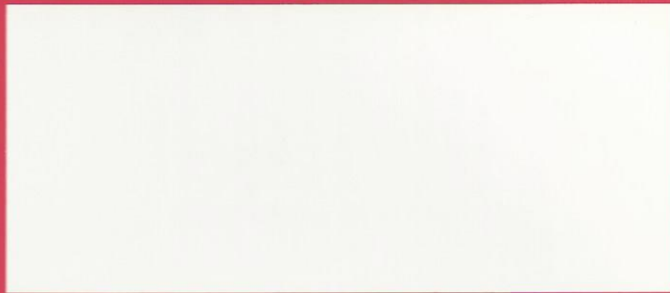
BOBBY BENSON
by Jack French, Page 52

DIME DETECTIVES
by John Dinan, Page 58

MAIL CALL!
Readers and listeners write, Page 60

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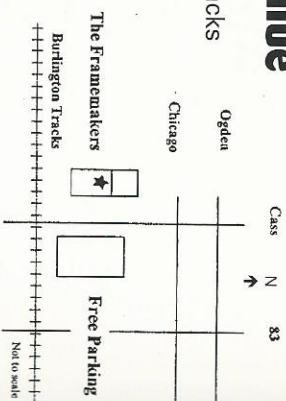
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BOOK 39, CHAPTER 1

WINTER 2013

JANUARY-FEBRUARY-MARCH

Hello, Out There in Radioland!

With this issue, *Nostalgia Digest* begins its 39th year of publication, and even though this issue includes the schedule for “Jack Benny Month” on *Those Were the Days*, we at the *Digest* have no plans to follow Mr. Benny’s example by stopping at 39.

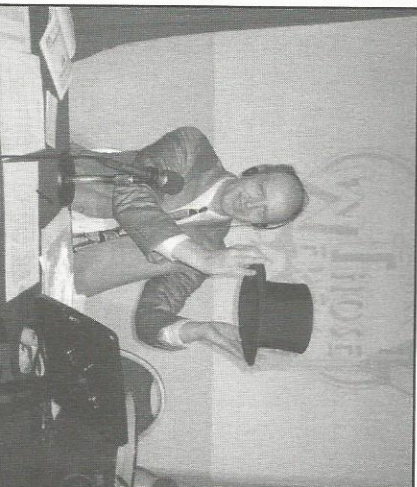
In fact, this past year has had no shortage of excitement. At the beginning of 2012, we began our series of *Nostalgia Digest* Podcasts, free, downloadable files dedicated to people, performers, topics and shows that have been featured in the *Digest* during its four-decade history. Appropriately, we began the series with Chuck Schaden — the founder of both *Those Were the Days* and this magazine — as we talked about his remarkable website, speakingofradio.com. The Podcasts are available for downloading through iTunes and through our website, nostalgia Digest.com. If you haven’t checked them out, we hope you’ll take a few moments and do so.

With the Podcast launched in high style, we kicked off “Jack Benny Month” in February with a live remote broadcast from the nearly-completed Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago. Some 60 listeners came by to get a special tour of the Museum, so they could see what had been done and what would be done. In the meantime, there were some classic radio shows featuring Jack Benny and even a phone conversation with Jack’s daughter Joan.

In March, the City of Chicago celebrated its 175th anniversary: on August 4, as part of the celebration, we returned to the Museum (which had opened in June, following a ribbon-cutting ceremony with Betty White, John Mahoney, Hugh Downs, and Edgar Bergen’s son Chris) for another live broadcast, as part of the City’s “175 Days” festival. It was the start of a four-week series on *Those Were the Days* dedicated to Windy City Radio, featuring the voices of Paul Harvey, Studs Terkel, Art Hellyer and such shows as the *National Barn Dance*, *Destination Freedom* and the *First Nighter* program. One of the highlights of that day came when MBC President Bruce Dumont produced something remarkable from the Museum Archives — the top

August 4, 2012: At the Museum of Broadcast Communications with Les Tremayne’s hat

PHOTO BY WALTER PODRAZAK



hat that actor Les Tremayne wore when he was the star of the *First Nighter* program in the 1930s and '40s — and for one brief moment, I donned Les Tremayne's hat! (For the record, my head is actually bigger than Les Tremayne's, for reasons that have nothing to do with ego.)

In September, we commemorated a rather bittersweet anniversary: the 50th anniversary of the end of the Golden Age of radio — the weekend in 1962 when CBS canceled *Yours Truly*, *Johnny Dollar* and *Suspense*. It was strange for us to realize that when Chuck Schaden began *TWTD* in 1970, the last Golden Age network radio drama had left the air less than eight years earlier. Now, here we were, commemorating the Golden Anniversary of the final days of that era.

In October, we were pleased when some of our *Those Were the Days* listeners joined us in celebrating the 95th birthday of actress Marsha Hunt by sending us cards and letters containing your greetings and good wishes. From there, we packaged all of the cards and forwarded them to Ms. Hunt. In a phone conversation we had before going to press, she acknowledged that she was both grateful and overwhelmed by the good wishes and what she called our listeners' "heartwarming" gesture.

In the midst of these activities and special broadcasts and related events, we continued to produce *Nostalgia Digest* and our Sunday internet radio show, *Radio's Golden Age*. Since 2010, the latter program has been heard every Sunday afternoon at www.yesterdayusa.com, but we were most pleased when the folks at www.talk-zone.com agreed to make *Radio's Golden Age* available to its online audience beginning in November, which means that now you can hear this show at two different times, on two different websites. You can see the complete schedules (and starting times) for both of our old-time radio shows beginning on page 32 of this issue.

All of these developments have us looking forward to the 39th year of the *Nostalgia Digest* — and the 43rd anniversary of *Those Were the Days* in April. We're delighted to have you with us for every step of the journey and we hope that you'll enjoy the shows and issues that are still to come...

Thanks for listening.

—Steve Darnall

Follow us online!

If you're a member of the Facebook community, please take a moment and join our *Nostalgia Digest* group! It's a chance to meet some like-minded listeners and get up-to-date news and information about *Nostalgia Digest*, *Those Were the Days*, *Radio's Golden Age*, our personal appearances, the *Nostalgia Digest* Podcast, and much more! You can also follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/NostalgiaDigest!>

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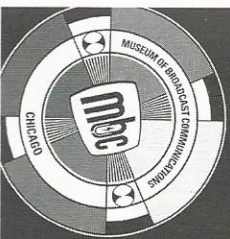
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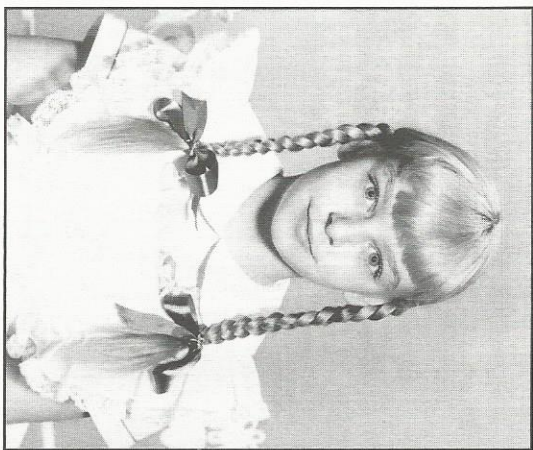
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A few moments with...

PATTY MCGORMACK

For almost her entire life, Patty McCormack has maintained a steady presence on television and film. As a child, she appeared on Mama, one of the early successes of television. More recently, she was Liz LaCerva on the critically acclaimed HBO series The Sopranos. Her movie credits include playing Pat Nixon in Frost/Nixon and appearing with Joaquin Phoenix in The Master. Still, to many people she will always be remembered for her haunting, iconic portrayal of the cold-blooded Rhoda Penmark in the stage and movie productions of The Bad Seed. In a conversation recorded in Los Angeles, McCormack recalled that she was already a show business veteran by the time The Bad Seed came along:



WARNER BROS./PHOTOFEST

I learned the seriousness of show business while doing that. So that was my first career.

You had been "carrying on"? In what respect?

Giggling, and teasing the person who was carrying me — and I was supposedly dying. It was a very dramatic scene. I was six and I had not a clue. We lasted a week on Broadway.

And then, slowly I began to do all sorts of parts... my real acting thing came on my seventh birthday when I got *Kraft Theatre*. It was called "Mr. Barry's Etchings," if anybody looks it up on IMDb. It was a huge thing to get and it was very memorable.

This was in the early days of live television—

Yes, and I did a lot of that. That was all there was, really; that and theatre — and soaps.

I've talked to folks who did live television as adults, and they talk about how arduous and challenging it was—

You're so awake! [Laughs] There's nothing like it!

Of course, you were also on Mama. I loved that show!

How did that come to be? Do you remember?

Oh, gosh... I think I auditioned for it. The typical thing was to go in... They met you if you were too young to read dialogue... We rehearsed in Grand Central Station, because there were rehearsal halls there.

You were working on that show with a couple of people who had lengthy radio resumes, including Dick Van Patten.

Oh, he was the best friend to children ever, so the fact that he had kids and a huge family is no surprise. He was playful; he used to play with Kevin Coughlin and I, and we were the two kids on the show. We had the best time. We used to tease him; throw things over the dressing room wall, and he'd kibitz with us. It was great.

Well, he had been a child actor himself.

Sure. So he knew that we were bored.

And another young woman who had a lengthy radio career starred on that show: Rosemary Rice.

Can you imagine? I had no idea. And Robin Morgan, of course [Dagmar on the Mama show], who is very famous as a women's [activist], well-known and admired for her brilliance in writing, and she was always smart. She was a little older than we were, and her mom was dedicated to her, because I think it was just the two of them.

Is it fair to compare live theatre to live television?

No. So different... It's similar in that you begin... you have a beginning, a middle and an end, and you're finished. And you get to do it once. But at least in the theatre you get to go back the next night and improve... but when it goes out [on television], it's out.

When you got to play The Bad Seed, you'd been an actress for a couple of years — not the longest time to practice your craft — but from all reports, [the play] was an absolute tour de force, and an amazing, groundbreaking play in its way.

There was nothing around like it. That was the thing.

Looking back, did you get a lot of direction or was this a role that came naturally to you — if that's not a guiding question?

Well, you know, there was probably something in my person that made them think that I could be that person. I don't know what that was. I was pretty tidy [laughs], as Rhoda is tidy, but I think that's the real difference — that's what I was trying to say earlier about live TV versus live theatre, is that so much occurred in the doing of that play, that I learned stuff on the journey. And the director was present and kept tuning us up, and you keep things in and you throw things out and things get found by accident, and the director would say, "I really like that. Make sure to keep that." We were together only ten months, but it was a lifetime for me, you know? By the time we did the film, we were a team, and we knew what we were doing. ■

Time in to Those Were the Days on March 30 to hear this conversation in its entirety, as Patty McCormack talks about her very brief radio career and the joy of playing a "true psychotic."

So I actually got it — miracle of miracles, because I had no idea what I was doing and I was carrying on on-stage as I was ... in my dying scene, being carried downstairs, and I was scolded profusely by the producers and director. [Laughs] I

O CHRISTMAS TREE

BY JAMES DOHREN

In my memory, the first sign of Christmas was the changing of decorations not only at home, but all over town, especially in downtown Aurora. For half of the 1950s, we Dohrens lived downstairs in a duplex my parents owned. There wasn't much to decorate so Mom (with help from the more responsible of us children) redid just about every surface in the living and dining rooms.

As with most families, a crèche set was an important part of our decorations — and as was probably the case in most families, ours was a family heirloom with a few hand-painted, chipped plaster figures and a bent Holy Star. The stable was rather thinly disguised corrugated cardboard covered in gold paint and grit, but who cared?

There was a winter scene on the dining room buffet with miniature pine trees and a frozen pond (actually a mirror sur-

James Dohren is a retired teacher who avidly listens to Those Were The Days in Downers Grove, Illinois.

rounded by some cotton batting). The front windows were decorated with Glass Wax-stenciled snowflakes, stars and angels. All glorious to behold.

There's no doubt, however, that the Christmas tree was the central figure in our home — as it is in so many homes. Even in the poor times of the depression and war-year shortages, might there not at least have been a tree? Did they ever ration those?

While the prosperity of the '50s quickly and sadly led others to flaunt their conspicuous consumption in the regrettable but unforgettable form of aluminum trees (flood lit, yet!) and flocked trees of every hue, the Dohren family remained purists. Ours was always a real tree.

Dad never left the tree until the last minute, unlike the father in a favorite movie I could name. He and I (or sometimes the whole family) would go the YMCA lot at the seasonally (and sensibly) closed Dairy Queen on Lake Street. In my memory it was always penetratingly cold. There were only two types of trees then: balsams with the many

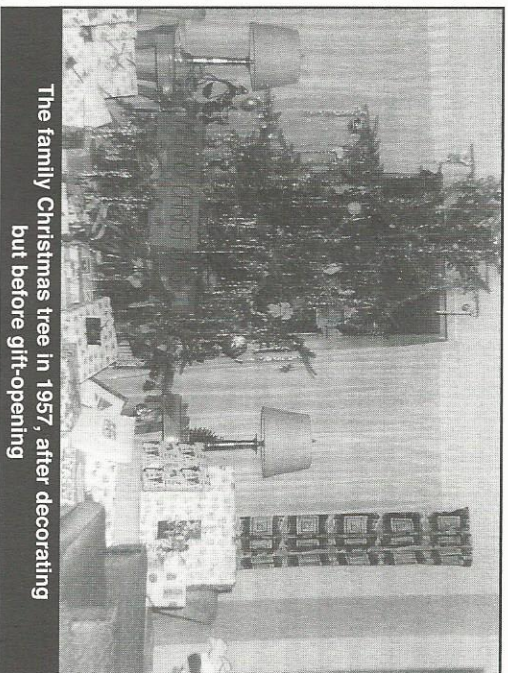
branches of short needles and the more graceful long-needled Scotch pines. Dad was always a balsam man, for reasons which will become apparent later. He would go from tree to tree and back again. I could understand this pattern because all of the trees were frozen in the position they came in on the truck — pretty much like a

folded umbrella, but without the pleasant foreknowledge of what it would look like unfolded.

Dad would take each tree in a gloved hand and pound the trunk bottom on the ground. Out would fall lots of brown needles (too many and the tree was a reject — too dried out) and often crusted ice and snow. You had to have an experienced eye like Dad's to judge what the thing would look like when it thawed. I really didn't like Mom going along because it took longer in the freezing cold, as she second-guessed just about every tree Dad considered. He persevered and finally the decision would be made and the tree tied to the top of the sedan. Good or bad, we had our tree.

At home Dad cut a slice off the bottom and a few branches from the trunk and placed it in a pair of water on the enclosed stairwell on the back of the duplex. There it could thaw, any snow and ice melting harmlessly while the tree gradually showed its true shape. This step was an important test of how the tree was going to be.

The next step was to attach the stand to the trunk and bring it into the living



The family Christmas tree in 1957, after decorating but before gift-opening

room — a process more easily said than done, for the branches were always wider than the doorways. Mom helped, but was mostly concerned with the mess and any scratched woodwork.

Dad now began his finest work. With one or more of us holding the tree at the bottom, he would have us turn it back and forth to achieve the best effect in the bay window. There was more holding of the tree as he got the bulky thing balanced just right in the little stand by adjusting the four bolts that held it. This adjustment was of crucial importance; if not done just right, the tree could fall over on someone (as it once did on my sister Patsy).

Now, my father was a calm and patient man, easily the most placid person I've ever known. But these trees could try the Patience of Job and Dad was just getting started. It sometimes happened that nothing short of a gyroscope could have gotten some of our trees balanced, so Dad would get crafty. He'd disappear to the basement and come back with a spool of monofilament fishing line, which he'd tie from the branches in the back of the tree to the

looks on the bay window.

Dad's next procedure was his specialty — his *pine de resistance*, if you will. He would survey the section of the tree facing the room (usually about three-quarters of the circumference) looking for gaps, which it seems there nearly always were. He would then use his electric drill to drill a hole in just the right place and insert a branch he'd earlier cut from the bottom of the tree to make room for the tree stand. If it worked out right, the need would not exceed the supply. Finally, when everything was ready, a tree skirt simulating drifts of snow and a red and green picket fence about five inches high were installed around the base of the tree.

As if that tippy tree stand weren't problem enough, it caused more trouble when one remembers that it had to be full of water. Despite having been cut perhaps months earlier the old tree still had some life left in it. If you kept water in the stand, the tree would take it up and keep the needles supple. Woe to those who shirked this duty for they would soon reap drifts of brown needles.

Crawling under to fill the stand often fell to me, though under protest. I was old enough to understand the task yet small enough to skinny under the bottom branches without hitting them a solid blow and causing havoc above. I carried the water in a small watering can, pulled back the tree skirt and poured. Since there wasn't enough head room for me to peer into the stand, I was taught to use a finger to test the water level. Too little and the tree would dry out. Too much and an overflow would stain the living room carpet.

Then came the lights. We had bubble lights — which were exotic then, but now are displayed to give trees (I shudder

to write) a "retro" look. Two things were different about the more ordinary Christmas tree lights in the '50s. First, they were all big-bulb C-6 or C-7s made by Noma or General Electric. (For younger readers and the otherwise uninformated, C-7 is the size still commonly used in night lights.) Despite the size, their opaque coating meant these lights were not really very bright, so we tried enhancing some of them by putting a reflector around the base of the bulb.

The other difference was also noticeable and not in a good way. If one of the string of lights burned out, the whole string would go dark. When this happened, Dad would have to find the affected string amongst all the branches and decorations — all the while trying to keep a good bulb in one hand — unscrew each bulb, take it out, screw in the new bulb and hope for the best.

There are two immutable laws of physics which apply here. First, the string that went out was always on the least accessible part of the tree and the bulb that went out was always the last bulb tested. This second law has a corollary. The color of the burned-out bulb was always different than the bulb Dad held — and if he were really lucky, just as soon as he got one bulb successfully replaced, another string would go out. Poor Dad!

Next on the tree went the ornaments and we had hundreds — boxes and boxes of them, old and new — all carefully wrapped in tissue paper or Kleenex. As we progressed through our school years, we'd bring home precious handmade decorations from school. Part of the great enjoyment of Christmas was learning about family through stories told as heirloom ornaments came out. There were a few bulky and heavy ornaments which

went on the strong bottom branches of the tree. (They had the advantage of being unbreakable, which limited the damage from our cat, Monkey Face.)

All of the other ornaments were light and mostly fragile; as a result, only adults got to hang them when we children were younger. Just like today, most ornaments were hung using thin wire hooks, although a paper clip could be used in a shortage. Again, because I was the oldest child, I was the first to be trusted with the more delicate items. As tall as any of us were, we still had to use a step stool to reach the top branches. I can still remember trying to keep from falling into the tree as I stretched out as far as I could (with Dad holding me by my belt) to hang an ornament in just the right place.

Right here would be a good place to talk about Angie, the Christmas tree angel. Like all of her clouds of sisters, Angie would be placed over the tip-top of the tree. My sister Pat tells me that Angie still appears on her family's tree, but she (Angie) is somewhat the worse for wear after 60-plus years of use.

You don't have to be an older fellow like myself to know what came next: the tinsel. Nowadays if tinsel is used at all it is lightweight and disposable. Despite the connotation of the name, the 1950s tinsel was more serious stuff — narrow, crinkled strips of lead foil, stored in a box on a cardboard frame. It was so heavy that as I write this, I wonder if it was the same "chaff" that was dropped from World War II bombers to jam German radar.

The tinsel was also the subject of two annual mother-son differences of opinion, if not actual arguments. I was of the opinion that tinsel was made to be flung by the handful, landing on the tree in a jolly, happenstance, impromptu exhibition. Mom was of the opinion that

the tinsel needed to be placed practically strand by strand to complement the already displayed lights and ornaments. The other debate came when it was time to "un-decorate" the tree. I thought we should just pull the darn stuff off the tree and throw it away — or, better yet, just leave it on the tree for disposal. She preferred collecting it carefully, gently restoring it to the cardboard and returning it to the box. I can tell you I never won, but I proudly claim that I never gave up. Luckily, about the time the old stuff wore out after many uses, the cheap, plastic stuff came in and we compromised, with Mom getting placement rights and me getting disposal rights.

Judging by contemporary photos and 8 mm films, our trees were always spectacularly decorated. Looking at those images from decades past, it's no wonder Dad always chose a balsam; those Scotch pines would never have held what we had to show. Gaudy or not, the cumulative hours we spent as a family working together on those trees were some of the best times I've ever had.

And so it went. The Christmas traditions came out along with the decorations. They were observed, relished and refreshed, then put away with the lights, ornaments, tinsel, saved paper, ribbons and bows — and stored in our memories, to be renewed time after time until we grew up. If we left Christmas traditions behind for a few years, we never could nor ever would outgrow them. We may have kept them in the attic of our minds for a few years, but when we became parents — then, all too swiftly, grandparents — out they came again, year after year, to tell us, our kids, and our grandkids how Christmas should be celebrated.

Merry Christmas tree memories everyone! ■

With almost half a million miles of travel to his credit, Ray Milland appears to be Hollywood's top-ranking cosmopolite and globe-trotter.

When the Paramount star recently returned from a European picture-making jaunt, he was completing what he estimates to have been his 30th trans-ocean trip. As to the balance of his wanderings, Milland recalls gallivanting about in various parts of the world in conveyances ranging from shiny four-motored bombers to humble burros.

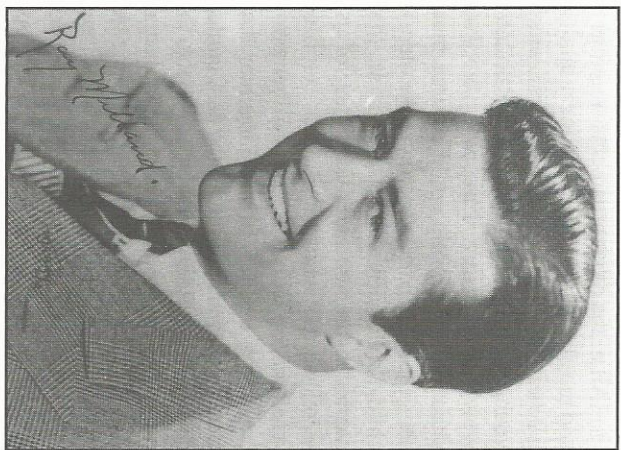
It took a "last splurge" dinner date with Estelle Brody, English movie star, four round trips from England, a number of meals on the cuff and a chance bus-stop meeting with Joe Egli of Paramount's casting department (in that order) to get Ray Milland started as a motion picture actor.

There were some other incidental wanderings and a few extra and minor roles in British films inter-mingled with the four above-mentioned salient facts, but they were the first four really important rungs up the ladder of movie success climbed by Milland.

They occurred back in 1931-32 and ever since then the grade has been a gradual uphill climb until he reached the highest rung on the ladder in 1946 with his winning of the "Oscar" for his characterization of Don Birnam, the dipsomane of *The Lost Weekend*.

The same role also won him an award from France, which presented him

This official biography of Ray Milland was issued by Paramount Studios in April 1949.



with the International Grand Prize for the best performance by an actor at the International Film Festival at Cannes.

Born Reginald Truscott-Jones in Neath, Wales on Jan. 3, 1908, the son of a steel-mill superintendent Milland attended public school, then King's College at Cardiff and then was accepted into the Household Cavalry, King's Royal Guards — a carefully handpicked group of four hundred men who were the legendary protectors of the King's person. During the four years he spent with this elite regiment, Ray became its second best boxing champion, a better-than-average horseman and an expert marksman. After inheriting \$2,000 from an aunt and completing his army career, he went on a tour of Europe. Returning a year later with about \$50 left out of the \$2,000, Milland-like he invited Estelle

Brody to dinner at Citro's in London. Milland-like again, he candidly told Miss Brody he was broke and she suggested he "go to work" as an extra at her studio.

She followed up the suggestion by getting him a job the next morning. Two hours after reporting for work as an extra, he was picked as a "type," given a contract and sent to Scotland the same afternoon for a part in *The Plaything*.

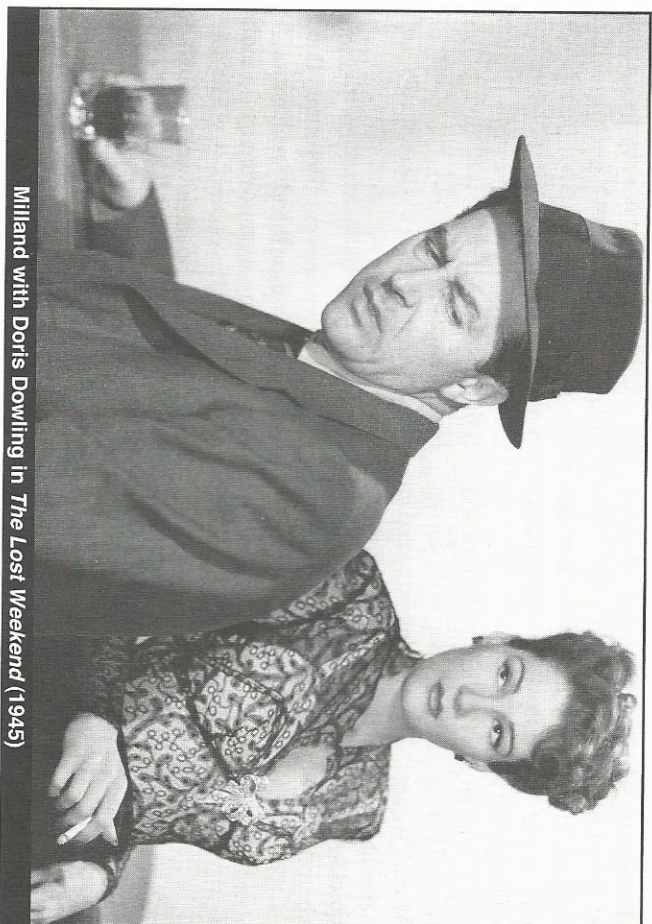
Milland's ability as a marksman won him his next role when he was asked to hit a half-crown at the other end of the room with a rifle he hadn't seen before. Then he was assigned in the same picture to shoot a mirror out of Lya De Putti's hand. Next came his first, real role in *The Flying Scotsman*, being given the part originally slated for Cyril McLaglen, Victor's brother, who was taken ill.

The Flying Scotsman, incidentally, was filmed by Theodore Sparkuhl, who was cameraman on Milland's recent release, *Till We Meet Again*.

Break number two then came Milland's way, for he was spotted by an M-G-M scout (now J. Robert Reubin, vice-president of M-G-M) and given a contract. He spent 15 months with M-G-M in Hollywood, during which time he was loaned to Warner's for the lead in *Bought opposite Constance Bennett*, and to Twentieth Century. He didn't quite make the grade and then started his period of rapid fire commuting from England to America.

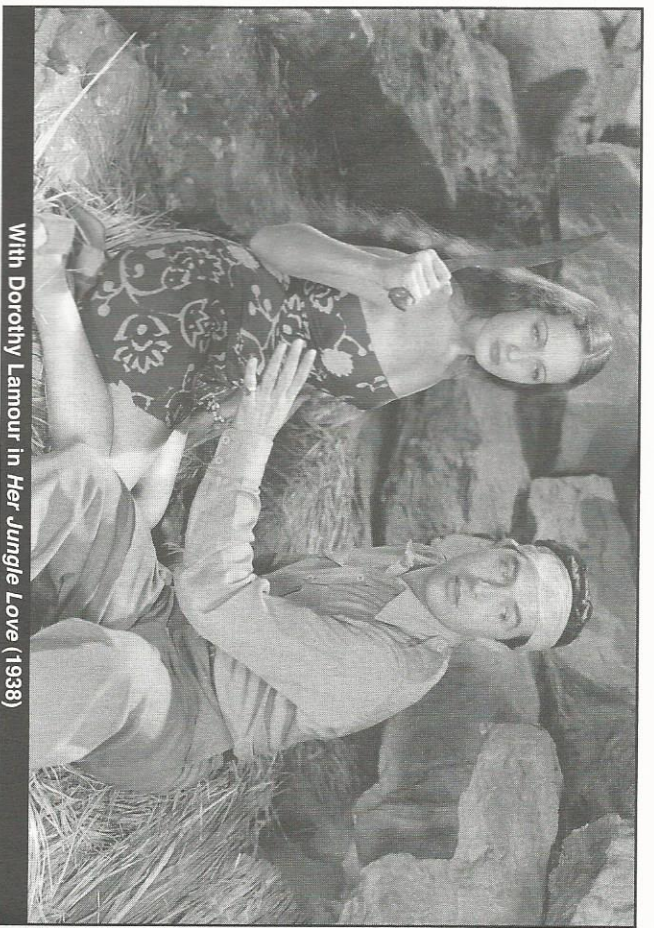
His second trip was made in 1933 and, upon arriving in New York with approximately four hundred pounds, found a cable-gram awaiting him with an offer of a better role in London. He accepted the London offer, leaving New York an hour after his arrival.

This same routine caught up with him again some eight months later, but his round-trip schedule across the Atlantic ended in Hollywood after the aforementioned period of cuffio [ED].



Milland with Doris Dowling in *The Lost Weekend* (1945)

PHOTOFEST



With Dorothy Lamour in *Her Jungle Love* (1938)

PARAMOUNT PICTURES/PHOTOFEST

NOTE — “*cuffo*” refers to “no charge” meals, which was climaxed by the chance meeting with Joe Egli of Paramount’s casting department and the consequent start of his present contract with that studio. That was in 1934. From then on, his climb up the ladder was easier, both mentally and physically, although not too rapid.

It was on his first trip to Hollywood in 1931 that he met his wife-to-be, Muriel Webber. The meeting occurred at a bridge party and a number of dates quickly followed. They terminated rather abruptly, however, when Miss Webber and Milland were accompanied on every date by her brother. Tiring of this routine, Milland broke a date and went out with another girl. The system worked. Miss Webber suddenly became quite interested and later in 1931, they were married. They have one son, Daniel David (Danny), aged eight. His return to London in 1947, for *So*

Evil My Love, marked his first picture there in some eight years. Shortly before war broke out he did *French Without Tears* in Britain for Paramount.

He insists that he is a shy individual. At any rate, he sympathizes with others who are shy. And no star has been kinder to new players. He teamed with Dorothy Lamour, Veronica Lake, Deanna Durbin, Gail Russell, and Barbara Britton in their first pictures and helped every one of them. “He was the one who tipped me off never to back into the lens, but always to keep my face to it,” Dottie Lamour recalls. “I’ve never forgotten that.”

Milland’s own offhand explanation is that “it’s to my own advantage to make ‘em look good.”

He speaks Spanish well enough to make regular broadcasts to Latin America in that language. He has his own workshop and has built most of the furniture for Danny’s room. He owns a beach home at Newport.

Milland is six-foot-one-and-a-half inches tall; weighs 185 pounds; has dark brown hair, blue eyes and an aversion for small talk. He’s an enthusiastic horseman and loves to hunt. His favorite outdoor sports, in addition, are fishing, boating and skiing. His most memorable boat trip was made alone from a Cornwall fishing village in an attempt to cross the English Channel to Calais. In the middle of the channel, he ran out of gas and sandwiches almost simultaneously and finally was rescued by a fishing smack.

A frequent visitor on the famed *Information Please* radio program, Milland accounts for his wide acquaintance with a variety of subjects by explaining that his favorite indoor pastime is studying the Encyclopedia, which he prefers to any other sort of reading.

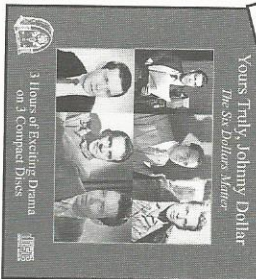
It would seem to account for his high batting average in answering baffling questions in company with the experts. ■

Ray Milland went on to star in the films Dial M for Murder, The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing, X: The Man With X-Ray Eyes, The Thing With Two Heads, Love Story and The Last Tycoon. He starred on the radio and television versions of the series Meet Mr. McNulty and later as the title character in the television series Markham. He died on March 10, 1986.

Tune in to Radio’s Golden Age on January 6 and to Those Were the Days on February 2 to hear Ray Milland on radio.

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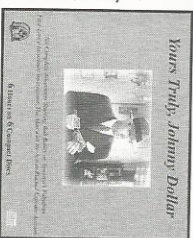
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WE COULD BE HEROES...



A few years ago, comic book scribe Mark Millar wrote about a forthcoming biography of Orson Welles that would purportedly chronicle (among other things) how Welles had planned to write, direct, and star in a movie based on National Periodicals' character Batman. The biography would allegedly include some of Welles' character sketches and even letters of confirmation from some of the film's "stars," including George Raft and Marlene Dietrich.

The whole story was quickly discovered to be a fake (which didn't stop some enterprising souls from splicing together "trailers" and posting them on YouTube); even so, one passage had particular resonance, when Millar suggested that a Welles-directed *Batman* movie "might have launched the superhero renaissance we're undergoing at the moment with quality cast and directors two or three generations earlier."

While that point might be debatable, there's no denying that Hollywood takes comic books *very* seriously today: some of the biggest films of last year centered around superheroes (Batman, The Avengers, and Spider-Man), a trend that's likely to continue with the cinematic return of Superman in 2013. Not long ago, this author had the chance to write a superhero comic — and, in an attempt to demonstrate the character's impact on popular culture, the story included a scene that speculated on who might play the hero in the movie version.

All of which got us to thinking: What if the powers-that-be in Hollywood had launched the superhero-movie renaissance two or three generations earlier?

** To really take this premise all the way, we'll assume that by embracing the idea of big-budget superhero movies, the powers-that-be would in turn have given their production teams free reign to develop costumes and special effects unlike anything heretofore experienced by moviegoers. In other words, they'd believe a man could fly.*

What if the Louis B. Mayers and Jack Warners of the world had reacted to the birth of Superman and his ilk not by exiling these characters into low-budget serials, but by making them the focus of major motion pictures, using all of their production resources and star power at their disposal? * Who would Hollywood have made into superheroes?

Here are a few suggestions:

SUPERMAN

The Golden Age of Comics as we know it began in 1938 with the release of *Action Comics* #1, which brought the world its first glimpse of Superman. The Man of Steel was unlike any hero before him: An all-powerful character in a colorful costume who chose not to rule society as a dictator, but decided instead to help it as a champion of the oppressed — and who decided to make himself more human by masquerading as the mild-mannered reporter Clark Kent.

To bring this character to the big screen requires a director who can handle rugged action and the sly sense of humor that allows a would-be god to play the role of a weakling. **Howard Hawks** was that rare creature who could direct films with action and violence (*Scarface*, *Only Angels Have Wings*) as well as rollicking comedies in which men and women shared the laughter equally (e.g. *Twentieth Century*, *Ball of Fire*, and the legendary *Bringing Up Baby*). Here's the cast we envision Hawks directing:

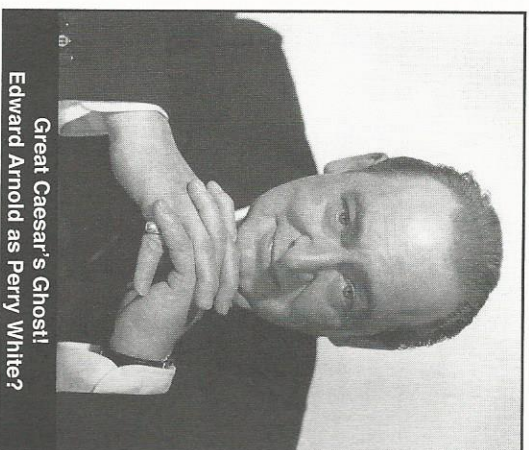
For the dual role of Superman and his not-so-super alter ego, it's important to have someone with a muscular build

A heroic fantasy by STEVE DARNALL,
"starring" TYRONE POWER, JOHN PAYNE,
GENE KELLY, GINGER ROGERS, and an all-star cast!

ILLUSTRATION BY CATHERINE SATIRA

and a sly sense of humor. The actor in question must have the ability not only to play the mild-mannered Clark Kent (who was, let's not forget, raised on a Midwestern farm) but also to play the supremely confident Man of Steel. In a certain world, Cary Grant would be an ideal choice — after all, his performance in *Bringing Up Baby* is sort of a microcosm of what we expect from Superman: the bespectacled nebbish who later throws aside his glasses and becomes a daring man of action — but Grant's English accent is such a one-of-a-kind instrument that not even the glasses would disguise him. Henry Fonda or James Stewart certainly could convey the Midwestern modesty associated with Clark Kent, but their tall, lanky physiques wouldn't do much to fill out the Superman costume. With that in mind, we recommend **John Payne**, whose experience in musicals (and his subsequent performance as attorney Fred Gayley in *Miracle on 34th Street*, a superhero movie of a sort) suggests a hero capable of delivering athletic exuberance and heroic deeds with a sly wink.

Casting the role of Superman's girl friend Lois Lane is equally challenging. It's easy to think of Katharine Hepburn or Eve Arden playing the vivacious *Daily Planet* reporter, but for all of their wonderful, comedic grace, one suspects that neither of them would be fooled for an instant by the glasses that separated Clark Kent from Superman. There's always Rosalind Russell (who was great as an intrepid newspaper reporter in *His Girl Friday*), but her imposing physicality suggests that she could handle herself pretty well without any help from a Man of Steel. The role of Lois Lane requires a spirited creature; someone who can be convincing as an intrepid reporter (one willing to go to any length for a scoop), as a damsel in distress, and as a self-absorbed beauty who can't quite put her finger on why Clark Kent never seems to be present whenever the Man of Steel shows up. It's hard to think of anyone who could fulfill all of those roles in one performance as capably as **Jean Arthur**, whose work always displayed a feisty spirit, whether the subject was comedic (*Easy Living*, *The More the Merrier*) or

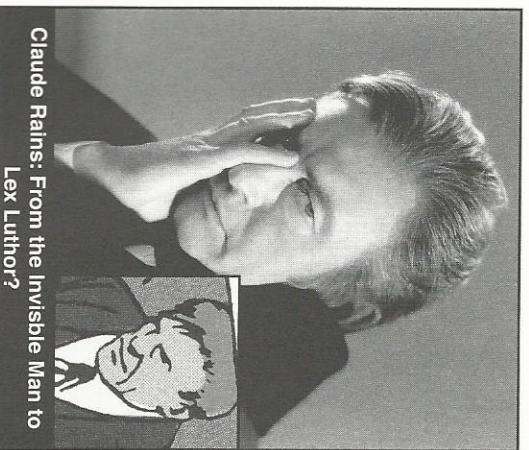


Great Caesar's Ghost!
Edward Arnold as Perry White?

dramatic (*Only Angels Have Wings*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*).

For the role of Perry White, you need a character actor capable of playing a gruff authority figure with a short fuse. The stout stature and sandpaper voice of Eugene Pallette — ably demonstrated as the father figure in *My Man Godfrey* and *The Bride Came C.O.D.* — puts him in the running. Still, no one can convey bluster and authority like **Edward Arnold**. Honestly, can't you just hear him proclaiming "Great Caesar's Ghost!" at the top of his lungs?

As for Superman's enemies, we'll limit ourselves to the best-known of them all: mad scientist Lex Luthor. History compels us to note that Superman's life-long nemesis actually started out with a shock of red hair before his transformation into the bald-headed villain most of us recognize. The role requires an actor who can suggest tremendous intelligence, the ability to work with technology, and an obsession with acquiring (and using) power. Although he might not match up in one-on-one battle with Superman, we'd like to recommend



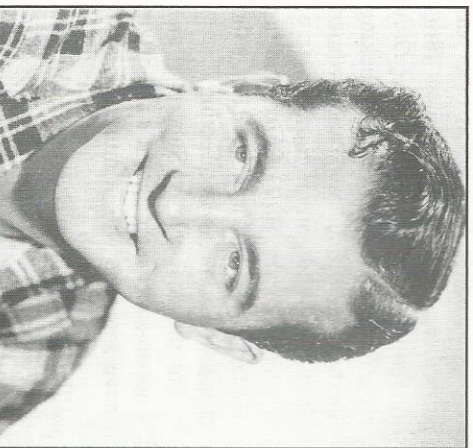
Claude Rains: From the Invisible Man to Lex Luthor?

Claude Rains, a fine actor whose performances in *The Invisible Man* and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* proved his skill at playing men who allow their obsessions to warp their judgment.

BATMAN

Batman creator Bob Kane once said he envisioned that his character would combine the athleticism of Zorro with the intellect of Sherlock Holmes — and if recent movie treatments have emphasized the former over the latter (albeit with many more explosions), they've also reminded us that the Dark Knight lives in a world of darkness and shadows. Bruce Wayne became the Batman and launched a war on crime after witnessing the murder of his parents. While he masqueraded as a vacuous playboy, his view of life was forever warped by this cataclysmic event — and the criminals he tracked down were often pretty warped as well.

What better choice for a director than **Fritz Lang**, who created a prototype for Gotham City with his classic 1926

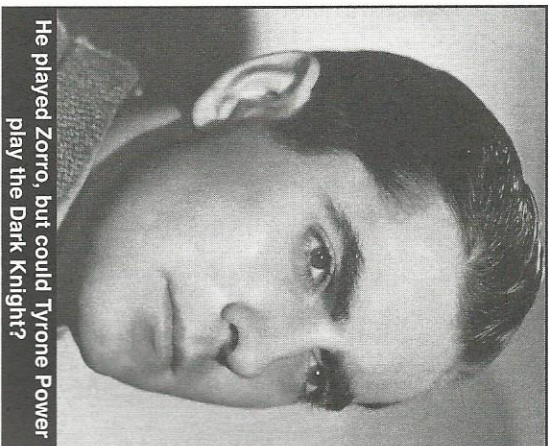


John Payne:
Would you believe this man can fly?



Jean Arthur as Lois Lane:
Intrepid with a "feisty spirit"

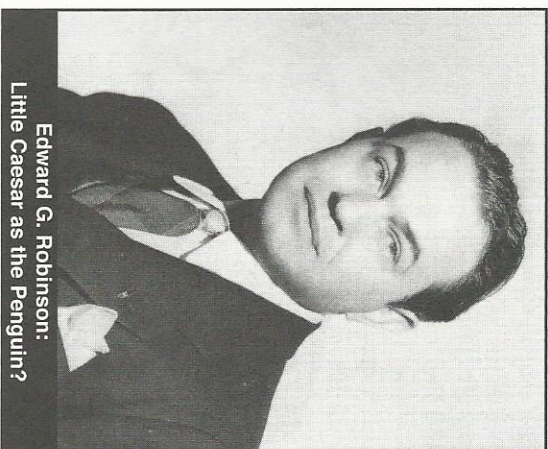
COLUMBIA PICTURES/PHOTOFEST



He played Zorro, but could Tyrone Power play the Dark Knight?

film *Metropolis*? His subsequent films focused on bizarre characters (see *M* and *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*) and even obsessive men out for justice and/or revenge (most chillingly in 1936's *Fury*). One suspects Lang would be right at home in a story involving men and women with strange habits and even stranger appearances. (Of course, if he's not available, there's the equally stylish Alfred Hitchcock.)

As with Superman, the role of Batman requires a good-looking actor who can switch gears between two very different personalities—in this case, the vapid Bruce Wayne and the fiercely intense alter ego. Unlike Superman, Batman isn't invulnerable; the role requires an actor who can convincingly deliver pain and feel it as well, someone who can be convincing as a man of high society and a scourge of the underworld. We recommend **Tyrone Power**, who never played Sherlock Holmes but did portray the swashbuckling Zorro and demonstrated his capacity for anthroes by playing the notorious Jesse James.



Edward G. Robinson: Little Caesar as the Penguin?

Of course, the Caped Crusader has no shortage of colorful, even outlandish foes. For the role of the Joker, how about **Laurence Olivier**? He has the regal demeanor of someone who considers himself a “Clown Prince of Crime” and his performance as Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* indicates a penchant for villainy and insanity that would bloom more completely with later projects like *Hamlet* and *Marathon Man*.

For the role of the Penguin, we propose **Edward G. Robinson**. After all, what is the Penguin but an upscale version of the gangster roles that made Robinson famous? Give him a top hat, a tuxedo, a monocle, a cigarette holder and the ever-present umbrella. Done.

On the distaff side, Batman's best-known female villain is the Catwoman, a role that requires a performer who can combine athleticism and allure sufficient enough to throw the Caped Crusader off his game. Who better to handle those responsibilities than former chorus girl **Barbara Stanwyck**, who set the bar for dark-hearted women with *Baby Face*

(and later raised that bar with her chilling performance in *Double Indemnity*)?

Finally, while Millar's fictitious account suggested that Orson Welles would play Bruce Wayne, it seems like he'd be more at home in a character role—we're thinking specifically of Harvey Dent, who became the vicious Two-Face after a gangster gave him an acid facial. Two-Face wears a bizarre “two-sided” costume to match his facial appearance and uses the gangster's “lucky coin” to help him make all his criminal decisions. A mentally imbalanced character with a penchant for constant coin-flipping? An actor buried in disfiguring make-up? Welles would eat this role for breakfast.

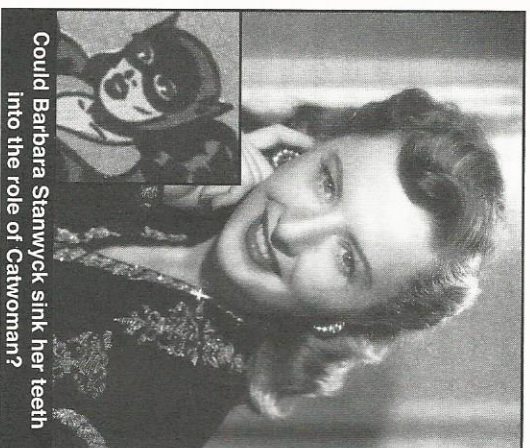
Of course, Batman has friends as well as foes, chief among them butler Alfred Pennyworth and Police Commissioner Gordon. For the former role, it's tempting to go with Hollywood's favorite movie butler, the wonderfully droll **Arthur Treacher**, although Charles Laughton is a strong possibility. The latter role requires someone with a certain dignity—a performer who can see (and understand) the dark-

ness of Batman and temper it with a certain restraint. Based on his performances in *Citizen Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons*, we think **Joseph Cotten** would fit the bill perfectly.

WONDER WOMAN

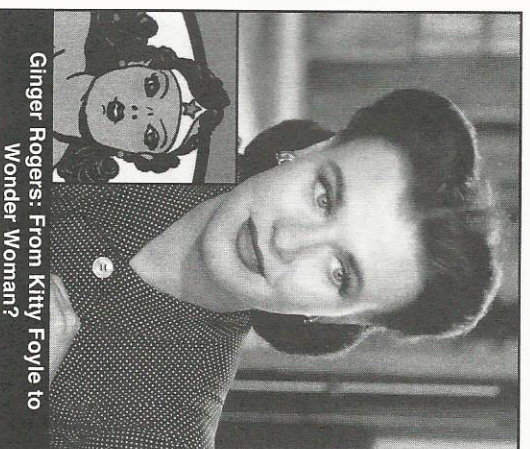
Since her debut in *Sensation Comics* #1, Wonder Woman has been a fascinating mixture: a princess, a warrior, a fighter, and even an early feminist. The role requires someone who can be stately, yet still has the agility to deflect a bullet or throw a punch; an actress who can inspire those around her, yet one who isn't afraid to show a little skin. Having proven her ability to play dark-haired heroines through her Oscar-winning performance in *Kitty Foyle*, we suggest keeping the hair dye handy and handing the role to **Ginger Rogers**.

For the role of the heroine's mother, the dignified Queen Hippolyta, we suggest someone who can convey both beauty and maturity—and you'd be hard-pressed to find many stately, beautiful actresses who could pass for royally bet-



Could Barbara Stanwyck sink her teeth into the role of Catwoman?

PARAMOUNT PICTURES



Ginger Rogers: From Kitty Foyle to Wonder Woman?

FROM RADIO PICTURES/PHOTOFEST

ter than **Myrna Loy**.

As for Col. Steve Trevor — the male equivalent of Lois Lane — you need an actor who could be convincing as a man of action yet self-effacing enough to understand the inherent comedy of the role: After all, he's a colonel in the armed forces, smitten with a woman who could wipe the floor with him — what's more, his role in the relationship is that of the damsel-in-distress. **Joel McCrea** has the rugged build of an action hero (as evidenced in *The Most Dangerous Game* and *Foreign Correspondent*), but his work in Preston Sturges' *Sullivan Travels* and *The Palm Beach Story* suggest he's also great at playing hapless men who charge into battle... even when they know they're in over their heads.

Who could play Priscilla Rich, the society girl with the split personality that transforms her into the dangerous Cheeatah? It's a role that requires a woman of beauty with a fiery spirit; the ability to turn on a dime from demure to bloodthirsty. We recommend the woman whose mental breakdown was integral to

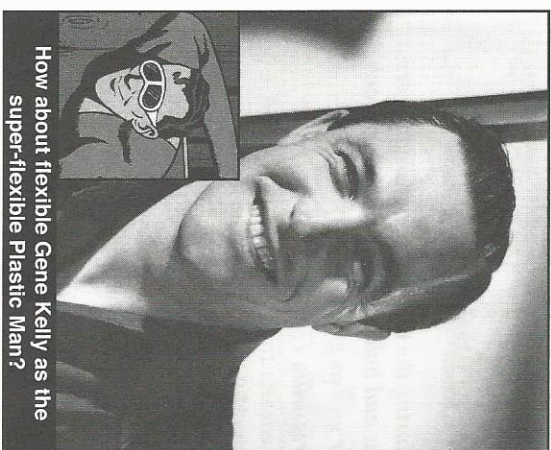
1939's *They Drive By Night*, the great **Ida Lupino**.

Obviously, a movie centered around women requires a director with a reputation for directing women... so let's hand it over to **George Cukor**, the man who directed *Little Women* (with a cast of mostly women) and *The Women* (with a cast of nothing but women), demonstrating a talent and an empathy for working with female actresses.

PLASTIC MAN

While he wasn't one of the first superheroes, Jack Cole's pliable creation is certainly one of the most distinctive.

He was a two-bit crook named Eel O'Brian, until the night his gang broke into the Crawford Chemical Works. Eel got shot in the shoulder, doused with a mysterious chemical, and was abandoned by the gang to fend for himself. Fleeing to the mountains in panic, Eel was rescued and nursed back to health by a monk who sensed a potential for good in the criminal. What no one could have sensed was the chemical would allow O'Brian to stretch his body like a human rubber band. Convinced that his new abilities would be a great weapon against crime ("I've been *for* it long enough!" he exclaims), he became Plastic Man and, with his tubby pal Woozy Winks (another reformed criminal), started in stories that took him to delightfully absurd heights (and lengths). Here was a hero who could slither through any keyhole and turn himself into a human parachute. The role of Eel O'Brian would require someone who could pull off the angry energy of a hoodlum, yet he'd also have to be flexible — and willing to con-tort himself to help create the illusion of total malleability. Eddie Bracken could

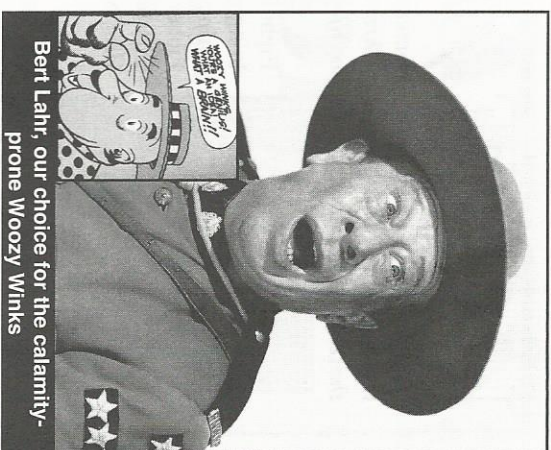


How about flexible Gene Kelly as the super-flexible Plastic Man?

probably pull off the bewilderment of someone who discovered that he had become Silly Putty with legs, but how convincing would he be as a tough guy? With that in mind, we recommend a man with a great understanding of body language and a desire to prove that his talent could extend beyond musicals: **Gene Kelly**.

The role of sidekick Woozy Winks is a different sort of broad comedy as well: Here's a character who wants nothing more than to help his pal, and for his efforts he makes most tough situations even tougher. You need somebody who can convince us he's cowardly at worst and foolhardy at best. Stand back, America: This looks like a job for one of America's great clowns, the indefatigable **Bert Lahr**.

To direct a *Plastic Man* movie, you need someone who can bring a sober twist to some of the most ridiculous and amazing sight gags in cinema history. What an opportunity to re-launch the directorial career of a cinematic immortal: the great **Buster Keaton**!



Bert Lahr, our choice for the calamity-prone Woozy Winks

Mind you, these are one writer's suggestions in response to questions that will always be completely hypothetical, and these musings only begin to scratch the surface. For example, would one cast Burt Lancaster or Robert Mitchum as The Spirit? Would Fred MacMurray make a good Captain Marvel (since he was, after all, the visual model for the character back in 1940)? How about C. Aubrey Smith as the mighty wizard Shazam?

Topics like this are the mental equivalent of eating potato chips: Once you get started, it's hard to stop. You might have some ideas and casting lists of your own and we'd love to see them — if only to imagine what might have been... ■

All characters illustrated in this article are © and ™ DC Comics and are presented here for journalistic purposes only.

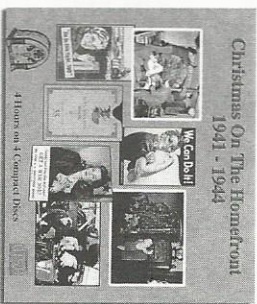
Tune in to Those Were the Days during the month of February to hear a complete 12-part story on The Adventures of Superman.



Ida Lupino as the Cheeatah, the society girl with the split personality

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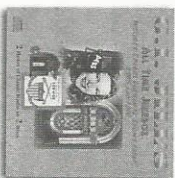


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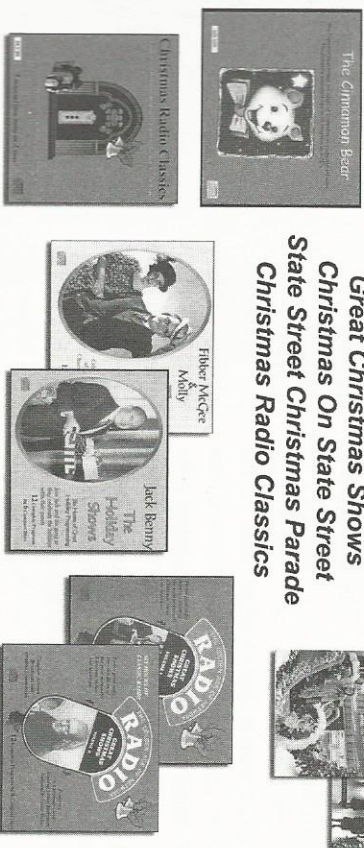
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DESTINATION: RADIO

A Look at some of Chicago's African-American radio pioneers

BY RYAN ELLETT

Few cities have a history as intertwined with early radio as Chicago. Such legendary stations as WMAQ, WLS, and WGN all date to the early 1920s; during the 1930s, the city's stations were second only to those of New York in terms of producing original broadcast dramas.

Less well known are the many contributions that African-Americans made to the city's broadcasting scene as writers, producers, actors and newsmen. In addition to the countless musicians who filled Chicago's airwaves with legendary jazz tunes nearly from the beginning of the era of commercial radio, the city could boast of a number of dramatic, variety, news, and talent programs aimed at a black audience.

Black Chicagoans, in fact, were on the air even before commercial radio emerged in 1920, communicating with Morse code over the airwaves as professional and amateur operators. History

Ryan Ellett is the author of Encyclopedia of Black Radio in the United States, 1921-1955, published by McFarland (www.mcfarlandpub.com).

may never reveal the very first Chicago-area African-American wireless (as radio was referred to then) user, but Harry Daily must be among the earliest. Daily honed his radio skills while serving in the navy and in 1914 — after multiple rejections for government radio jobs due to his race — he applied successfully for a wireless job with the Red Star Line. Daily was subsequently denied the position when he showed up for work and the Atlantic liner discovered he was black, a fact that had not been clarified on the job application.

Another early operator who broadcast as an amateur (as opposed to a professional like Daily) was 17-year-old Robert Crawford. As a student at Wendell Phillips High School in Chicago, Crawford built a fully functioning wireless station which included a homemade transmitter, receiver, and telegraph key. In 1916 he was identified as the only black member of the local Wireless Club.

During the post-1920s commercial era, Chicago's first black broadcaster was Jack Cooper, widely regarded as the dean of African-American radio professionals. Considered the first of his race to

make a career in the radio industry, Cooper spent most of his years on the air—waxes creating and promoting radio content for the enjoyment and edification of black listeners.

After a short job in the nation's capital at station WCAE, Cooper returned to Chicago where he created one of the medium's first black-oriented entertainment programs, *The All-Negro Hour*. Drawing on his years in vaudeville, the show debuted on November 3, 1929 over WABC. Audiences approved and the series ran weekly until 1935.

Building on the success of *The All-Negro Hour*, Cooper began creating additional shows in 1933 and by 1935, Cooper was responsible for the content of one-sixth of WABC's broadcasting schedule. In addition to *The All-Negro Hour*, his numerous creations during the early to mid-1930s included *The Colored Children's Hour*, *The Defender Newsreel*, *Midnite Accommodation*, *Timely Tunes*, *Midnite Ramble*, and *Nite in Harlem*. Nevertheless, Cooper biographer Mark Newman emphasizes that the would-be radio mogul was consistently relegated to late night and weekend slots and struggled for years to get his programs on during the station's prime time hours.

Cooper managed to produce so much programming by using prerecorded

music instead of live performers, a gimmick that he didn't originate but one that he eventually used to his immense benefit. As early as 1931 he came to the realization that playing so-called "race" records (featuring black performers) — which were exempt from the ASCAP ban on playing records over the air — was considerably cheaper than paying live talent. The format was so successful that even *The All-Negro Hour* cut most of its live singing, skits, and serials (only the recurring comedy sketch "Horseshadish and Fertilizer" survived).

Despite Jack Cooper's apparent success as measured by airtime, financial security was elusive as long as he was blocked out of the best broadcasting times. In 1938, fourteen years after his first radio work, Cooper finally caught a break and had the opportunity to buy mid-afternoon time on Chicago stations WABC and WHFC. He immediately programmed some new disc jockey shows: *Rug Cutter's Special*, *Gloom Chasers*, and *Jump, Jive, and Jam*.

In June of 1947, Cooper debuted *Wardrobe Derby* (sponsored by National Credit Clothiers) on station WAAF. Participants competed for items of clothing, including a complete wardrobe for the grand prize winner. He had two other shows at the time including *Jivin' With Jack*, a daily record program. That year

marked the highpoint of Cooper's radio enterprise, whereupon he was selling 40 hours of air time every week across four stations.

Between 1946 and 1952 he produced *Listen Chicago* over WAAF, a public affairs program focused on topics of interest to black listeners. Other series created by Cooper over the years included *Bible Time*, *Know Your Bible*, *Song of Zion*, *Songs By Request*, *Evening Heat Wave*, and *Tips and Tunes with Trudy*. *Your Legal Rights* offered legal advice to listeners, while another show, *Missing Persons*, claimed to have helped reunite thousands of black families separated during the migrations of the early 20th century.

It took two decades, but his tireless work paid off and Cooper enjoyed a new level of financial prosperity during the final years of his career, pulling in a reported \$200,000 per year. For his groundbreaking efforts on behalf of radio and the African-American people, Cooper was inducted into the National Radio Hall of Fame in 2012.

Though he is not known to have appeared on any of Jack Cooper's programs, James Mitchell is recognized as one of the very few black child actors during this era. As a student at Chicago's Dunbar Junior High School, he used his radio paycheck to support his family during the mid-1930s. Mitchell made his broadcast debut in January 1933, playing the role of Wishbone on *Uncle Quin's Day Dreamers*. The show was heard over WGN and featured historical stories aimed at children. Every week, a group of youngsters (all of whom were white except Mitchell) would make a wish on his character's magic wishbone and were whisked anywhere they wanted to go.

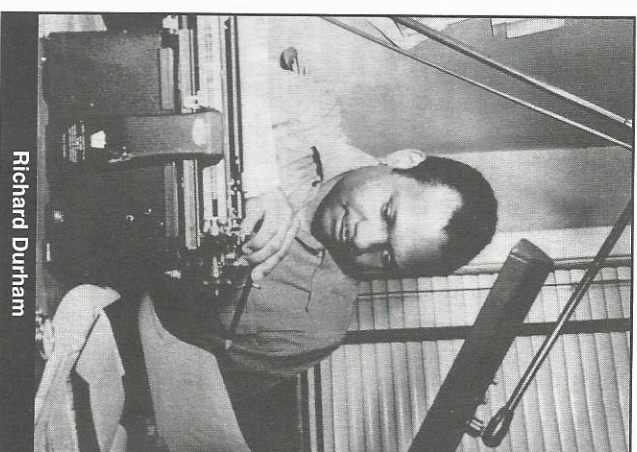
The most famous of Chicago's black

radio performers is unquestionably Richard Durham. Durham was born in Raymond, MS, on September 6, 1917 but spent most of his childhood in Chicago. One source claims he studied first at Wilberforce and Central YMCA College before attending Northwestern University, where he participated in the first NBC-Northwestern University summer radio institute in 1942. Durham's earliest writing work included time as a dramatist with the WPA's Writers Project and as national editor for the city's biggest black newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*.

Durham's first known radio work was a weekly series entitled *Democracy USA*, heard on WBBM/Chicago beginning May 4, 1946. It was a fifteen-minute series of Sunday morning broadcasts that dramatized the life of prominent African-Americans. Sixteen months later — while *Democracy USA* was still on the air — Durham's second effort, *Here Comes Tomorrow*, premiered on WJJD. Considered to be the first black soap

And if you're on Facebook...

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Richard Durham

opera, this story followed the Redmond family and their son, Milton, who returned home with amnesia after fighting in Italy during World War II. Both *Democracy USA* and *Here Comes Tomorrow* went off the air in the spring of 1948.

Destination Freedom, Richard Durham's most enduring radio legacy, debuted over WMAQ on June 27, 1948. The basic premise of *Destination Freedom* — stories that dramatized the lives of individuals of African descent and prominent events in black history — was an extension of his work on *Democracy USA*.

Destination Freedom ran for two years, an impressive run for a program that never attracted a commercial sponsor, was not picked up by a network, and focused exclusively on the lives of African-Americans. In 1956, Durham filed suit against NBC for \$250,000, claiming the network had continued to air episodes in the years since he had left despite his claims to all copyrights concerning the show.

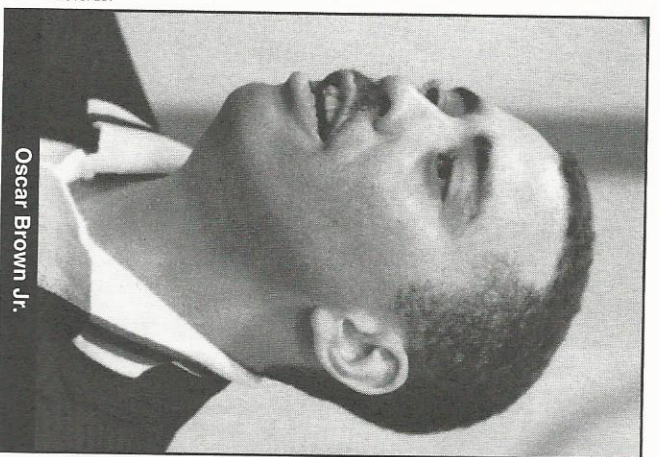
The extent of Durham's post-WMAQ writing is less clear. In a 1983 interview with John Dunning, Durham recalled leaving *Destination Freedom* to work on the Inna Phillips show *What's New?* starring Don Ameche. According to Durham, the difference in pay between the sustained *Destination Freedom* and a sponsored Phillips-produced show was too much to pass up. In that same interview, he commented that frequently his name was not associated with scripts to avoid problems with Southern sponsors. One other known Durham script was "Sweet Cherries in Charleston," a 1957 *CBS Radio Workshop* production that told the story of Denmark Vesey, a slave who led an uprising in 1821. (Vesey had

been the subject of a 1948 *Destination Freedom* program). The extent of Durham's radio writing may never be fully realized.

During the 1950s, Durham worked as a publicist for the Packinghouse Workers' Union and as a press agent during the 1958 congressional campaign of Dr. T.R. Howard. Durham followed these jobs with an editorship at *Muhammad Speaks* and returned to electronic media in 1959 when he was hired to script *Bird of the Iron Feather* (originally called *More From My Life*), an African-American soap opera set in a Chicago ghetto. The show was broadcast over Chicago public television station WTTW and lasted just seven weeks before going off the air due to a premature and unexplained disappearance of funds. In the late 1970s, Durham worked with Muhammad Ali on the boxer's autobiography. Richard Durham passed away on April 27, 1984, and was inducted into the National Radio Hall of Fame in 2007.

Around the time that Richard Durham was hitting his stride with *Destination Freedom*, Vernon Jarrett and Oscar Brown Jr. were teaming up for *Negro Newsfront*, a daily fifteen-minute radio news program broadcast over WJJD — one of the first such newscasts of its kind. Though historical records indicate the news show aired from 1948 to 1951, Brown claimed to have started the show in 1947 over WJJD before moving it to WVON and then WHFC, where it ended its run in 1952.

A native of Tennessee, Jarrett made his career as a journalist in Chicago, beginning in 1946 at the *Chicago Defender* and later with the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*. He provided news for Chicago-area television as well.



Oscar Brown Jr.

remains popular to this day on television. Finalists chosen from each broadcast competed for the grand prize, a thirteen-week contract on WBBM which paid \$100 a week. Over 450 men and women auditioned for *Star Quest*, although the grand prize winner is unknown.

By the late 1940s, the black drama and variety programs of Cooper and Durham were waning and disc jockeys were taking their place. Some of Chicago's first record spinners — beyond Jack Cooper himself — included Al Benson and Eddie Honesty, both of whom enjoyed long radio careers.

Although they never represented more than a tiny fraction of the programming heard on Chicago's airwaves, these pioneering African-Americans carved out a space where the city's black citizens could listen to music, news, and serious drama created specifically about and for them.

One final program of interest was created to promote local black talent. The Chicago *Defender* and station WBBM teamed up to sponsor *Star Quest*, a short-lived 1947 show dedicated to amateur performers, a concept that

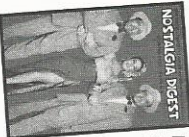
Tune in to Those Were the Days on January 19 to hear a broadcast of *Destination Freedom*.

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Stan Laurel...

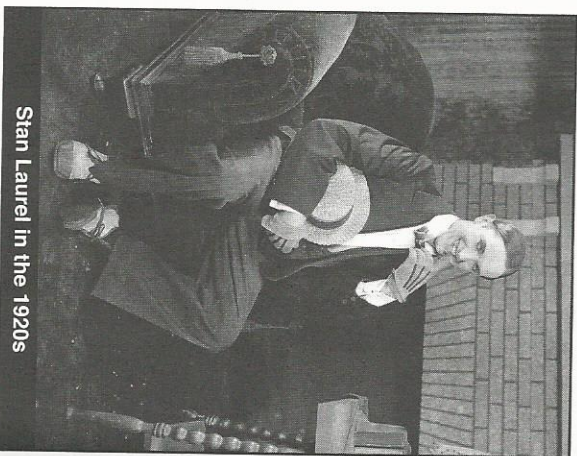
MONSTER!

BY JEFFREY S. MILLER

Comedians have always used scary settings and haunted houses as a backdrop for their funny antics. Many comedy teams shine in vehicles that spoof horror and mystery genres. One immediately thinks of Abbott and Costello and their classic monster “meetings.” Our Gang and the Three Stooges in their many spooky shorts and even the Bowery Boys with their multiple macabre outings.

One seldom thinks of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy in terms of horror comedies, for the beloved duo only made sporadic forays into the genre. In the 1928 silent short *Habeus Corpus*, Stan and Ollie deal with a mad scientist and a corpse that appears to come to life in a cemetery.

In 1930, they appeared in *The Laurel-Hardy Murder Case*, the closest Jeffrey S. Miller is a writer and movie buff from Los Angeles, California.



Stan Laurel in the 1920s

PHOTOGRAPHER

they would come to a real horror-comedy. In this three-reeler, Stan discovers he is heir to a fortune and he and Ollie spend a frightful night in a haunted house where murder and mayhem abound. In 1933's *Dirty Work*, the boys play chimney sweeps who encounter another mad



The gang's all here: Laurel and Hardy with Richard Carle in *Habeus Corpus* (1928)

MGM

scientist, one who eventually transforms Ollie into a chimp. The next year, the duo starred in *Oliver the Eighth*, a dark comedy about a “black widow” who marries and murders men named Oliver — guess who's due to be number eight?

In 1934, the pair headlined another short, *The Live Ghost*, in which they are shanghaied on a ship rumored to be haunted. That same year saw the boys starring in one of their most beloved films, *Babes in Toyland* (a.k.a. *March of the Wooden Soldiers*) is a bona fide Christmas classic and while it is classified mainly as a fantasy, plenty of people have been frightened by the horrible bogey-men who invade Toyland at the command of the evil Barnaby.

In 1940, Laurel and Hardy starred in *A Chump at Oxford*, in which the boys attended the posh British school. After their snooty classmates try to scare them by dressing up as fake ghosts, a fantastic plot element is introduced when Stan hits his head and thinks he is a famous former student. Ironically, 1942's *A-Haunting*

We Will Go is not a horror comedy. Instead, the boys play assistants to Dante the magician, as a prop coffin is switched for a real one containing a gangster's body.

None of these films are remembered as classic horror comedies and most of them only briefly touch this cross-genre area. Which makes it all the more interesting that back in 1925, Stan Laurel appeared in an *actual* horror parody — before the start of his partnership with Oliver Hardy.

Dr. Pyckle and Mr. Pryde directly spoofed John Barrymore's classic 1920 version of Robert Louis Stevenson's immortal novella. For years, it was nearly impossible to see this film; however, the elusive short recently made its way to DVD.

The short begins with a foreword that explains how, if good and evil could be separated, “even saxophone players would be tolerated.” From there, we meet Dr. Stanislaus Pyckle (Laurel), a 19th century English scientist. Pyckle experi-

ments with chemicals in an attempt to create a potion that will separate the good and evil sides of his personality, but all he gets for his efforts are burnt pants and a blackened face — each resulting in a classic Stan Laurel facial reaction.

After a vase falls on his head, Stan is inspired to try one more potion (“Dr. Pyckle’s 58th Variety”). Reluctant to taste it, Stan uses a towel to force himself to drink (a comical device Lou Costello would copy in *Hold That Ghost*). However, this time the move results in Laurel falling out the window! Returning to the lab, Dr. Pyckle transforms into evil Mr. Pryde.

Laurel’s resemblance to John Barrymore’s Hyde is simply amazing. If one just had a quick glimpse of Laurel without knowing what film was playing, one might easily assume it was Barrymore himself!

Pryde takes to the streets and starts causing trouble, although his “evil” deeds are actually impish pranks: He steals ice cream from one little boy and shoots his pea-shooter at a group of kids. Even though these childish pranks are rather tame as outrageous behavior goes, they incite a mob to chase Pryde, who returns to his lab and changes back to normal, saving himself and confusing the mob.

When the crowd disperses, Pyckle’s potion spills and gets licked up by his dog Pete (the same Pete who turned up in the *Our Gang* shorts and as Tiger in the *Buster Brown* series). In a very funny sight gag, Pete transforms into an evil canine version of himself and emerges wearing a wig of hair that resembles Mr. Pryde’s. Pyckle tries to keep Pete hidden and gets bitten for his trouble. (One can’t help but wonder if this was the inspiration for the final act of Jim Carrey’s film

The Mask, in which the main character’s dog Milo finds himself wearing the mask and undergoing a transformation similar to Pete’s.)

Later, Pryde is on the loose again causing trouble. He gives a woman the raspberry then tries to play a joke on a cop — although it backfires and Pryde find himself hit on the head by a brick. Pryde plays some more pranks and once again gets chased by a mob — and once again, he returns to the lab and transforms back to normal.

The mob is turned away but Pyckle’s girlfriend (Julie Leonard, described as a “dainty English miss”) stays behind. Suddenly, Pyckle transforms into Pryde again and advances lecherously on his girl. The short ends abruptly with the girl smashing a vase over Mr. Pryde’s head.

Dr. Pyckle and Mr. Pryde is one of twelve shorts that Laurel did for producer/director Joe Rock. At the time, the story was familiar to movie audiences, as Stevenson’s story had already been adapted multiple times. The film is not frightening in any way — even the transformation scenes occur off-screen. However, Laurel’s Mr. Pryde make-up is still amazing today, bearing an amazing resemblance to the frightful visage John Barrymore employed in his version of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Laurel also mimics Barrymore’s mannerisms and physical movements, illustrating that the famed comic had a knack for impersonation. Even the lab set is nicely detailed and would fit perfectly in a straight horror or science-fiction film.

Laurel’s scenes as Pryde are the funniest in the film. It’s a hoot to see Laurel committing pranks and harassing people on the street — almost as if we’re seeing the Mr. Hyde side of the Stan Laurel we know and love from his later work with

Hardy. The idea to have Pryde shoot peas at passers-by or put someone’s finger into a Chinese trap is brilliant, satirizing Barrymore and Stevenson. (The fact that many of Laurel’s pranks backfire adds to the comedy as well.) As if barely able to contain his excitement, Laurel jumps up and down before he pulls a gag on an unsuspecting Londoner.

The only problem with the short is the abrupt ending. Perhaps the last few seconds of the film are lost or perhaps it just ends as is but the short just seems to run out of steam, as if no one knew how to bring the flick to a proper conclusion.

Dr. Pyckle and Mr. Pryde was thought lost for many years. Some poor quality French prints of the film surfaced eventually. Kino restored the film (and its original titles) and released the short as part of a collection of solo Stan Laurel films.

Although the short was considered lost to the ages, it can be credited as a direct inspiration for Carl Reiner’s 1969 film *The Comic*, in which Dick Van Dyke plays fictional silent film comedian Billy Bright, with the help of clips from his past “films.” In one such sequence, Van Dyke spoofs Mr. Hyde by taking the potion and transforming into the monster — until his girlfriend enters the room and he immediately reverts back to Dr. Jekyll. Whenever she turns her back, he acts like Hyde, returning to Jekyll the moment she turns back to face him.

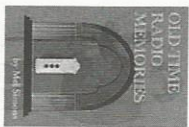
Dr. Pyckle and Mr. Pryde is a rare chance to see Stan Laurel at work before his legacy-inspiring work with Oliver Hardy. It’s also a chance to see him in a bona fide parody of the horror genre, which didn’t happen very often. It may not “transform” your life, but it is a fun diversion for fans of classic horror — and classic comedy. ■

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JANUARY 2013

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5

REMEMBERING LORETTA YOUNG

FAMILY THEATRE (2-13-47) "Flight From Home" is the first show of the series, starring Loretta Young and Don Ameche in the story of a young couple whose marriage is tested after a tragedy. James Stewart hosts. Sustaining, MBS. (29 min)

CAMPBELL PLAYHOUSE (1-14-40) "Theodora Goes Wild" stars Loretta Young and Orson Welles in a radio version of the 1936 movie, about a small-town girl who tries to hide her secret life as the author of a racy novel. Cast includes Ray Collins, Everett Sloane, Georgia Backes, Mary Taylor, Clara Blandick, Frank Readick. Ernest Chappell announces.



Loretta Young

Campbell Soups. CBS. (26 min and 31 min)
SUSPENSE (3-2-50) "Lady Killer" starring Loretta Young, with Lawrence Dobkin. An insurance investigator boards a flight and suspects that the passenger sitting next to her may be a murderer. Harlow Wilcox announces. Auto-Lite. CBS. (29 min)
CAVALCADE OF AMERICA (10-15-45) "Children, This is Your Father" stars Loretta Young, with Gale Gordon, Marlene Ames, Tommy Bernard. The story of a family that must readjust when a husband returns home from the war and becomes reacquainted with

his children. DuPont, NBC. (29 min)
OUR SPECIAL GUEST will be film historian **BOB KOLOSOSKI**, who will talk about the film career of Loretta Young, who was born on January 6, 1913.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 12

OUR MISS BROOKS (5-15-49) Eve Arden stars as Connie Brooks, English teacher at Madison High School, with Gale Gordon as Mr. Conklin, Richard Crenna as Walter Denton, Jeff Chandler as Mr. Boynton, Leonard Smith as Stretch Snodgrass. Walter and Stretch want a photo of Miss Brooks for the school yearbook. Colgate-Palmolive, CBS. (30 min)

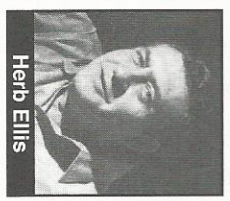
BOBBY BENSON & THE B-BAR-B RIDERS (5-17-54) "Den of Thieves" stars Clive Campbell as Bobby, with Bob Haig as Tex Mason, Don Knotts as Windy Wales, Craig McDowell as Harka. After capturing two members of a criminal gang in Deadwood, Tex and Bobby are asked to interrogate the prisoners. Sustaining, MBS. (30 min) *Read the article about Bobby Benson on page 52.*
SONGS BY SINATRA (11-6-46) It's "The Voice" and "The Schnozz," as Frank sings "My Sugar Is So Refined" and welcomes guest Jimmy Durante, who sings "So I Ups to Him." With Andre Previn, the Pled Pipers, Axel Stordahl and the Orchestra, announcer Marvin Miller. Old Gold Cigarettes, CBS. (27 min)

MOLLE MYSTERY THEATRE (5-21-48)

"Solo Performance" stars Everett Sloane with Elizabeth Morgan. An actor kills his producer and decides to assume the producer's identity to avoid suspicion. Mollie Shaving Cream, NBC. (28 min)
BOB HOPE SHOW (10-24-50) From Fort Belvoir, Virginia, with Bill Goodwin, Les Brown and His Band of Renown, and guest Marilyn Maxwell. Bob and Marilyn sing "All About Love" and perform a sketch as Caesar and Cleopatra. AFRRS rebroadcast. (24 min)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 19 SPOTLIGHT ON HERB ELLIS

ADVENTURES OF NERO WOLFE (11-3-50) Sydney Greenstreet stars as Wolfe, with Herb Ellis as Archie Goodwin. Three men are implicated in a woman's murder when they each accuse the others of making threats against her. Cast includes Lee Millar, Lawrence Dobkin, Barney Phillips, Jerry Hausner. Sustaining, NBC. (30 min)
SPEAKING OF RADIO (9-29-11) Part one of Steve Darnall's conversation with actor and director Herb Ellis, who talks about his career in radio and television. Recorded at Mr. Ellis' home in San Gabriel, CA. (30 min)



Herb Ellis

DRAGNET (7-10-52) "The Big Hate" starring Jack Webb as Sgt. Joe Friday, with Herb Ellis as Frank Smith. A middle-aged woman is found dead in a boxcar. Cast: Vic Perrin, Joyce McClosky, Harry Bartell, Fatima Cigarettes, NBC. (28 min)
SPEAKING OF RADIO (9-29-11) Part two of Steve Darnall's conversation with actor and director Herb Ellis. (29 min)
JASON AND THE GOLDEN FLEECE (6-7-53) Macdonald Carey stars as Jason, owner of the Golden Fleece, with William Conrad as Louis Dumont. The widower of a popular actress wants to hire the Golden Fleece for a honeymoon voyage with his new bride. Written by Herb Ellis and Cleve Herman, with Tony Barrett, Stacy Harris, Bill Bouchee, Charlotte Lawrence, John Larch. Sustaining, NBC. (29 min)

BROADWAY IS MY BEAT (2-21-53) Larry Thor is detective Danny Clover, with Charles

Calvert as Sgt. Gino Tartaglia and Jack Kruschen as Detective Muggavin. The police investigate when a rookie cop is stabbed to death. Cast includes Herb Ellis, Charlotte Lawrence, Lou Merrill, Joe Forte. Sustaining, CBS. (29 min)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26

BIRDS EYE OPEN HOUSE (9-27-45) Dinah Shore stars, with announcer Harry Von Zell, Robert Emmet Dolan and the Orchestra, the Ken Lane Chorus, and guests Vera Vague and Cesar Romero. Dinah sings "I'm Gonna Love That Guy" and "I'll Buy That Dream." Birds Eye Frosted Foods, NBC. (30 min)

ADVENTURES OF ELLERY QUEEN (3-27-43) "Adventure of the Circus Train" stars Hugh Marlowe as Ellery, with Marion Shockley as Nikki. A circus fortune teller attempts to identify a murderer on a moving train. Ernest Chappell announces. Bromo Seltzer, NBC. (28 min)
MILTON BERLE SHOW (9-30-47) The future television star offers "A Salute to Brooklyn," and takes his son to see a game at Ebbets Field. With Pert Kelton, Jack Albertson, Billy Sands, Jackie Gimes, singer Dick Varney, Ray Bloch and the Orchestra. Frank Gallup announces. Philip Morris Cigarettes, NBC. (28 min)

DESTINATION FREEDOM (7-11-48) "Dark Explorers" tells the story of "the Negro explorers who helped open the new world." Cast includes Boris Aplan, Oscar Brown Jr., Don Gallagher, William Key, George Kluge, Charles Mountain, Arthur McCoo, Fred Pinkard, Jess Pugh. Sustaining, NBC. (30 min) *Read the article about Destination Freedom and other African-American radio shows on page 23.*
ADVENTURES OF MAISIE (3-2-50) Ann Southern stars as Maisie Revere, who impersonates English royalty to help two young lovers get married. Cast includes Hans Conried, Sheldon Leonard, Bea Benaderet, Ben Wright, Sammie Hill, Will Wright, Earle Ross. Syndicated. (28 min)

THE WHISTLER (2-25-46) "Murder in Haste" stars Joseph Kearns, with Elliott Lewis, Gerald Mohr, and Bill Forman as the Whistler. After murdering his wife, a man flees town and encounters a mystery writer en route to New York. Marvin Miller announces. Signal Oil, CBS. (30 min)

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FEBRUARY 2013

February Is Jack Benny Month!



ILLUSTRATION BY IRVING JOHNSON, WITH THANKS TO JIM BERGET

This February, we celebrate two radio heroes, as we honor the 80th anniversary of Jack Benny's 39th birthday and the 75th anniversary of the debut of Superman!

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2

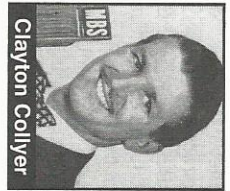
JACK BENNY PROGRAM (2-6-38) Jack oversleeps and misses the opening of the program! With Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris,

Don Wilson, Kenny Baker, Eddie "Rocheester" Anderson, Frank Nelson. First of four consecutive Benny programs from February 1938. Jell-O, NBC. (29 min)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (2-12-40) The first show of the long-running adventure series takes us "millions of miles from the Earth." With their home planet of Krypton on the verge of destruction, scientist Jor-El and his wife Lara place their infant son in a rocket and send him to Earth. Cast includes Ned Meyer as Jor-El and Agnes Moorehead as Lara. Syndicated. (12 min) *Read the article about Superman and other superheroes on page 14.*

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (11-15-36) Jack and the gang reminisce about their school days and celebrate Kenny's first anniversary on the show. Later, the cast presents the first installment of their long-running western feature, "Buck Benny Rides Again." With Mary, Don, Kenny, Phil, Pat C. Flick. Jell-O, NBC. (28 min)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (2-14-40) The second show of the series, as the Man of Steel arrives on Earth, assumes the identity of Clark Kent, and applies for a job at the Daily Planet. Clayton Collier stars as Clark and Superman, with Julian Noa as Perry White and Agnes Moorehead as Miss Smith. Syndicated. (12 min)



Clayton Collier

SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS (6-13-43) "Love Is News" starring Jack Benny, Ann Sheridan and James Gleason in a radio version of the

1937 film. When a relentless reporter tricks an heiress into giving him an exclusive story, she turns the tables by announcing that she's going to marry him. Lady Esther Products, CBS. (28 min)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (4-28-47) Episode one of "The Phantom of the Sea," with Clayton Collier, Julian Noa, Joan Alexander as Lois Lane, announcer Dan McCullough. Lois and the eccentric Horatio Horn are in a Canadian fishing village where the fishermen refuse to go to sea. Jackson Beck narrates. Kellogg's Pep, MBS. (14 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (3-10-46) Guest Ray Milland joins Jack and the gang for a parody of Milland's film *The Lost Weekend*, with Jack and Ray playing twin brothers! With Mary, Phil, Don, Rochester, Larry Stevens, Mel Blanc, Frank Nelson. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (27 min) *Read the article about Ray Milland on page 10.*

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (2-13-38) It's the day before Jack's birthday and Kenny has put 50 candles on a cake! Guest Robert Taylor meets the cast and joins Jack for a violin and cello duet. Second of four consecutive programs. Jell-O, NBC. (30 min)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (4-29-47) Chapter two of "The Phantom of the Sea." Lois Lane and Horatio Horn go to sea with Captain Marble to see what's been terrorizing the local fishermen. Kellogg's Pep, MBS. (14 min)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (4-30-47) Chapter three of "The Phantom of the Sea." Superman flies to the Canadian fishing village of St. Selmo, unaware that the boat carrying Lois and Horatio has capsized! Kellogg's Pep, MBS. (14 min)

LUX RADIO THEATRE (12-16-46) "Killer Kates" starring Jack Benny and Gail Patrick, with Alan Reed, Gale Gordon, Herb Vigran, Gerald Mohr. A failed comedian finds success playing a gangster on Broadway, until the gangster role takes over his personality. William Keighley hosts. AFRRS rebroadcast. (15 min & 16 min & 19 min)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (5-1-47) Chapter four of "The Phantom of the Sea." Superman takes Lois and Horatio to the hospital, where she makes a discovery about the "sea monster" that attacked their boat.

Kellogg's Pep, MBS. (14 min)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (5-2-47) Chapter five of "The Phantom of the Sea." After talking with the mayor of St. Selmo, Clark, Lois, and Horatio take a boat to get a closer look at the mysterious monster. Kellogg's Pep, MBS. (14 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (10-17-54) Jack takes the role of a swashbuckler in a sketch, "The Purple Pirate." With Mary, Rochester, Don, Dennis Day, Bob Crosby, Mel Blanc. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS. (26 min)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (2-20-38) It's been a week since Jack's birthday and everyone wants to know how old he is! The gang offers their version of the movie *Submarine D-1*, with Jack in the lead role. With Sam Hearn as Schlepperman. Third of four consecutive programs. Jell-O, NBC. (29 min)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (5-5-47) Chapter six of "The Phantom of the Sea." A fire on Ike Barnaby's boat forces Clark, Lois, and Horatio to jump ship. Kellogg's Pep, MBS. (14 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (1-25-42) Jack and the gang present part one of "The Frightwig Murder Case," with Jack as Captain O'Benny. With Mary, Phil, Don, Dennis, Yeola Vonn, Harry Baldwin. Jell-O, NBC. (29 min)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (5-6-47) Chapter seven of "The Mystery of The Sea." Clark goes to Metropolis to analyze a sample of sea water, while Lois and Horatio pay a visit to Ike Barnaby (played by Jackson Beck), Kellogg's Pep, MBS. (14 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (2-1-42) Jack has trouble with sound effects man Virgil Rhymer (played by Frank Nelson). Later, Jack and the gang continue "The Frightwig Murder Case" with the help of guest Humphrey Bogart. Jell-O, NBC. (30 min)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (5-7-47) Chapter eight of "The Phantom of the Sea." Clark returns to St. Selmo, unaware that Lois and Horatio have been captured by Mr. Barnaby. Kellogg's Pep, MBS. (14 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (5-22-49) With Mary, Phil, Dennis, Don, Rochester, Mel Blanc, Frank Nelson. Jack plays the role of a prizefighter in a sketch, "The Champion Set-Up." AFRRS rebroadcast. (25 min)



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FEBRUARY - MARCH 2013

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23

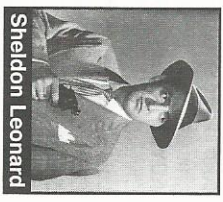
JACK BENNY PROGRAM (2-27-38) Jack and the gang with guest Andy Devine. The cast continues their parody of *Submarine D-7*. Kenny sings "Thanks for the Memories" and Jack announces plans to play it on next week's show. Fourth of four consecutive programs. Jell-O, NBC. (29 min)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (5-8-47) Chapter nine of "The Phantom of the Sea." The mysterious Mr. Andrews commands like Barnaby to dispose of Lois and Horatio. Kellogg's Pep, MBS. (14 min)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (5-9-47) Chapter ten of "The Phantom of the Sea." While Superman continues his search for Lois and Horatio, Capt. Barnaby takes the pair to see the "sea monster" that has been frightening the villagers. Kellogg's Pep, MBS. (14 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (10-20-46) Jack and the gang talk about the lifting of meat restrictions, and present "The Fiddler," a parody of *The Whistler*. With Mary, Phil, Don, Rochester, Dennis, Sara Berner, Bea Benaderet, the Sportsmen Quartet. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (27 min)

SUSPENSE (1-18-54)



Sheldon Leonard

"The Face Is Familiar" stars Jack Benny as a man who unwittingly takes part in a bank robbery. Cast includes Sheldon Leonard, Joseph Kearns, Hy Averbach, Herb Butterfield, Harlow Wilcox announces. Autolite, CBS. (29 min)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (5-12-47) Chapter eleven of "The Phantom of the Sea." Superman demands information from Ike Barnaby, while Lois and Horatio try to escape from the submarine before it sinks to the bottom. Kellogg's Pep, MBS. (14 min)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (5-13-47) The twelfth and final chapter of "The Mystery of the Sea." Superman saves Lois and Horatio and the mystery is solved — however, when Clark returns to Metropolis, he learns some startling news. Kellogg's Pep, MBS. (14 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (3-5-50) Jack and his cast present "Buck Benny" for the last time at the request of guest Sarah Churchill. With Mary, Phil, Don, Dennis, Rochester, Mel

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SATURDAY, MARCH 2

Blanc. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (27 min)

ESCAPE (11-22-49) "Maracas" stars William Conrad, Ted DeCortisa, Joan Banks, Paul Frees, Juano Hernandez. A "murderous conflict of greed and passion aboard a coast-wise tramp steamer headed for Central America." Sustaining, CBS. (29 min)

AL PEARCE SHOW (2-7-40) Pearce stars as Elmer Blurt, the reluctant salesman, who is selling hot dogs on a busy corner. With Arlene Harris, Arlie Auerbach as Mr. Kitzel, Carl Hoff and the Orchestra, Marie Green and Her Merry Men, announcer Wendell Niles. Dole Pineapple, CBS. (28 min)

NIGHTBEAT (6-19-50) "Vincent and the Painter" stars Frank Lovejoy as Randy Stone, night beat reporter for the *Chicago Star*. Stone encounters a painter who talks about killing a wealthy society woman. Cast includes Ben Wright, Jeanette Nolan, Lawrence Dobkin, Wilms Herbert, Martha Wentworth. Wheaties, NBC. (30 min)

DRENE TIME (2-23-47) Don Ameche, Frances Langford and Danny Thomas star in the eleventh show of the series, with Carmen Dragon and the Orchestra, announcer Tobe Reed. Frances sings "Somebody Loves Me"; Don and Danny answer listeners' requests; the cast takes part in a "Bickersons" sketch. Drene Shampoo, NBC. (29 min)

WARNER BROTHERS ACADEMY THEATRE (4-24-38) "Special Agent" starring Carole Landis and John Ridgely in a radio version of the 1935 Warner Bros. film. A government agent goes undercover as a reporter in order to trap a gangster. Gruen Watches, Syndicated. (30 min)

HALLS OF IVY (4-2-52) Ronald and Benita Colman star as William Todhunter Hall and his wife Victoria, first family of Ivy College, with Herb Butterfield as Mr. Wellman, who is concerned about the qualifications of one of Ivy's history professors. Voice of America rebroadcast. (23 min)

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

REMEMBERING ALICE FAYE — AND HER HUSBAND!

MUSIC FROM HOLLYWOOD (12-17-37) A

program of "Songs of the movies, sung by the stars and played for dancing America" starring Alice Faye, Hal Kemp and his Orchestra, and guest Clarence Nash, the voice of Donald Duck. Chesterfield Cigarettes, CBS. (28 min)

REQUEST PERFORMANCE (1-27-46) A variety show inspired by audience requests, with Lionel Barrymore, Meredith Willson, and Phil Harris and Alice Faye, "together in front of a microphone for the first time." The couple perform a sketch, "At Home in the San Fernando Valley." Campbell Soups, CBS. (30 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (10-28-87) Chuck Schaden's conversation with Alice Faye, as she looks back on her career in movies and radio. Recorded at the Whitehall Hotel in Chicago. (31 min)

LUX RADIO THEATRE (6-3-40) "Alexander's Ragtime Band" starring Alice Faye, Ray Milland and Robert Preston in a radio version of Faye's 1938 film, about a singer who becomes involved in a love triangle with two musicians. Cecil B. DeWille hosts. Lux Soap, CBS. (23 min & 21 min & 17 min)

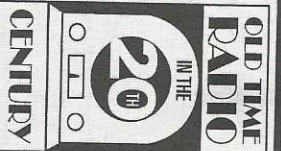
PHIL HARRIS - ALICE FAYE SHOW (3-19-50) Alice wants to buy a new car but is so intent on making the perfect choice that she can't make a decision. With Elliott Lewis, Walter Teley, Robert North, Jeanine Roos, Anne Whitfield, Hans Conried. Rexall, NBC. (29 min) Read the article about The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show on page 42.

SATURDAY, MARCH 16

INNER SANCTUM (1-10-49) "Murder Comes to Life" starring Charles Irving and Santos Ortega. A man returns from a near-death experience and learns about his previous life as a criminal. AFRS rebroadcast. (25 min)

PHILCO RADIO TIME (2-19-47) Bing Crosby stars, with announcer Ken Carpenter, John Scott Trotter and the Orchestra, and guests Judy Garland, William Frawley, and Leo McCarey, director of *Going My Way*. Judy sings "I've Got You Under My Skin"; Bing and Frawley duet on "I'da." Philco, ABC. (30 min)

JIMMY FIDLER (10-19-47) The Hollywood gossip reporter talks about the best picture of the week and presents items about Laraine Day and Leo Durocher, Marlene Dietrich, Milton Berle, Clark Gable, Robert Mitchum, and others. Arvid, MBS. (14 min)



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GREAT GILDERSLEEVE (2-17-46) Harold Peary stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve, with Walter Tetley as Leroy, Lillian Randolph as Birdie, Dick LeGrand as Peavey, Bea Benaderet as Eve Goodwin. Leroy has the flu and his uncle Giddy must administer tender loving care. Kraft, NBC. (30 min)

SPACE PATROL (12-6-52) "The Space Shark" starring Ed Kemmer as Buzz Corry, Lyn Osborn as Gadget Happy, Nina Bara as Tonga. Corry and Happy travel to Venus, where Tonga is investigating contaminated food grown in hydroponic tanks. Dick Turfield announces. Ralston Cereals, ABC. (30 min)
COMMAND PERFORMANCE (10-24-42) Linda Darnell is mistress of ceremonies, with

Virginia O'Brien, Zero Mostel ("America's newest zany"), Red Skelton, Harriet Hilliard, Tuman Bradley, Erskine Hawkins and his Orchestra, announcer Don Wilson. O'Brien sings "Did I Get Stinking at the Club Savoy?". Skelton, Hilliard and Bradley present a sketch with Junior, the Mean Little Kid. AFRS. (29 min)



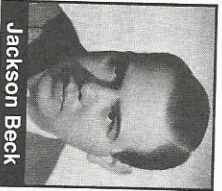
Linda Darnell

SATURDAY, MARCH 23 DETECTIVES ON THE AIR

SHERLOCK HOLMES (11-30-46) "The Strange Death of Mrs. Abernethy" stars Tom Conway as Holmes, Nigel Bruce as Dr. Watson. A wealthy old woman in poor health asks Holmes to investigate her family, but the focus of the investigation shifts when the woman is murdered. Joseph Bell announces. Krenl Hair Tonic, ABC. (30 min)

ADVENTURES OF SAM SPADE (7-25-48) "The Mad Scientist Caper" starring Howard Duff as Sam, with Lucrece Tuttle as Effie. A scientist asks Sam to track down a missing "secret formula," and the investigation leads to an insane asylum. Cast includes Joseph Kearns, Junius Matthews, Wildroot Cream Oil, CBS. (30 min)

PHILO VANCE (1-25-49) "The Idol Murder Case" stars Jackson Beck as Vance, with George Petrie as District Attorney Markham. The famous detective investigates a murder at a



Jackson Beck

museum after the arrival of a strangely popular statue. Syndicated. (27 min)
THE FAT MAN (7-8-46) "The Black Angel" is the first show in the series, with J. Scott Smart as the "hard-boiled criminologist who tips the scales at 237 pounds." A man thinks his wife is cheating on him and asks the Fat Man to investigate. Sustaining, ABC. (30 min)
CANDY MATSON (6-20-50) "Symphony of Death" stars Natalie Masters as Candy, with Henry Left as police detective Ray Mallard. Candy tries to help a composer who fears he is going mad and wants to write a "Death Symphony." Sustaining, NBC. (28 min)
RICHARD DIAMOND, PRIVATE DETECTIVE (5-15-49) Dick Powell stars, with Virginia Gregg as Helen Asher and Ed Begley as Lt. Levenson. A woman shoots her black-maller and then is shot herself. The woman's husband hires Diamond to find the killer. Sustaining, NBC. (30 min)

SATURDAY, MARCH 30

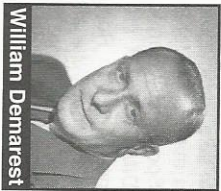
FIBBER MCGEE & MOLLY (3-23-48) Jim and Marian Jordan star as the McGees, with Bill Thompson, Gale Gordon, Arthur Q. Bryan, the King's Men, announcer Harlow Wilcox, Billy Mills and the Orchestra. Molly wins a local merchant's contest and the prize is a special Easter dress. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (30 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (9-27-11) Steve Darnall's conversation with actress Patty McCormack, who talks about her career on stage, movies and television. Recorded poolside at the Sportsmen's Lodge in Los

Angeles, CA. (38 min) *Read an excerpt from this conversation on page 4.*

SUSPENSE (10-23-56) "The Doll" starring Patty McCormack in the first broadcast of the show's 15th season, produced and directed by William N. Robson. When a father forgets his daughter's seventh birthday, his new wife gives the child an unusual gift. Cast includes Mary Jane Croft, Shep Menken, Richard Beals, Luis Van Rooten, Dick LeGrand. Sustaining, CBS. (24 min)

MELODY RANCH (1950s) Gene Autry stars, with Pat Buttram, Johnny Bonds, Cass County Boys, The Pinafores, announcer Charlie Lyons. Gene sings "For Me and My Gal" and "Harbor Lights" and tells the story "The Mystery of the Concertina." Wrigley's Gum, CBS. (24 min)
STARS OVER HOLLYWOOD (7-30-49) "The Town Constable" starring William Demarest with Norma Jean Nilsson. The community gives a testimonial dinner for the constable who has been elected for the ninth consecutive time, but his daughter is in trouble with her school's principal. Dial Soap, CBS. (29 min)



William Demarest

READERS' DIGEST RADIO EDITION (4-21-46) "Our Lady's Juggler," stars Richard Conte in this Easter Sunday broadcast, hosted by Arnold Moss. A poor and sick juggler who begs in the streets is taken in by monks and nursed back to health. Basil Ruysdael announces. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (29 min)

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SUNDAY, JANUARY 6

SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS (1-7-46) "The Lost Weekend" starring Ray Milland, Jane Wyman and Frank Faylen in a radio version of the Billy Wilder film about an alcoholic writer. Lady Esther Products, CBS. *Read the article about Ray Milland on page 10.*

JUDY CANOVA SHOW (1-3-48) Judy hopes to take advantage of the new leap year to land a man! With Mel Blanc, Ruby Dandridge, the Sportsmen Quartet, Colgate-Palmolive, NBC. **DIMENSION X** (10-29-50) "No Contact" starring Luis Van Rooten. A space expedition to the planet Voita attempts to break a "galactic reef." Sustaining, NBC.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 13

RED SKELTON SHOW (10-7-41) The first show of the new season, with Ozzie Nelson and His Orchestra, Harriet Hilliard, Wonderful Smith, Raleigh Cigarettes, NBC.

LIGHTS OUT (6-8-43) "Organ" is Arch Oboler's story about a family that rents a large old house and finds that the house has a caretaker... and a history. Ionized Yeast, CBS. **MATINEE WITH BOB & RAY** (8-17-50) Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding from early in their careers, with spoofs of Republic Pictures and radio soap operas. Participating sponsors, WHDH.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 20

MR. PRESIDENT (7-30-50) Edward Arnold stars as a U.S. President who insists on living in the White House while renovations take place. Sustaining, ABC.

PHIL HARRIS - ALICE FAYE SHOW (1-16-49) Phil is unhappy that his orchestra hasn't been invited to play at President Truman's inauguration. Rexall, NBC. *Read the article about The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show on page 42.* **SUSPENSE** (5-10-51) "Death on My Hands"

starring Phil Harris and Alice Faye in the story of an accidental death and an attempted escape. Auto-Lite, CBS.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 27

LIFE OF RILEY (6-7-47) William Bendix is Chester Riley, who recalls how he met his wife Peg. With Paula Winslowe, John Brown, Alan Reed. Draft, NBC.

PAT NOVAK FOR HIRE (3-6-49) Jack Webb stars. A lawyer hires Novak to watch an wealthy alcoholic woman and the man who claims to be her husband. AFRS rebroadcast.

JIMMY DURANTE SHOW (2-4-48) Jimmy welcomes guest Victor Moore, who has two passes for the race track. Rexall, NBC.



Jimmy Durante

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3

THE WHISTLER (1-3-43) "The Weakling" stars Joseph Kearns as The Whistler, with Gerald Mohr, Hans Conried. A district attorney's son is implicated in a woman's death. Sustaining, CBS.

MY FRIEND IRMA (1-6-52) Marie Wilson stars as Irma, who decides to write her memoirs and goes looking for a publisher! Ennds, CBS. **CISCO KID** (4-9-53) "Fire in the Night" stars Jack Mather as Cisco, Harry Lang as Pancho. Cisco tries to stop a pyromaniac who has been on a wild spree. Syndicated.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10

PHILCO RADIO HALL OF FAME (1-9-44) Deems Taylor hosts this all-star variety show, with Fanny Brice, Hanley Stafford, Garry Moore, Joan Edwards, Laird Cregar. Philco, NBC BLUE.

ESCAPE (8-11-49) "Red Wine" starring Willard Waterman. A detective investigating a murder in the Borneo jungles has three suspects. Sustaining, CBS.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17

CHARLIE MCCARTHY SHOW (1-19-47) Edgar and Charlie celebrate their 10th anniversary on the air for Chase and Sanborn, with guests Rudy Vallee, Dorothy Lamour, Don Ameche, Nelson Eddy, Chase and Sanborn, NBC.

BOX 13 (9-19-48) "Actor's Alibi" starring Alan Ladd as Dan Holiday, who receives a ticket to a radio show and pursues an actor whom he suspects is a murderer. Syndicated.

GREAT GILDERSLEEVE (4-29-45) Harold Peary stars as Gildy, who wants to invite his new neighbor to join the Jolly Boys Club. Kraft, NBC.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24

ADVENTURES OF NERO WOLFE (11-17-50) "The Case of the Careless Cleaner" starring Sydney Greenstreet as Wolfe. An artist is framed for murder. Sustaining, NBC.

BURNS AND ALLEN SHOW (9-14-43) George and Gracie welcome guest Brian Donley, as Gracie wants a leading man for the upstairs Greek Theatre. Swan Soap, CBS.

GUNSMOKE (10-3-53) "How to Kill a Friend" stars William Conrad as Marshal Matt Dillon, who tangles with a gunman hired by two crooked gamblers. With Parley Baer, John Dehner. Post Toasties, CBS.



William Conrad

SUNDAY, MARCH 3

ADVENTURES OF OZZIE & HARRIET (1-9-49) Harriet is worried about Ricky and David's infatuation with sports figures. With John Brown, Janet Waldo, Henry Blair, Tommy Bernard. International Silver, NBC.

GREEN HORNET (7-11-39) "The Devil's Playground" stars Al Hodge as the Hornet, who investigates an amusement park with an unsafe roller coaster. Syndicated.

FRED ALLEN SHOW (3-10-46) Fred welcomes guest Carmen Miranda, who sings

SUNDAY, MARCH 10

"Chattanooga Choo Choo" and joins Fred for a duet on "Chiquita Banana." AFRS rebroadcast.

SUNDAY, MARCH 17

ADVENTURES BY MORSE (1944) "It's Dismal To Die" a complete three-part adventure starring David Ellis as Capt. Bart Friday, who comes to the aid of a damsel in distress at a South Carolina swamp. Syndicated.

SUNDAY, MARCH 24

LUX RADIO THEATRE (12-27-48) "The Luck of the Irish," starring Dana Andrews, Anne Baxter and Stanley Holloway in a radio version of the 1948 film. An American newspaperman is befriended by a leprechaun. Lux Soap, CBS.

PHILCO RADIO TIME (3-17-48) It's St. Patrick's Day and Bing Crosby sings Irish songs and welcomes 11-year-old Margaret O'Brien. Philco, ABC.

SUNDAY, MARCH 31

THE SHADOW (1-19-41) "The Shadow Challenged" starring William Johnstone as Lamont Cranston. The Shadow is blamed when a professor is murdered for an ancient manuscript. Blue Coal, MBS.

MARTIN AND LEWIS SHOW (2-15-52) Dean and Jerry with announcer Jimmy Wallington and guest William Holden, who joins the duo for a parody of his film *Born Yesterday*. Participating sponsors, NBC. **ROCKY JORDAN** (3-26-50) "Fool Proof" stars Jack Moyles as Jordan, owner of the Cafe Tamborine in Cairo. Rocky meets a king-size customer carrying a briefcase full of rare diamonds. Del Monte Foods, CBS.

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (4-10-55) It's Easter Sunday and Jack and Mary celebrate by strolling down Wilshire Boulevard. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS.

NIGHTBEAT (8-21-50) "Stay of Execution" starring Frank Lovejoy as Randy Stone, night beat reporter for the Chicago Star, who is sent to Joliet State Prison to cover an execution. Sustaining, NBC.

BOB HOPE SHOW (3-5-46) From the campus of the University of Nevada, with Frances Langford, Skinnay Ennis and the Orchestra, and guest David Niven. Pepsodent, NBC.

COVER STORY

Phil Harris & Alice Faye:

A MARRIAGE MADE IN RADIO

BY JORDAN ELLIOTT

By the fall of 1945, Alice Faye had had it.

Over the last decade, her meteoric rise to fame had been the stuff of fairy tales. She was a child of Hell's Kitchen who had danced in *Earl Carroll's Vanities* and sung with Rudy Vallee's orchestra before she was old enough to vote. When Vallee went to Hollywood to star in the movie version of *George White's Scandals*, Faye anticipated that she *might* sing a song in the picture. That changed — as did everything else about Faye's life — when Vallee's co-star Lillian Harvey quit the film and Alice suddenly found herself going from featured performer to leading lady.

It was the beginning of a career arc that would escalate with high-profile films like *Wake Up and Live* and the Shirley Temple vehicle *Stowaway*. Things exploded when she replaced the late Jean Harlow for the 1938 period piece *In Old Chicago*. Over the next half-dozen years, she divided her time

Jordan Elliott is a freelance writer from Chicago.

between musicals set firmly in the present (*That Night in Rio*, *Week-End in Havana*, *The Gang's All Here*) and others set in the recent past (*Alexander's Ragtime Band*, *Tin Pan Alley*, *Lillian Russell*, *Hello Frisco Hello*).

During this initial flash of movie stardom, Faye was surrounded by talented, amiable co-stars (including Tyrone Power, Don Ameche, John Payne, Robert Young). However, as entertaining as these musicals were, there was no denying an increasing sense of déjà vu with each one; Faye once remarked that in many of her films, “my voice was deeper than the plot.” One can’t fault 20th Century Fox honcho Darryl F. Zanuck for betting on what he considered to be a sure thing, but his insistence on nostalgic scenarios led one writer to joke that the studio should have renamed itself *19th Century Fox*.

Adding to Faye’s disenchantment with the Fox musicals was that each one was incredibly labor-intensive; between costume fittings, rehearsals, and the staging of countless elaborate musical numbers, a single film could involve months of production, leaving Faye precious lit-



tle time to spend with her new husband, bandleader Phil Harris.

Harris was no stranger to the work treadmill, or to jumping off of it: He had been a touring musician during his youth and quickly grew disenchanting with the late nights and one-night-stands. When he joined the cast of *The Jack Benny Program* in 1936, it was a chance to leave behind the itinerant life of a traveling bandleader, and he grabbed it. It wasn’t long before Phil proved his impecca-

ble sense of comic timing (second only to his boss) and Jack’s writers milked it for all it was worth, creating the character of a conceited, hard-drinking illiterate who only led a band because he was too incompetent to actually play in one.

“What we want to do is live a normal life,” Alice told one reporter. For Phil, that meant an end to a life playing one-night-stands; for her, it meant breaking away from the endless cycle of frothy Fox musicals that had proven so popular

to watch and so tiring to make.

There were personal reasons for Alice's desire to shift gears — including the birth of her two daughters, Alice and Phyllis — but there were practical and artistic ones as well. As Faye neared her 30th birthday, she knew she had no interest in becoming a middle-aged ingenue. Indeed, like many musical stars of the time, Faye wanted to stretch her limits and try her hand at drama. The birth of her second daughter in 1944 precluded the possibility of her co-starring as Aunt Sissy in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, but she eagerly accepted a starring role the next year in Otto Preminger's *Fallen Angel*. In a far cry from the splashy fantasies of her previous films, *Angel* cast Alice as June Mills, a wealthy woman on the verge of becoming a spinster — an easy mark for the affections of con man Eric Stanton (Dana Andrews), who plans to marry June and use her money to woo the alluring hash-slinger Stella (played by Linda Darnell).

Faye was excited for the opportunity to broaden her artistic palette until she saw Zannuck's edit of the film — although “butchered” might be a better word than “edited.” Suddenly, many of Faye's scenes were gone; what's more, those scenes that survived now made little sense out of context. An infuriated Faye told Andrews “I'll never make another picture,” wrote an angry letter of resignation to Zannuck, and drove off the studio lot with no plans to return.

Sometimes, when one door closes, another one opens, and Alice Faye had slammed the door shut on her movie career. It wasn't long before opportunity would come knocking.

While Faye was content to live at home as a wife and mother, Harris had become a sensation on the *Benny* show,

to the point where his first lines were often greeted with applause (which his character usually solicited). When he and Faye appeared as themselves on the variety show *Request Performance*, it became apparent that a purported glimpse into the home lives of Phil and Alice was a situation comedy waiting to happen.

So it was in the fall of 1946 that Alice and Phil became the stars of *The Fitch Bandwagon*, in a weekly half-hour situation comedy format that aired on NBC immediately after *The Jack Benny Program*. Phil would play an extension of the character he played on Benny's long-suffering wife who got some jokes of her own — and, in a nod to what made them famous in the first place, Phil and Alice would each sing a song over the course of the show. Walter Scharf, who had worked with Alice in Rudy Vallee's orchestra years earlier, was brought on board to provide the accompaniment

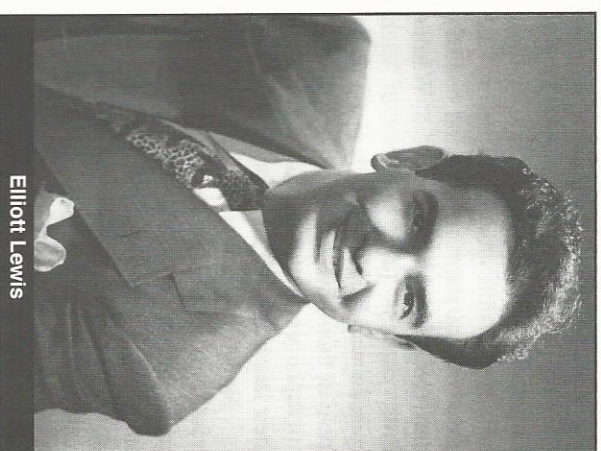
when Phil belted out one of his novelty numbers (ranging from the spiritual “Shadrach” to his 1950 smash “The Thing”) and did the same when Alice sang a modern standard like “I'm in Love with a Wonderful Guy” or her big movie hit, “You'll Never Know.” (And because the show took nothing seriously, the other characters were often heard to grumble that the song interrupted a perfectly good conversation.)

One of the running jokes was that Alice the former movie star had far more money than Phil — who, after all, worked for Jack Benny, the perennial cheapskate. Actually, Benny was generous with money and credit, but he was also sympathetic to the demands on Harris' time. To that end, Jack worked with his writers to ensure that Harris could appear on the first half of the Benny show, yet get out in time to run across the hall before the *Bandwagon* went on the air.

Still, logistics weren't the only challenge facing this new enterprise: It quickly became apparent that simply transferring Harris' hard-drinking, imbecilic character from one show to another wasn't going to work — it might have been fine for comic relief, but it wasn't a suitable anchor for a family comedy. For Phil and Alice to survive on radio, it would be necessary to soften the edges of the leading man and give those rough edges to another character...

Enter Frank Remley.

The real Frank Remley was a left-handed guitar player who had been a member of Phil's band for years. Jack Benny and his writers had convinced listeners that the Harris band was filled with drunkards, fools and roustabouts (Sample Benny joke: “Every time we do a sound effect of a police siren, they

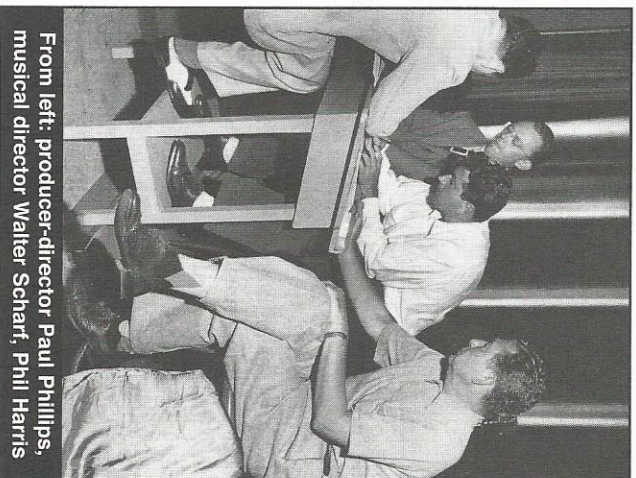


Elliott Lewis

throw up their arms and yell ‘We was framed!’”) and Remley was usually cited as the worst apple in the barrel. In fact, Remley was a fine (and sober) musician, but he was a great audience and went along with all of the gags. As a result, Remley had acquired almost a mythical status among radio fans who'd never actually heard him speak — which made him a natural to accompany Phil and Alice on their new venture.

Unfortunately, as an actor, Frank Remley was a great guitarist, and while his delivery style might have worked for a single line in a show, it was clear he wasn't going to make it as a virtual co-star. In some desperation, Phil turned to Elliott Lewis, a veteran radio actor who had appeared numerous times on the Benny program. Harris knew that Lewis was able to do comedy, but no one knew that the Harris-Lewis/Remley relationship would become comedy gold. “We were like clockwork,” Harris recalled.

Having a solid performer like Lewis on hand changed the focus of the stories.

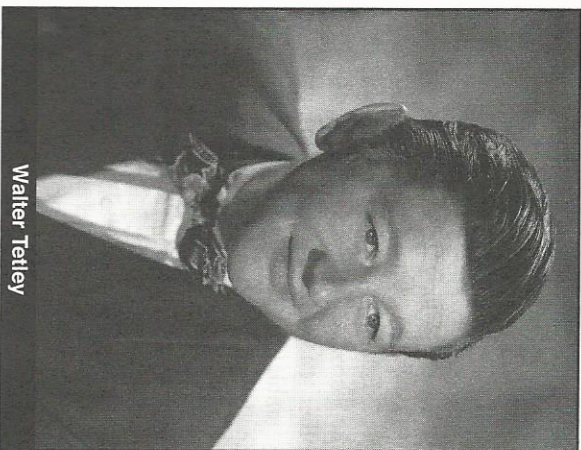


From left: producer-director Paul Phillips, musical director Walter Scharf, Phil Harris

“We took the onus off Phil and put it on Remley,” explained writer Ray Singer, who (with his partner Dick Chevillat) was responsible for transforming the show from a standard situation comedy into the radio equivalent of a Warner Bros. cartoon. (The wildness of each episode was heightened when the show took a then-new approach and placed microphones above the audience, making their laughter the loudest on radio.)

Now, the Remley character was the troublemaker, displaying qualities of greed and stupidity that were exceeded only by his self-confidence. If Phil had money for anything—a gift for Alice, a business investment, a new car—Remley would take Phil’s simple plans and foul them up beyond all recognition. When Phil wanted to save money on the price of meat, Remley took Phil’s money and bought the Harrises a live cow. When Phil wanted to invest in a television station, Remley took the money and bought the contract of a broken-down lady wrestler instead. When Phil had it in mind to serve as volunteer fire chief, Remley figured the best way for Phil to get experience as a fire-fighter was to start a fire inside the house. Confronted with such brazen stupidity, Phil’s response was usually... more stupidity. Alice, meanwhile, was on hand to chastise Phil and help clean things up by the end of each show.

The overall insanity went up further with the additions of Robert North as Alice’s milquetoast brother Willie (who entered each show with an especially disdainful “Gooooood morning, Philip!”) and Walter Tetley as Julius Abruzzo, a California grocery boy whose voice and attitude were pure Bronx. Julius typically showed up in the second half of each show — after Phil and Frankie had



Walter Tetley

launched that week’s harebrained scheme — wielding a sarcastic sledgehammer wit and taking an almost sadistic pleasure in making a bad situation worse. (As Jack Benny snapped when he guested on the show one week, “That kid had all the charm of live bait.”)

And even as Julius derided the hapless Phil and Frankie, he was often as not swept up in their plans, especially if the promise of money was involved. In one episode, Phil and Frankie asked Julius to settle an argument by lying on a Murphy bed after it had gone back into the wall. Julius declared, “You couldn’t get me in that bed unless you gave me a million dollars!” Remley offered him two dollars as a down payment: “You’ll get the rest after you suffocate.”

As the Harris’ daughters, Jeannine Roos and Anne Whitfield were swept up in the insanity as well, playing dutiful children who were prone to mimicking the mannerisms and the slang they’d clearly picked up from their father.

Recall began a two-year association

with *The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show* in the fall of 1948. Gale Gordon brought his trademark dry wit to the role of Mr. Scott, the long-suffering Rexall liaison. (The drug store chain found itself the butt of more than a few jokes on the show, beginning when Remley responded to the news of the new sponsor by muttering, “What’s a Rexall?”) All of the elements were in place and the show became one of the most celebrated on radio.

Yet, at a time when a big radio show was considered a stepping stone to television, Phil — much to Alice’s disappointment — refused to make the switch, citing the rigorous demands of the medium.

“He couldn’t see another family show on TV,” she lamented to Chuck Schaden years later. “That’s one thing I really am sorry for, that we didn’t go into television.” (Singer and Chevillat had no such reservations, leaving the show in 1952 to create and write the series *It’s a Great Life*.)

Phil may have had no interest in moving to television, but the fact is that radio budgets were shrinking and the “Golden Age” was slowly starting to wind down. Phil and Alice’s show inadvertently took another hit in the fall of 1952, when Bob Crosby assumed Harris’ role as bandleader on the *Jack Benny Program*. That in and of itself wasn’t a big deal (Phil hardly needed the money at this point), but this development was compounded by a rift between Phil and Frank Remley, which led the guitarist to stay with Benny. As a result, Elliott Lewis stopped playing the role of Frankie Remley in favor of a character named... Elliott Lewis. The situations were still delightfully ludicrous and the performances were solid, but as the actor himself noted, “Elliott Lewis just isn’t as funny as Frank Remley.”

The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show left the air for good in 1954, and the magic it created was hard to duplicate — in fact, the principals didn’t even try. The Harrises more or less retired from steady work, limiting themselves to television guest appearances or infrequent movie roles. Phil lent his voice to a number of animated films, most notably playing Baloo in *The Jungle Book*. He lived the life of a happily retired sportsman until his death in 1995.

Alice, who helped make the radio show possible by storming out of 20th Century Fox back in 1945, didn’t make another movie until the 1962 remake of *State Fair*. “I don’t know what happened to the picture business,” she said afterward. “I’m sorry I went back to find out.” In her later years, she became a spokeswoman for Pfizer Pharmaceuticals before passing away in 1998. Writer Ray Singer co-created *Here’s Lucy* for Lucille Ball, while his radio collaborator Dick Chevillat wrote *Green Acres*, another show that centered around gentle lunacy and carefully controlled chaos.

Lewis became a respected director in radio (and later in television) and steadfastly refused to “team up” with any other comedians after his years with Phil Harris. Listening to the *Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show* today, one suspects that everyone involved agreed with the sentiments he expressed to Chuck Schaden back in 1975.

“I remember those days with the utmost fondness,” Lewis noted. “I don’t know when in my life I have so enjoyed a job.” ■

To hear Alice Faye and Phil Harris together on radio, tune in to Radio’s Golden Age on January 20 and to Those Were the Days on March 9.

FLIND POPCORN... AND SATURDAY MATINEES

BY WAYNE KLATT

The best part of being a kid in the 1940s was the Saturday matinee. Now, don't assume we saw major Hollywood productions — no, no, no. The Balaban and Katz movie chain that dominated Chicago was too aloof to schedule two- and-a-half hours for the likes of us. Yet those dinky neighborhood theaters who were struggling to stay open another year knew what we wanted.

The owners of these theatres had even formed their own group, the Independent Theatres of Illinois, to battle the chains in the fight for our pennies. They lined up the cheapest films they could to fill their week, after shelling out most of their money for a few M-G-M musicals and other crowd pleasers — to be shown on Saturday nights (the traditional date night) and on Sundays (family time, when many parents dressed up before they went out).

But Saturday afternoons were ours. The pop, pop, popping of the popcorn machine was the beating of our hearts in anticipation. Each theater had its own *Wayne Klatt is a writer and nostalgia buff from Chicago.*

formula for conducting a kiddie show, but there was not much difference from Florida to Oregon.

The place of my heart was the Rogers Theater near Western and Fullerton. Since it was less than a block from our apartment, my family used it as a cheap babysitter. In those days when no one was expected to do homework until high school, I went to the "show" by myself three times a week. Admission was seventeen cents, except for Tuesday nights when I had to pay adult fare — a quarter — so I could receive a free plate or cup from a tall stack in the lobby. That my mother was able to collect a full set of china is a tribute to my misspent youth.

The Rogers seated five hundred but on Saturday afternoons only about seventy-five or a hundred boys and girls would file in, leaving plenty of room for running about and horsing around. I don't know if adults were actually barred, but none ever dared poke his or her head through the double doors that led from the candy lobby to the sloping concrete floor. The center aisle was carpeted, but years of spilled popcorn butter and stepp-ed-on Gummies had coated the walking space with an irreproducible substance.

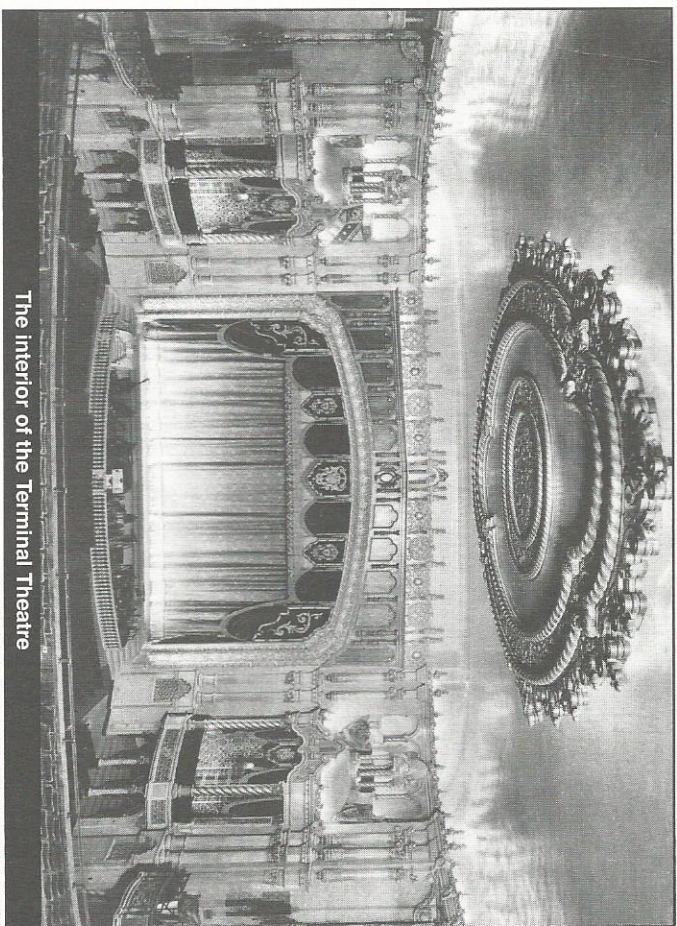
Imagine enduring nuns treating you like prisoners for five days a week and then being let loose to do whatever we wanted. There even ceased to be a division between "the publics" and "the parochials." We were boisterous but no real fights ever broke out. Girls tended to watch in amusement or alarm while boys playfully jabbed one another and someone sailed a paper airplane from up the aisle.

My family had brought me up on the principle that I could either buy a green paper cone of popcorn or go to the show, but I couldn't do both. That meant I seldom had candy from the counter; however, at the back of the lobby one could get three globes of Boston Baked Beans and other goodies for a cent (usually a lead penny in the first couple of years after World War II). As a schoolgirl, my wife would spend her leftover matinee money in a machine that dispensed autographed movie star photo cards at the Terminal

Theatre near Lawrence and Kimball.

Still, whatever the theatre, the basic experience was the same. Before the lights darkened, popcorn blitzed from everywhere. You could hear the kernels crunching by the mouthful and when they came underfoot as kids ran up and down the aisle. Raisinets descended like scattered hail. We yelled, just to yell, and we played jokes on one another. That, after all, was why we all showed up twenty minutes or more before the lights dimmed. The theater was our playground without any adults present (not counting the projectionist watching from his little window high above, to make sure no one got killed).

Waiting for the movie to come on was good time to look around for any children we knew who might be wearing nylon stockings on their heads as part of a treatment for head lice. On the mistaken theory that kids calm down to classical music, the projectionist always



The interior of the Terminal Theatre

played a dusty 78 rpm record of Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet Overture" over a loudspeaker before the film began. Whenever I hear the piece now, I listen for the needle skips and constant crackling that I heard in my youth.

We were primed for action. If there was going to be any kissing on the screen, it had better be between man and horse. We cheered in the dark and applauded whenever a bad guy took a shot or a fist. It never occurred to us that the only one who could hear us was the projectionist.

He was one of the two owners at the Rogers. The other, his brother, took the tickets and worked the candy counter. The two of them advertised each week's three changes of double features by printing black-and-white flyers that folded like an accordion, and hired local boys to distribute them (using theatre passes as payment).

After each of us was given a small territory of a few blocks to cover after school, some of the boys discarded their leftover ad folders in the gutter and went home, but I walked up and down stairs to put a flyer in every mailbox until I ran out, which is why the brothers liked me. One afternoon I wished they hadn't.

That particular matinee had a special promotion: every child was given a free box of Milk Duds, and if you found a purple one you received a second box free. I sat feeding my face until my Duds were gone, then decided to visit the magic shop next door before the movie came on. I signaled to the Concession Counter Brother that I would be back; when I returned, he gave me another free box of Milk Duds.

"I already had one," I said.
"Just take it."

As I was finishing my second box, I

found a purple Milk Dud. So I went to the Concession Brother, who gave me my third box. Since saving food has never been part of my thinking, I forced myself to finish off the third box during the film. I have never eaten a Milk Dud again in my life.

My older brother would go to the kiddie matinees with his friends, and to this day he lovingly remembers seeing Roy Rogers films and calling out: "He's behind that rock, Roy!" When I was with my friend Bob at another matinee Western, he said, "I feel an Indian coming on." Then a stunt man disguised as a Native American suddenly jumped out. Bob kept this up throughout the movie, telling me in advance of each Indian and bad man. I was amazed at his psychic powers until he told me with a laugh that he had seen the film the night before at another theater (probably the Round-Up on Milwaukee Avenue, which had just switched to an all-Western format).

As you can see, the movie itself didn't matter. What drew us to the theater on Saturday afternoons was the rowdy camaraderie, the exaltation that comes from being ages 6 to 13. We lived in a world that didn't pay attention to us, but the "pitcher show" did. It loved us.

Like many kids in working-class neighborhoods, I had assumed that films just happened and all of them were B-movies. By the 1940s, they were being churned out only by "poverty row" studios and were put up for rent like any other commodity.

Theater owners would buy everything — from posters of coming attractions and used theater seats to boxes of Tootsie Rolls — in offices (and even on a rooftop in one instance) along South Wabash Avenue. Exhibitors for major studios shared a Film Row building, but

independents usually headed for the nearby low-rent digs to meet with the distributors of bargain-basement studios like Republic (cheap Westerns), Reel-Art (low budget dramas), and Monogram (Charlie Chan mysteries and the Bowery Boys). More effective than the spools of the salespeople were their press books that offered promises of socko returns.

The owners of the Rogers rented feature films (not newsreels or serials) but, bless them, twice a year they gave us a feast of 17 color cartoons (the flyers said "count 'em," and we did, on our fingers) as the first half of a Saturday matinee. However, far from being the delightful and famous Disney, Warner Brothers, and M-G-M classics, these cartoons offered the tepid mayhem of characters such as Little Audrey, with maybe a Casper thrown in. The last cartoon was followed by a comedy like *Mr. Peabody and the Mermaid* or *One Touch of Venus*, as if we gradschoolers could catch all of the innuendos.

The independent theater owners not only rented cans of film, they bought promotional trinkets, such as cardboard sheets with superheroes that were ready to be punched out so you could move their arms and put flying capes on them. This may seem suspiciously like paper dolls, but when you're a boy and the figure is Captain Marvel, it's not paper dolls; it's studying your role model.

One day my brother and I went to a matinee featuring the Bela Lugosi color mystery *Scared to Death*, a dreadful film in every way, yet eerie to those who are young enough not to know better. Every time the spooky music came on and the Man in the Green Mask appeared at a window, I kept my Captain Marvel punch-out sheet in front of my 7-year-old eyes until the dialogue assured me that

everything was safe.

Or the attraction might be a Tarzan movie — or two! I had to miss a rare double feature of loin cloths and Cheetah when my brother and I were sick. If our parents hadn't stopped me from dragging myself out of bed, I might have gone to the Rogers and set off the plague of the century.

At the matinees, we got to see those "Coming Attractions" which promised that each coming movie was "Spectacular!" or "Shocking!" and that we would never forget it, which of course we quickly did. The most ordinary films usually were awarded two exclamation points!!

When the show was over we went home, the good feeling we had shared ebbing in the fresh air; however, some kids remained in their seats as the staff came in with a large barrel to sweep the rows before the Saturday evening double feature began.

My family moved out of Logan Square when I was 10, and my new neighborhood didn't have a movie house showing kiddie matinees. Then one by one the independents shut down, probably from the loss of my business. Chances are that those of a certain age can name at least half a dozen such theatres from their own childhood.

Of course, those wonderful B-movies aren't really gone; you can buy the movies of Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Hopalong Cassidy, and other Saturday matinee heroes in inexpensive DVD sets, and even discs with 50 — count 'em, 50 — color cartoons of the kind we used to see.

But it's not the same when you watch them in your living room. Maybe I'll put one on and have my wife throw popcorn at me. ■

Riding the range with BOBBY BENSON

BY JACK FRENCH

Bobby Benson was the first, as well as the last, juvenile western hero on radio. This young cowboy was the subject of two radio series (the first ran on CBS from 1932-1936; the second on Mutual from 1949-1955) as well as two local TV shows, both presented live in New York City over WOR-TV. Personal appearances by “Bobby” drew overwhelming crowds everywhere; in March of 1950, his first appearance at Macy’s giant store in Manhattan drew a mob of 40,000 kids.

The man responsible for the creation and continuation of “The Cowboy Kid” was Herbert Colin Rice, a talented immigrant who arrived from England in 1923 at age 19. By the time he was 25, he had found his niche in broadcasting in Buffalo, NY as an actor, writer, director, and advertising salesman for the CBS affiliate.

In 1932 the Hecker H-O Company of Buffalo approached Rice with an offer to sponsor a new kids’ adventure series to promote their cereals. Rice quickly

Jack French is a writer and old-time radio historian from Fairfax, Virginia.

created a scenario about a juvenile orphan, Bobby Benson who, under the guardianship of Sunny Jim, owned and operated the H-Bar-O Ranch in Texas. (Sunny Jim, an old gentleman who looked like Ichabod Crane, was then a symbol of H-O cereals.) A contract was drawn up with the cereal company to sponsor this new series (entitled *H-Bar-O Rangers*) and Rice talked CBS into airing the 15-minute show nationwide.

Not only did Rice write and direct the series, he also played foreman Buck Mason and the cook, Wong Lee. This Buffalo-produced radio show had a good cast. Eleven-year-old actor Richard Wanamaker played Bobby Benson, while Lorraine Pankow (Rice’s wife) portrayed Aunt Lily. Other Buffalo actors played the supporting roles of the old geezer Windy Wales, Little Bart, teen-aged Polly, and the three ranch hands Waco, Bill, and Miguel.

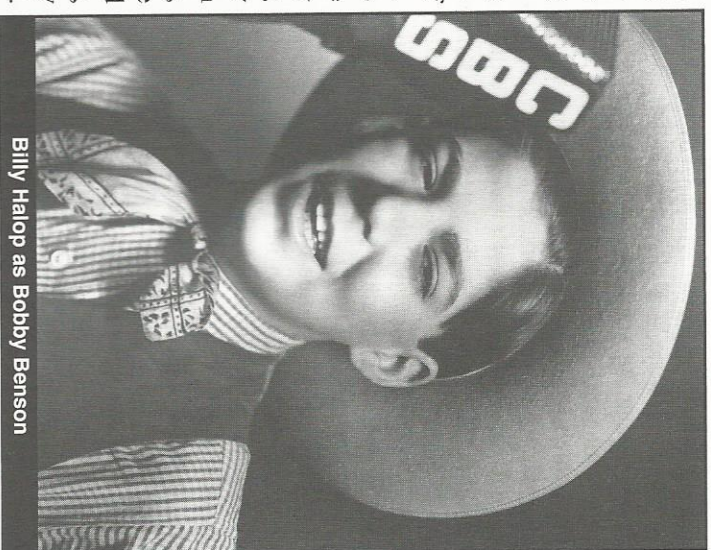
The program aired from Buffalo from October 1932 to March 1933 for a total of 78 episodes. Its success was immediate. Within months, the Hecker Company had assigned a dozen employees to answer the fan mail and process the box tops arriving daily in exchange for premiums advertised on the program, including code books, cereal bowls, card

games, and glass tumblers. Locally, Rice promoted the radio show with Wanamaker (in western attire and astride a pony named Silver Spot) making numerous personal appearances.

CBS executives, aware of the series’ popularity, moved the production to Manhattan in the fall of 1933 and recast all of the parts. Twelve-year-old Billy Halop (later to achieve fame as one of the Dead End Kids) became the new Bobby Benson; his younger sister, Florence, was cast as Polly. Sunny Jim was gradually phased out in favor of a new character, Diogenes Dodwaddle, while the foreman’s name was changed from Buck to Tex Mason. Harka, an American Indian (played by Craig McDonnell) was added. Bobby now had two friends his own age, Black Bart and Jock, portrayed by Eddie Wragge and Walter Tetley respectively.

Peter Dixon, a scripter for other network radio shows, including *Skipppy*, became the head writer for the *H-Bar-O Rangers*, although John Battle wrote scripts for the 1934-35 season. Dixon had a significant influence on the series and was sent to Los Angeles to supervise the casting for the Don Lee Network’s version of the show. In addition to writing the scripts, Dixon wrote two books (*The Lost Herd* and *Tunnel of Gold*), which the sponsor distributed from its cornucopia of radio premiums. His third book, *Bobby Benson on the H-Bar-O Ranch*, which contained the character’s “origin story,” was released by Whitman in 1934 as a Big Little Book.

Only two scripts from the entire CBS run have been uncovered so far,



Billy Halop as Bobby Benson

both contained within anthologies. In one, the H-Bar-O Rangers are broadcast-ing a radio show promoting Tex’s candidacy for sheriff when his arch-enemy “The Scorpion” tries to break into the studio. In the other, Bobby and Tex are flying in a “round-the-world” air race. (This script, number 690, shows how far the scenario had been stretched from its original western ranch concept.) The air-craft, with Bobby at the controls, passes above Shanghai, China and over some isolated Pacific island, where they see four survivors of a crashed airplane and a sunken Spanish galleon in a nearby lagoon.

When he played the leading role in this series, Billy Halop got star treatment away from the microphone as well. His photograph was displayed on radio premiums by the Hecker Company and (as “Bobby Benson”) he made personal

appearances at Madison Square Garden and toured with the W. T. Johnson Circus Rodeo during the summers. Eventually, he got a major role in Broadway's *Dead End* which led to a Hollywood career, thus ending his radio work. His sister Florence appeared in a few movies and stayed active in network radio, later playing major roles on *Duffy's Tavern* (as Miss Duffy), *The Jimmy Durante Show* (as the sultry Hothreath Houlihan) and many other shows.

Although the thrice-weekly CBS version went off the air in December 1936, the Hecker Company continued to use Bobby Benson in its advertising campaigns. In 1937, he was featured prominently on the backs of their cereal boxes, all of which contained "Bobby Benson money" (actually coupons worth two-and-a-half cents that kids could use to buy gum or candy). In addition, the long-running *Bobby Benson* Sunday comic strip promoted "Bobby Benson money" through 1938.

By the late 1940s, kids' radio adventures had switched from episodic 15-minute shows (usually requiring six to ten weeks to conclude a storyline) to self-contained half-hour adventures. In 1949, Herb Rice — now a naturalized citizen and a vice-president at the Mutual Broadcasting System in Manhattan — resurrected *Bobby Benson* as a 30-minute show. The new show would air from WOR two or three times weekly, alternating its time slot with the western drama *Straight Arrow*, produced on the opposite coast. For this new series, the ranch was renamed the B-Bar-B.

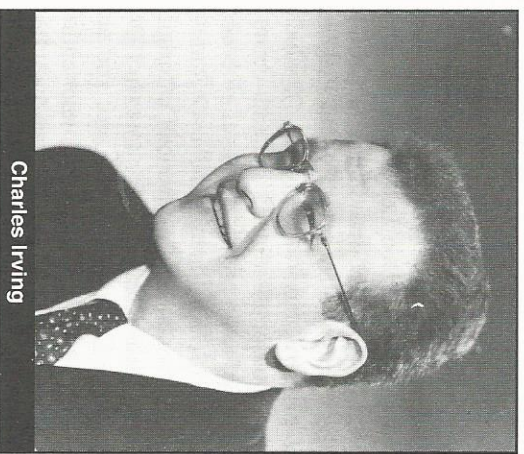
Only two people made the move from the CBS series to the Mutual series: writer Peter Dixon and actor Craig McDonnell, who played two separate ranch hands, Harka and Irish. The former

was a Native American, the latter spoke with a Celtic brogue. (To prevent confusion, McDonnell marked Harka's lines in his script with red ink and Irish's lines with green ink.) Ivan Cury came aboard as Bobby. Charles Irving played Tex and the cast was rounded out by a young Don Knotts playing Windy Wales. All of the animal sounds were performed by Frank Milano, a talented guy who also supplied the voice of Mighty Mouse in Terrytoons.

The show's rousing theme song was not original; it was, in fact, Hugo Reisenfeld's "Westward Ho!", composed for a 1923 silent film, *The Covered Wagon*.

The Mutual version debuted June 21, 1949 and ran for six years, until June 1955, thus outlasting all of the other juvenile hero shows, including *Captain Midnight*, *The Adventures of Superman*, *Sky King*, *The Tom Mix Ralston Straightshooters*, and even *Straight Arrow*.

Personal appearances by "Bobby" drew overwhelming crowds everywhere: When the character made his first



Charles Irving

Bobby Benson's B-Bar-B Riders

Harka Tex Irish Windy

HI, RIDERS! THIS IS BOBBY BENSON AND THE B-BAR-B PRIVATE SHOWING OF OUR ADVENTURES IN FILMS IN YOUR OWN MOVIE THEATRE AT HOME!

Now! you get COMPLETE HOME THEATRE!

Popcorn, 2 featurettes — 78 pictures in all. Plus 2 featurettes — 78 pictures in all. High, wide and deep. The projector is well made and equipped with new lenses. It is equipped with new lenses. It is equipped with new lenses. It is equipped with new lenses.

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vey corrals, horses, cow herds, and so forth. It was a rigorous schedule for the cast; not only did they have to rehearse and perform the radio show three times a week, they had to memorize lines and blocking for the half-hour television show, rehearse it for six hours on Mondays and for another three hours on Tuesday prior to the live show on Tuesday nights. While no video has survived from this show, virtually all of Cranton's scripts, from April 1950 to September 1951, are archived at the UCLA Performing Arts Collection.

In early 1951, Cury left for a role on *Portia Faces Life* and better-paying freelance work. Bobby McKnight, a young singer who had impersonated The Cowboy Kid in personal appearances (including an overseas tour of NATO countries) took Cury's place; however, when his voice began to squeak into maturity, another replacement had to be found.

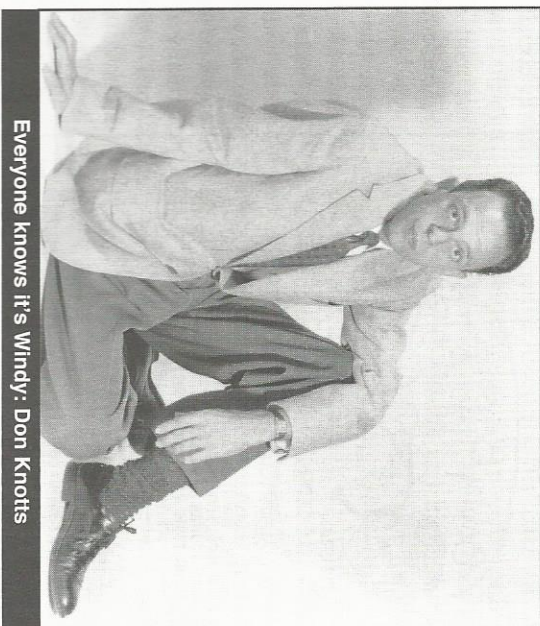
Mutual's last and longest-running Bobby Benson was 10-year-old Clive Rice, who used the professional name of Clyde Campbell so as not to call attention to the fact he was Herb Rice's nephew. Clive's British family had immigrated to the U.S. the prior year and he had "Americanized" his accent. Clive did all of the remaining radio shows while making hundreds of personal appearances throughout the year — on weekdays in summer and on weekends the rest of the year. In the fall of 1951 alone, Campbell made publicity trips to ten different states in the midwest and east coast, each of which could mean five to eight separate appearances per day. Rice sent his secretary, Mary Jane Williams, as the boy's chapone, claiming she was Bobby's "tutor."

While the B-Bar-B tales were filled with adventure and mystery, they were not devoid of humor. After a few years on the job, writer Jim Shean convinced the young director, Bob Novak, to let him write every third script as a comedy. While the scripts still contained excitement, they were primarily written for laughter and usually featured Windy Wales in some sort of predicament.

In 1952, the makers of Chiclets and Dentyne gum agreed to sponsor a five-minute version of this successful series, a spin-off called *Songs of the B-Bar-B*. Written and directed by Jim McMenny, this short program consisted of one song each by Clive and a cowboy singer, Tex Fletcher, with a funny story by Don Knotts as Windy. These short programs were recorded in batches and played once a day over WOR radio.

The second Bobby Benson television show debuted over WOR on February 16, 1953. To avoid the technical problems of their earlier TV series (missing props, difficulty in matching stock footage, cast accidents, etc.), the format of this new show was very simple. It had one small set (next to that of *The Merry Mailman*) and only three cast members. Clive and Tex Fletcher would sing a song or two and Paul Brown, a comedian called "Mr. Nobody," provided some humor. Clive also told short western stories and read letters from his fans. Wilrich's Grape Juice eventually signed on as a sponsor.

Nothing visual has survived from



Everyone knows it's Windy: Don Knotts

PHOTOGRAPH BY

either television program, nor has a single audio copy surfaced from the approximately 700 CBS episodes that aired on both coasts. Of the nearly 350 Mutual radio shows, a few episodes of the half-hour version are in circulation. There is also a seven-minute audio story, "The Golden Palomino," a Decca recording that some collectors have confused for a radio show.

More than half-a-century later, we have 19 audio copies of the Mutual show, plus fragments of two others, and an Australian audition recording. Five of the five-minute *Songs of the B-Bar-B* shows are also in circulation. Twenty issues of the *Bobby Benson* comic book were published between 1950 and 1953. Countless radio premiums from both the CBS and Mutual series are traded among collectors.

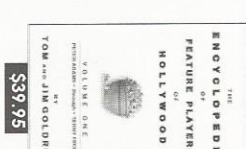
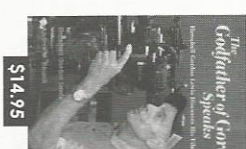
It's a safe bet that the Cowboy Kid will always be with us. ■

Tune in to Those Were the Days on January 12 to hear an episode of Bobby Benson and the B-Bar-B Riders.



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DIME DETECTIVES

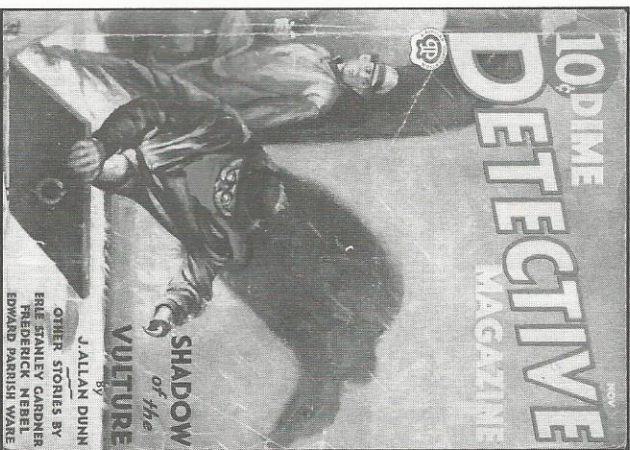
BY JOHN DINAN

"I opened the window to suck up some of the clean, fall air. Just then, I heard the office door open and a booming voice command: 'Don't turn around,' followed by a loud cracking noise I would later discover was my head. I remember thinking as a blackout curtain came over me: 'Another satisfied customer...'"

Openings like this one were common to the pulp detective genre and they did a lot to describe these characters to their readers. The pulp detective took a lot of abuse and he had a sense of humor. He usually demonstrated a fidelity to his customers, the ability to operate in all strata of society, a heavy reliance on booze and a general sense of self-leathing — as Howard Browne's Paul Pine illustrated in *Halo In Brass*: "Be a private detective. Easy, enjoyable. See the world through a garbage can."

The pulps got their name from the cheap paper-pulp mash used to make the

John Dinan is a writer from Topsfield, Massachusetts.



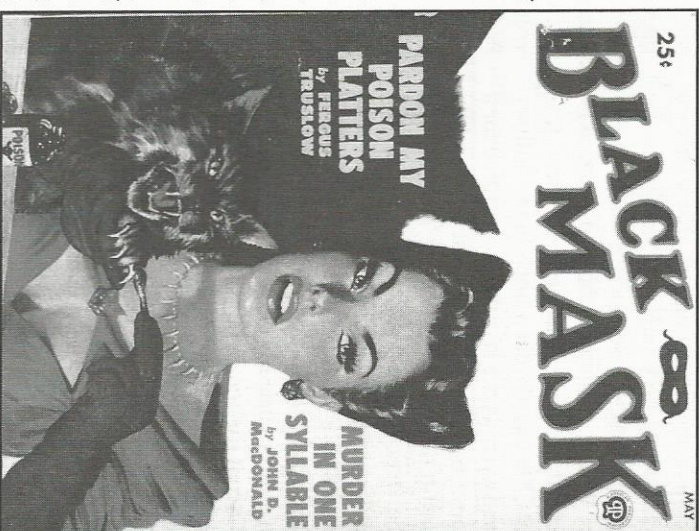
JOHN DINAN COLLECTION

paper, a paper so cheap you could see slivers of wood in the finished product. Some wags claimed they got a sliver in their finger when they turned the pages. The interiors of the pulp magazines weren't much to look at either: 128 ragged-edge pages of pulse-pounding purple prose, topped off with a garish, glossy cover (7" x 10") designed to separate readers from a dime. Each one was

loaded with ads for B.B. guns, whoopie cushions, false teeth, or how to get a body like Charles Atlas.

But the content of these magazines...well, this transcended all of the other shortcomings, enough to entice some four million readers every month. There were hundreds of these magazines published during the first half of the 20th Century and many of the writers who appeared in them would cut their writing teeth and go on to great things. The science-fiction pulps were literally "invented" by writers like Ray Bradbury and Arthur C. Clarke. Tennessee Williams was published for the first time in *Weird Tales*. The Western genre was represented by the likes of Frederick Faust, who wrote millions of words under seventeen different pen names. Detective pulps brought the world such talents as Dashiell Hammett (author of *The Thin Man*), Raymond Chandler (creator of Philip Marlowe), and John MacDonald.

For the most part, the detective pulps were patterned after *Black Mask*, a magazine started in 1920 by drama critic George Jean Nathan and legendary *Baltimore Sun* reporter H.L. Mencken. In its own words, it planned to offer "the best stories available of adventure, the best mystery and detective stories, the best romances, the best love stories, and the best stories of the occult." Still, the magazine really took off under the editorship of Joseph Shaw, who put out the call inviting writers who would observe "the cardinal principle in creating the illusion of reality. They did not make their characters act and talk tough; they allowed them to be tough. They gave their



JOHN DINAN COLLECTION

stories over to their characters, and kept themselves offstage. They wrote with greater restraint, careful of exaggeration."

The covers were practically an art form unto themselves: a splash of vivid colors and outrageous situations, long-admired and often-parodied. It wasn't uncommon to see a midget jumping out of a suitcase with a .45 in hand, or a benign-looking granny firing a shot at the reader from the bottom of her crutch. A cover might show something as lurid as a head stuffed in a mailbox or an arm frozen in a block of ice. Many times the artwork bore no relation to the insides of that issue; it depended largely on publishing schedules and the availability of cover art — and of course, the image most likely to stand out on a magazine rack.

As these characters evolved from the model established by *Black Mask*, the

pulp detectives took on characteristics that would become as well-known as the genre itself. Typically, the detective was a WASP of humble birth but one who could mix comfortably at all social levels. He usually did a hitch in the military and even worked on the police force for a brief time. He has a distrust of all public institutions and employees, even though he depends on his contacts within the police department to do his job. His moral code is a mixed bag of street ethics and situational pragmatics, flavored with a strong sense of obligation to his client. Except for booze, he is heir to few weaknesses of the flesh. He will endure punishment to achieve his objective (usually the objective of his client) and will not fold under pressure.

Perhaps the most enduring quality of these pulp detectives is their collective



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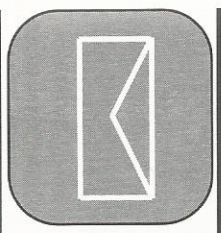
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sense of humor, which surfaces during high-stress situations and within inner monologues. The use of simile and metaphors give an additional punch to scenes and characters. One of the most vivid examples came from Chance Purdue, a P.I. from Chicago created by Ross Spencer, who described a woman's reluctant handshake as follows: "She put out her hand as though she was about to plunge it into a steaming mound of drag-on dung."

Finally, the P.I. is usually suffering from middle-age doldrums, a time when he questions everything in his life. He sees himself as a failure; a guy who makes a living by poking through other people's garbage. Raymond Chandler summed up this dilemma when he described his character The Continental Op as "a little man going forward every day. Day after day through blood and mud and death and deceit — as callous and brutal and cynical as necessary — towards a dim goal with nothing to push or pull him toward it except he's been hired to reach it."

More than any other style of storytelling, the detective story (particularly as shaped by the writers and editors of *Black Mask*) was one of the great creations to emerge from the pulp genre. While the science-fiction genre rose to prominence through the pulps, the genre itself owed more to the influence of established writers. The hardboiled detective story was unique to the pulps and would be recognized as the springboard for everyone from Chandler to Hammett to Mickey Spillane to everyone who followed in their footsteps. ■

Time in to Those Were the Days on March 23 for an afternoon of detectives on radio.



MAIL CALL!

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E-MAIL—In "My Tube Is YouTube" [Summer 2012], you speculated that Harry Morgan had a big bushy mustache due to his possibly being involved with *Gunsnake* at the time of his appearance on Jack Benny's 1974 TV special. Actually, he was filming a different Western at the time: *The Apple Dumpling Gang*. —**MARK ARNOLD**

SEMINOLE, FLORIDA—I had a schoolboy crush on Terry Moore! Good to know Ms. Moore's still around [Autumn 2012 issue]. My wife remembers her too, although we didn't realize her acting covered TV, radio, and theatre in addition to movies. —**ART BAILEY**

NEW PORT RICHEY, FLORIDA—My husband and I read Fred Perris's "Spelling 'Chicken' Is Easy...Plucking One Is Not!" [Autumn 2012 issue] and we both enjoyed it immensely. Although neither one of us worked in a butcher shop, we're familiar with the type of customers and, of course, the butchers. We enjoy reminiscing and this was one of the best "memories." Thank you. —**CLARA KRAVETTE**

MARLBORO, NEW JERSEY—"Spelling 'Chicken' Is Easy...Plucking One Is Not!" was great. It's just the kind of enjoyable article that adds a smile. Keep these kinds of articles coming! —**RON SHERRY**

AURORA, IL—We so much enjoyed your "Day With Bob & Ray" [TWT/D, March 31]. They were pioneers in what I would say was new age radio entertainment for that time, like Bob Arbogast and (as you named in the program) Art Hellyer.

I did not realize that Bob and Ray never broadcast from Chicago. I heard them in the early 1950s during my early teens. I first heard Art around 1950. I remember being home from school alone with the radio on and Art came on like a bomb! I became an instant and lifetime fan until WJOL changed their format in 2001 and he was released.

I remember when Chuck devoted a program to Art's career. It's funny, but I clearly recall Ken saying something like "I don't deserve to sit next to you," and Art replying, "Come sit on my lap!" He may have been a sort of rebel in his day but that goes with being unique. He was our version of a one-man Bob and Ray, a lot like Steve Allen. —**MEL DORNER**

(ED. NOTE)—We hope you'll be glad to know that we're planning to play our recent conversation with Art Hellyer on *Those Were the Days* during the summer of 2013.)

LAKE GENEVA, WISCONSIN—I just wanted to let you know that I think your memorial presentation for Andy Griffith [TWT/D, July 21] was superb! I was out of town Saturday and missed the program, but just listened to the archive. I've been an Andy Griffith fan for years and appreciate you devoting your time to him. —**PAT ROMENESKO**

E-MAIL—I had to leave the Chicago area recently to seek teaching jobs in Florida, but I really enjoyed your broadcast from the Museum of Broadcast Communications [TWT/D, August 4] devoted to Chicago. As always, a fantastic show, and a show which brought back memories for me.

Please give Ken my best; I miss hearing him on the old WNIB classical station. I do like and listen to Bruce Oscar's *Swing Shift* when I am in the Chicago area. Again, my many thanks to you for keeping alive a time when entertainment was concerned with quality, and, most importantly, shows had something to say! —**BRUCE R. WEAVER**

MCHENRY, IL—Enjoyed the brief Art Hellyer show excerpt [TWT/D, August 4]. I would like to hear more of the old DJ shows; they bring back cruising, drive-ins, the fun of the '50s and '60s. Radio had such impact. My wife and I reminisced how old radio commercials remain imprinted (e.g. Robert Hall's "Where the values go up, up, up and the prices go

down, down, down"). Lots of others that I'll bet you and Ken could sing along with. Love your program, it makes Saturdays even better. —**JAMES JOHNSON**

E-MAIL — Steve, I heard your comment [7/MTD, August 11] about the Globetrotters starting out at the Savoy. It reminded me that they had another connection with the South Side of Chicago. For many years, the man who served as their summer tour director, referee, and possibly other roles within the organization was Elliott (Eli) Hasen, the football coach and athletic director at Hyde Park High School. Hyde Park, of course, at 63rd and Stony Island, is not that far from the Savoy at 47th and South Park. I remember on rainy days at Hyde Park, when our gym classes couldn't go outside, we'd sit and watch films of the Globetrotters, with Eli usually in there refereeing the madness. He also refereed in the Big 10. Probably not many people realize the Harlem Globetrotters were a Chicago organization; apparently Abe Saperstein picked "Harlem" for the name because Harlem was known as the center of black culture back then.

Keep up the good work. Lots of memories in the Chicago radio series this month. —**MIKE BAUM**

E-MAIL — I wanted to ask if you got the half-hour segment of the *John Doremus Show* on WAIT [7/MTD, August 11] from Ken Alexander. It sounds great — actually it sounds better than I remember WAIT sounding on my parents' AM radio when I was a kid.

My dad enjoyed WGN but my Mom was a WAIT listener because she enjoyed the quiet sounds they played. Thanks for sharing the show with us. —**RICH BILEK**

(ED. NOTE) — The "high fidelity" segment from the *John Doremus Show* that you heard on our August 4 show was provided to us by the management at station KNXR/Rochester, Minnesota, where you can hear repeat broadcasts of *Patterns in Music* — hosted by the late John Doremus — five nights a week. Truth be told, between his collections of old newspapers and shoes, Ken doesn't have much time — or space — to collect anything else!

MT. PROSPECT, IL — I appreciate all your efforts to further this memorable era. Thanks. —**ROBERT J. KRUCKMEYER**

E-MAIL — I am in New York City, playing the July 2, 2011 broadcast from the four discs you sent me. The subject was "Big Bands on Armed Forces Radio" — that's MUSIC! I sorely miss tuning in on Saturday afternoons after listening to *Swing Shift*. I am just so busy here but am taking a moment to say thanks so much for the quality time your show afforded me and my mother on weekends. She expired October 19, 2011. We had a blast though, especially listening to the radio. Thanks again. —**RAY O'BRIEN**

(ED. NOTE) — We're glad to hear that you enjoyed your copy of our "Big Bands on Armed Forces Radio" show from 2011. An audio transcript of any four-hour *Those Were the Days* program is available on four compact discs for \$25.00 plus tax — where applicable — and shipping from **Nostalgia Digest, Box 25734, Chicago, IL 60625**. And we're grateful beyond words to know that our efforts have been appreciated by two generations!

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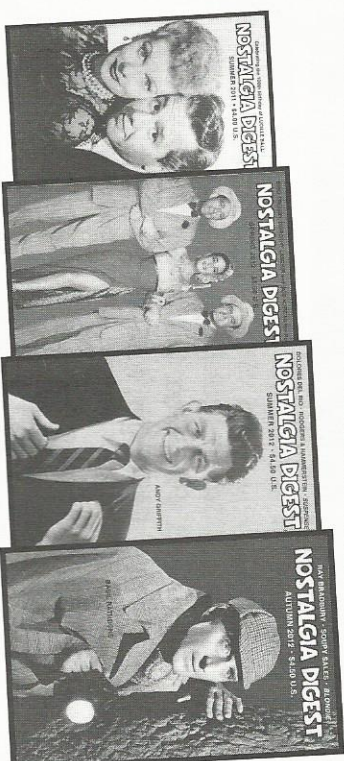
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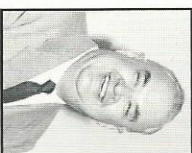
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