

# NOSTALGIA DIGEST <sup>AND</sup> RADIO GUIDE



**75**  
YEARS  
OF  
RADIO  
1920-1995

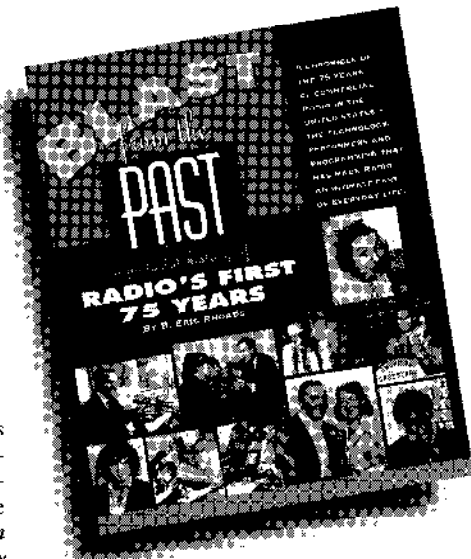


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## CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

BOOK TWENTY-ONE

CHAPTER SIX

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1995

### Hello, Out There in Radioland!

This year marks the 75th Anniversary of Radio and the Radio Hall of Fame is leading the celebration with a spectacular weekend of activities October 27-29, 1995.

The centerpiece of the celebration will be the coast-to-coast broadcast of this year's **RADIO HALL OF FAME INDUCTION CEREMONIES.** The two-

hour program will be aired live from 7-9 pm (Central Time) on Sunday, October 29 and will originate in the Grand Ballroom of Chicago's Hyatt Regency Hotel. It will be heard in Chicago on WBBM and WGN. The program will be an entertainment-documentary saluting radio's 75 year history and will feature the 1995 Inductees to the Radio Hall of Fame, including satirist/humorist Stan Freberg and the CBS World News Roundup.

*The event is open to the public; individual seats to the star-studded black tie dinner and broadcast are \$300 each.*

Another special event of particular interest to fans of old time radio is the unique **RADIO HALL OF FAME PIONEER INDUCTION CEREMONY** on Saturday afternoon, October 28 at the Swissotel, Chicago. Being inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame at this special luncheon program will be broadcast pioneers Les Tremayne, Ralph Edwards, Eve Arden, *One Man's Family* and *Your Hit Parade*. This special event will include a re-enactment of Norman Corwin's classic radio comedy-drama, "The Undecided Molecule" with an all-professional cast. Norman Corwin, who was inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame in 1993 will direct this re-enactment of his award-winning script. Also scheduled to be present for this special occasion are Radio Hall of Famers Himan Brown (producer of *Inner Sanctum* and *CBS Radio Mystery Theatre*), Shirley Bell Cole ("Little Orphan Annie") and Chuck Schaden. This event will not be broadcast.

*The Pioneer Induction and luncheon is open to the public; individual seats are \$50 each.*

**To make a reservation for either the Hall of Fame Dinner and Broadcast or the Pioneers Induction Luncheon, call Katy Roan at the Museum of Broadcast Communications, 1-800-860-9559.**

Other 75th Anniversary activities include:

**A SALUTE TO SPORTSCASTERS**, Friday, October 27 from 7-9 pm at the Chicago Cultural Center. Host Roy Leonard will welcome Jack Brickhouse, Harry Caray, Don Dunphy, Curt Gowdy and others. *For information, call Carrie Thomas at WGN-Radio, 312/222-4700.*

**ROCK 'ROLL REUNION**, Saturday, October 28, from 7 pm to Midnight at the Chicago Cultural Center. Radio's rock 'n roll legends who will appear include Bernie Allen, Dick Biondi, Jerry G. Bishop, Bob Hale, John "Records" Landecker, Gary Owens, and Bob Sirott. *For information call Edith Prado at WJMK-Radio, 312/977-1800.*

As you can see, Radio's 75th Anniversary is being celebrated in style. It's all happening in Chicago and you're invited to join in the festivities.



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—Chuck Schaden

# When Magic Was In The Air

## A Remembrance on the 75th Anniversary of Radio

BY BILL ELWELL

There was a sense of excitement in Pittsburgh on that Tuesday evening in November. The year was 1920, and KDKA, the first commercially-licensed radio station, was broadcasting an event of great popular interest: the Harding-Cox presidential election returns.

The excitement generated by that landmark transmission was felt beyond Pittsburgh and produced remarkable reactions wherever it was received. Listeners elsewhere in Pennsylvania and in nearby Ohio and West Virginia were also fascinated by the voices and musical interludes their primitive receivers pulled from the air on the night of November 2. And, in a day when news rarely came sooner than the

next newspaper, people were astonished by the speed with which radio brought them the election returns. To many listeners, radio was like magic in the air

The contents of the historic broadcast from Pittsburgh, which was considered the beginning of modern radio, contrasted with much of the programming on the air in 1920. The transmission from KDKA was scheduled, significant, and memorable; while many others of that time were irregular, ordinary, and soon forgotten.

In 1921, KDKA continued to be in the forefront of the fledgling radio industry. It searched for and found new sources of

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*Bill Elwell is a regular contributor who fills his retirement years by gardening, hiking, writing and listening to old time radio shows.*

---

programming and thereby accomplished a number of "firsts" in the business: a "remote" church broadcast, a broadcast by a national figure (Herbert Hoover), and regular broadcasts of baseball scores and market reports.

During the same year, the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company, which had established KDKA, set up three additional stations in cities where it had plants: KBZ (East Springfield, Massachusetts), KYW (Chicago, Illinois), and WJZ (Newark, New Jersey). While these stations were being formed, Westinghouse produced its first popularly-priced radio receiver, which retailed for approximately \$60.

It is interesting to note that, in the early days of broadcasting, virtually no advertising, as we now understand the word, went out over the air. This frequently caused financial hardships for stations that did not have adequate backing from other sources.

There were, however, some stations that did broadcast advertisements. These were often owned by a radio manufacturing establishment that used the stations to stimulate sales of its products.

A station that included sports events in its programming and advertised radios sometimes found the combination very worthwhile. Then, as now, many people enjoyed athletic contests immensely and, in that day, bought radios just to listen to them and, of course, to the station that broadcast them.

This situation was particularly evident



KDKA, PITTSBURGH, makes radio history on November 2, 1920, with broadcast coverage of the Harding-Cox presidential election returns.

whenever a special athletic event was in the offing. Anticipation of the Dempsey-Carpentier boxing match, for example, prompted fans to buy thousands of radios just before the fight was broadcast from Jersey City on July 2, 1921. Although radio manufacturers and retailers were often hard-pressed to meet this kind of demand, they were pleased, of course, with the jump in sales.

The growing number of relatively substantial stations in 1921 began to attract entertainers who wanted to try out the new medium. Among them were Billy Jones and Ernie Hare, who became known as the "Happiness Boys." In October of that year, Jones and Hare began a program of song and humor over station WJZ and went on to become two of radio's first big stars.

By the fall of 1921, radio was beginning to show more signs of what it would become in the future. For example, a weekday program schedule dated October 9 offered listeners play-by-play coverage of the World Series, postgame comment and analysis, children's programs, a summary of the day's most important news, and a

concert of musical and vocal selections.

Radio continued to cover events of national interest in the early twenties and in the process often achieved new firsts. On November 11, 1921, for instance, President Harding's Armistice Day address was broadcast from the nation's capital and sent to Madison Square Garden in New York and the Civic Auditorium in San Francisco over telephone circuits. This arrangement foreshadowed future radio networks.

During the following year, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company added to the growing number of stations when it established WEAF in New York. Many technical innovations were installed at that station, and new techniques of broadcasting and commercial sponsoring were developed there.

Then, on August 28, 1922, one of the first sponsored programs ever broadcast was aired from WEAF. The commercial covered the advantages of certain apartments in Jackson Heights, New York, and was paid for by a suburban real estate firm.

There was another significant radio first in 1922, the broadcast of a stage show

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called *The Perfect Fool*, which featured comedian Ed Wynn. When the performance was aired over WJZ on February 19, Wynn was so nervous in front of the microphone that the pitch of his voice rose significantly. This concerned him at first, but, when he realized that listeners liked his frantic, high-pitched tones, he decided to keep them in his act.

"Mike fright" was common in the early days of radio, and performers found various ways to cope with it. Veteran stage performer Alice Brady, for example, conquered her fear by covering the microphone with a lampshade, so she would not be aware of it during broadcasts.

In the early twenties, the radio equipment also posed technical problems for performers. The vacuum tubes used in transmitters at that time, for instance, were so fragile that the high notes of singers often caused them to blow out. It is said that Vaughn de Leath, perhaps the first woman to sing over radio, solved that problem by singing softly into the microphone and thereby inventing a style that became known as "crooning."

By May 1922, there were over 300 licensed radio stations. This represented more than a tenfold increase in less than two years.

The rapid growth of the industry had been largely unchecked and often caused conflicts when different stations broadcast on the same frequency at the same time. As a result, President Harding instructed the Secretary of Commerce to call a conference of radio manufacturers and broadcasters. The meeting established a federal legal authority over transmitting stations.

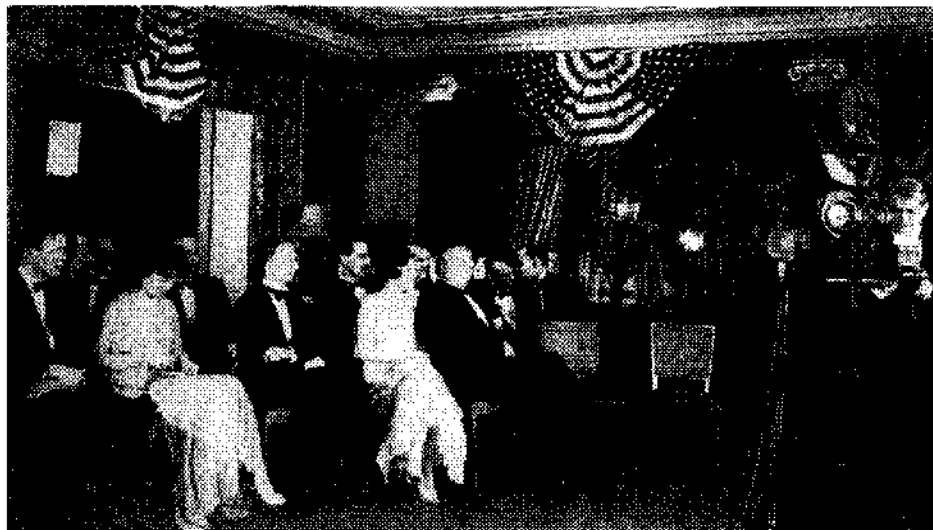
The conference appeared, however, to

have no negative effects on industry expansion, for by 1923 there were nearly 600 broadcasting licenses in existence. Nor did the conference seem to inhibit programming innovation, for, on December 4 of that year, WEAF broadcast the first fully sponsored program, *The Eveready Hour*. This program was also the first big variety show on radio. It featured a concert orchestra, a jazz band, and a one-act play. Then, only two days later, another industry first was realized when WEAF in New York, WCAP in Washington, D.C., and WJAR in Providence, Rhode Island, were connected by wire and became the nation's first network.

By the mid-1920s, radio, as a whole, had learned the value of commercial advertising and was beginning to prosper. The availability of new funds enabled the industry to increase the number of programs for children and programs of music, news, and sports events. During this expansion the popular, long-running *National Barn Dance* and *Grand Ole Opry* premiered from Chicago and Nashville, respectively.



**BILLY JONES AND ERNIE HARE**  
"THE HAPPINESS BOYS"



**NBC's INAUGURAL BROADCAST** took place November 15, 1926 in the Grand Ballroom of the original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel which is the present site of the Empire State Building. One thousand guests turned out for the broadcast, including (far left) Charles A. Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart. The program was carried by 25 stations in 21 cities. An estimated two million listeners tuned in to hear such talent as Will Rogers and the vaudeville team of Weber and Fields.

The improved financial picture also enabled stations to add new kinds of programs to their schedules. WEAF, for instance, added talks by authorities on gardening, health, civic matters and topics of interest to women. Specific programs that began during that time included a unique showcase for young talent over WJZ called *The Children's Hour*, which later became known as *Coast-to-Coast on a Bus*. This show featured many child actors who later became radio stars as adults. Two well-known individuals from this group were Florence Halop, who became "Miss Duffy" in *Duffy's Tavern*, and Walter Tetley, who became "Leroy" in *The Great Gildersleeve*.

Other programming innovations in the mid-twenties included a comedy, *Sam 'n' Henry*, and a situation comedy, *The Smith Family*. The former premiered on WGN in Chicago and featured Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, who would move to WMAQ in 1928 to star in the medium's

first great radio show, *Amos 'n' Andy*. *The Smith Family*, a prototype "soap opera," was heard over WENR in Chicago and featured the vaudeville team of Jim and Marian Jordan. The Jordans subsequently starred in *Smackout* and in the popular, long-running *Fibber McGee and Molly*.

Another major advance in the radio industry took place on November 15, 1926. On that date, the National Broadcasting Company, America's first permanent nationwide network, was created.

The formation of NBC began with the purchase of WEAF by the Radio Corporation of America. WEAF was designated the key station and linked with a group of affiliates. The entire network incorporated more than 3,500 miles of special telephone wires.

In January 1927, the Rose Bowl game was broadcast from California to the rest of the nation over NBC's new network. Later that year, NBC reorganized into two semi-independent networks. One of them

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consisted of WJZ, plus the old radio group network, and the other of WEAJ plus the old telephone group network.

Prospective cities were identified for each of the two new networks, and engi-

neers preparing maps of the arrangements connected one set of cities with blue lines and the other with red. Thereafter, WJZ and its stations became known as the blue network, and WEAJ and its stations became the red.

There were several special broadcasts on radio during 1927. One of them originated in Washington, D.C. and aired the arrival of aviator Charles Lindbergh at the nation's capital subsequent to his record-setting flight from New York to Paris. Two other specials that year came from Chicago: the first sponsored opera broadcast which originated in the Civic Auditorium and the broadcast of the Dempsey-Tunney prize fight which originated in Soldier Field.

The closing years of the decade saw the foundation of one more radio network, the Columbia Broadcasting System. It was formed by a merger of the nearly bankrupt Columbia Phonograph Broadcasting Company network and the United Independent Broadcasters, which supplied talent for independent stations. CBS subsequently sold the record company and went on the air with WABC (now WCBS) as the key station.

In 1928, radio continued to explore new areas of programming and produced innovations in the areas of drama, interviews, and farming. The results of these efforts were *Real Folks*, one of radio's first dramatic series; *Louella Parsons*, a program which provided fans with the latest news on the Hollywood scene; and the *National*

*Farm and Home Hour* with its well-known master of ceremonies, Everett Mitchell, who regularly affirmed that it was a beautiful day in Chicago.

In the final year of the 1920s, the number of new major programs increased substantially. The more than 20 new offerings represented about one-third of all major programs coming on the air during the entire decade.

Among the newcomers in 1929 were programs tailored for children and shows specializing in comedy, drama, education, interviews, music, mystery, news, religion, serial drama ("soap opera"), and variety. Some of the more memorable ones that year included two for the younger set: *The Adventures of Helen and Mary*, which was known later as *Let's Pretend*, and the *Buster Brown Gang*, which subsequently became *Smilin' Ed's Buster Brown Gang*.

Also premiering at the close of the 1920s was *Seth Parker*, an unusual blend of music and serial drama. It featured small-town New England humor and hymn singing, and, at one point, was broadcast from a schooner at sea.

The landmark serial comedy-drama, *The Rise of the Goldbergs*, first came over the airwaves in 1929, as did the *Rudy Vallee Show*. Vallee was often credited with making this program the first really professional variety show and used it to introduce many future stars including Phil Baker, Edgar Bergen, Eddie Cantor, Alice Faye, and Ezra Stone.

By the end of the 1920s, radio had captured the attention and affection of the nation. It had something for everyone, and people loved it. It had become their "magic box."

But there were storm clouds on the horizon in 1929, and, by year's end, the stock market had collapsed. It was the beginning of the Great Depression, and many wondered if radio would survive. There



EDDIE CANTOR

was a curious phenomenon at work in the economy during the 1930s. The same decade-long economic depression that destroyed many businesses also caused radio to flourish.

There were several factors involved in this apparent contradiction. For one, as the economy worsened, many Americans could no longer afford relatively expensive forms of entertainment, and, consequently, movie houses closed, nightclubs languished, and theatrical stock companies disappeared. This, in turn, led to unemployment for scores of vaudeville and movie celebrities, nightclub performers, and concert stars. Many of these talented individuals found work in radio and substantially improved the quality of programs.

When people realized that radio entertainment was getting better and virtually free, the number of listeners rose to new heights. And, when faced with a loss of income, families often gave up vacuum cleaners, furniture, and cars purchased on credit during the prosperous twenties but

kept up payments on their radios. They would not surrender their polished wooden boxes or the marvelous entertainment that came to them with just the turn of a knob and twist of a dial.

As advertisers became aware of the huge and growing radio audience, they moved increasingly into the medium and were responsible for an enormous financial boost to the industry. This injection of new capital, which further enhanced the already prospering business, enabled radio to expand even more throughout most of the Depression.

By 1930, the medium was about to present some of its brightest stars and most memorable programs. Radio and its audience were on the threshold of a "golden age."

The substantial upswing in new major programs first evident at the close of the twenties continued throughout most of the thirties. The number of new programs per year grew during those ten years from about 20 in 1929 to nearly three times that figure in 1939. And there were approximately 400 new offerings from 1930 through 1939, nearly seven times the total for the previous decade. Radio was "booming."

About 80 per cent of the growth in new programs during the 1930s occurred in seven categories: adventure, children, comedy, drama, music, serial drama ("soap opera") and variety. Two categories, drama and soap opera, accounted for nearly half of the gain.

There was memorable programming both within and outside of the major growth categories during the decade of the thirties. One example of the latter was an educational program, the *American School of the Air*, which premiered in 1930. This was a half-hour show that was broadcast weekday afternoons. It dramatized history, current events, and great literature and was

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required listening in many classrooms.

The early 1930s also witnessed the first significant adventure serial for youngsters, *Little Orphan Annie*. This newcomer helped give rise to "radio clubs" and

encouraged friends of "Annie" to write in for premiums: secret decoders and drinking mugs that were coincidentally suitable for quaffing the sponsor's chocolate-flavored drink.

In 1931, one of the first great stars of vaudeville to succeed in radio, Eddie Cantor, came on the air with the *Chase and Sanborn Hour*, a comedy-variety presentation that stayed among the top-rated shows. Other new arrivals in the medium that year included two popular offerings: a mystery, the *Eno Crime Club*, and a serial drama, *Myrt and Marge*, which was among the first major soap operas on radio.

The following year, two more graduates from vaudeville, Jack Benny and Fred Allen, made the transition to radio where they built long and successful careers in comedy. Another popular and long-running program, *One Man's Family*, also premiered in 1932. The same year saw the first airing of a new mystery, *The Shadow*, which brought an unusual element to the genre: an invisible hero. And there was a unique variety show, *Baby Rose Marie*, which also appeared that year. It starred Rose Marie Curly, a five-year-old child wonder who sang and acted. Years later on television, she played the part of "Sally," one of the comedy writers in the *Dick Van Dyke Show*.

During the early 1930s, there were some who tried to build and retain audiences by injecting extreme suspense and excessive



JACK BENNY AND FRED ALLEN

violence into scripts of certain kinds of programs. Parents, educators, sociologists, and government officials became especially concerned about programs such as murder mysteries which might inflict mental and emotional damage on youngsters.

This concern grew into a nationwide protest, and Congress itself was moved to act. It introduced bills that would restrict the programming that stations and networks could broadcast for children.

Networks responded to these pressures and tried to head-off restrictive legislation. They initiated their own codes for children's programs and banned horror, kidnapping, profanity, torture, vulgarity, and any use of the supernatural or superstition that was likely to cause fear in youngsters.

In 1933, the industry demonstrated its willingness to improve when it brought out two new programs for the younger set. One

of them was *Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy*, which gave listeners lessons in law and order, clean living, fair play, and good behavior. Another was the *Lone Ranger*, which was action-packed, but did not emphasize violence. Both programs exemplified positive values and achieved great popularity.

The mid-thirties also witnessed the creation of yet one more network, the Mutual Broadcasting System. It consisted of four stations, WGN (Chicago), WLW (Cincinnati), WOR (New York), and WXYZ (Detroit), which came together in order to get a bigger share of the advertising dollar. Those years also saw the births of a new opportunity for aspiring performers and a special seasonal program. The former, *Major Bowes and His Original Amateur Hour*, quickly became one of the top-rated shows. The latter, *A Christmas Carol*, starred well-known actor Lionel Barrymore as "Scrooge" and became an annual presentation.

Other memorable premieres during that time included a comedy, *Fibber McGee and Molly*, and a drama, the *Lux Radio Theatre*. And one of the first major quiz programs, *Professor Quiz*, made its debut then.

As the midpoint of the decade passed, another aspect of the industry began to expand. World news was being made. There was a civil war in Spain, and German troops had entered the Rhineland. And radio increased the scope of its coverage in order to report these dramatic events to its listeners in America.

It was a different kind of conflict, however, that was broadcast to Americans on March 14, 1937. On that day, the famous Jack Benny - Fred Allen "feud" began.

The feud was, of course, only a clever publicity gag. Even so, it aroused great interest among listeners. And, when fans heard that Benny and Allen were going to engage in physical combat on one program,



MARIAN AND JIM JORDAN  
(FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY)

the demand for tickets to the show was so great that the broadcast had to be moved to the more spacious ballroom in the Hotel Pierre in New York.

The same year also brought new entertainment for younger listeners. Among these programs were the memorable *Terry and the Pirates* and the marvelous Christmas story called the *Cinnamon Bear*.

The year 1937 was interesting for yet another reason. At least 17 major soap operas premiered that year, and that number came to represent the historic peak for the genre.

If there was a golden age for "soaps," it was the 1930s. More than 80 of them were first heard during that decade. And this figure represented more than half of all major soap operas ever broadcast.

Already on the air by 1937 were such well-remembered soaps as *David Harum*, *Ma Perkins*, *Pepper Young's Family*, and *The Romance of Helen Trent*. Newcomers that year included *Aunt Jenny*, *Guiding Light*, *Lorenzo Jones*, *Our Gal Sunday*,



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*Road of Life*, and *Stella Dallas*. And there were many more to come.

Soap operas had an enormous following. Millions of housewives listened faithfully to the pathos and protracted plots

and took the anguished lives of their favorite characters to heart. Fans even wrote letters of advice and encouragement and sent gifts to them. Many listeners could easily relate to and sympathize with even a fictional person who had similar and sometimes worse problems than they did.

There was one other newcomer to the airwaves in 1937 well worth mentioning. It was the *Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy Show*. This unique comedy-variety, which featured the wit and wisecracks of ventriloquist Bergen's wooden alter-ego (McCarthy), went right to the top of the ratings.

One of this program's most memorable moments occurred on December 12 of its first year. During that broadcast, the seductive inflections used by guest Mae West in her "dialog" with Charlie McCarthy caused a listener protest which led to an investigation by the Federal Communications Commission.

In the late 1930s, radio was keeping its listeners well-informed of the growing tensions around the world. And, during that time, the airwaves also carried a new drama series, the *Mercury Theatre on the Air*.

On the evening of October 30, 1938, the *Mercury Theatre* presented an adaptation of H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*. Unfortunately, many in the radio audience believed it was a news broadcast of a real invasion and became terrified. When the truth became known, the FCC and CBS, which carried the program, received hun-

dreds of complaints.

Although CBS apologized profusely, it also pointed out that the program had been described as only a play several times during the broadcast. Even so, broadcasters were strongly advised not to repeat that kind of program.

Radio continued to turn out other memorable programs through the end of the decade. For youngsters, there were new adventure serials including *Captain Midnight* and *Superman*. A popular drama, *Mr. District Attorney*, and the classic thriller, *I Love A Mystery*, also premiered at that time. And two noteworthy situation comedies, the *Aldrich Family* and *Blondie*, a spin-off from the comics, also joined the airwaves at the conclusion of the thirties.

The 1930s were a decade of growing and maturing for the radio industry. Those years saw the emergence of new kinds of programs, including adventure and detective, and substantial growth in existing categories, including children, comedy, drama, music, mystery, soap operas, and variety.

Throughout the decade, housewives often found solace in the fictional lives portrayed in daytime soaps. In the evening families tuned-in to comedy and variety shows and found welcome respite from the pressures and privations that came from a faltering economy. And radio prospered.

By the close of the thirties, the industry was entering its best years. Its widespread networks were carrying programs from coast-to-coast. And the number, quality, and variety of these shows provided regular, marvelous entertainment for millions of people.

To most listeners, these programs were radio's crowning achievement. And, to the industry, this achievement was a crown of gold.

If the thirties were a golden crown for the radio industry, then the forties were the



ARTHUR LAKE AND PENNY SINGLETON  
"BLONDIE"

priceless jewels in the crown. It is estimated that at least 500 new major programs were added to the airwaves during those years. And this number reflected an increase of approximately 25 per cent over the preceding decade.

Comedy programs continued to fill top positions on the rating charts during the 1940s, and it was not unusual for Hollywood to sign up the stars of these shows for films. It was a special treat for radio fans whenever several of their favorite comedians appeared together in movies like *It's In the Bag* with Jack Benny and Fred Allen and *Look Who's Laughing* with Fibber McGee and Molly (Jim and Marian Jordan), Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve (Harold Peary), and Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy.

Although radio comedies remained a favorite with listeners, most of the growth in new programming in the forties took place in seven other categories: adventure, audience participation, detective, drama, mystery, quiz, and situation comedy. Two of them, drama and situation comedy, ac-

counted for almost two-thirds of the gain.

Two popular quiz shows, the *Quiz Kids* and *Truth or Consequences*, premiered during the first year of the decade. Although quite different in content, they both enjoyed long runs.

The following year produced several other memorable programs. They included one of the first audience participation shows, *Breakfast at Sardi's*; comedy offerings, *Duffy's Tavern*, and the *Red Skelton Show*; detective and mystery programs, *Bulldog Drummond*, *Mr. and Mrs. North*, and *Inner Sanctum*; and situation comedies, *A Date With Judy* and the *Great Gildersleeve*.

In 1942, a new theme, the Second World War, began its nearly four year impact on programming. Not only did it become a major part of news reports, as would be expected, it also appeared in many kids' adventure serials, such as *Hop Harrigan*.

A war theme was also evident whenever well-known comedians like Eddie Cantor, Jack Benny, or Bob Hope broadcast their shows from military installations. The war was the background for many dramas, and it sometimes gave an air of reality to the story lines of "soaps." And the war was often evident in the songs sung on variety programs.

The Second World War not only found its way into existing categories of programming, it also was the topic around which new kinds of programs were built from the early to mid-forties. The influence of the conflict was sometimes seen in the titles of these shows which included *The Army Hour*, *Chaplain Jim*, *Ceiling Unlimited*, *The Doctor Fights*, *Stage Door Canteen*, and *Treasury Star Parade*.

The war years also witnessed the arrival of many new programs which had no direct connection with the conflict. And these shows did great service by distracting their audiences and giving them relief

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from wartime tensions. There were, for example, several audience participation programs which premiered during that time including *People Are Funny*, *Ladies Be Seated*, and *Queen For a Day*. The comedy

scene was brightened by the arrival of Jimmy Durante and Judy Canova. *Suspense* added its outstanding presence to the field of drama, and the *Whistler* brought its unique plots to the airwaves. *Life of Riley*, *Meet Corliss Archer*, and the *Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* brought much needed laughter to listeners on the home front. Radio served the nation well during those troubled times.

At war's end in 1945, many businesses began the process of reconversion to peacetime pursuits. There was, however, no major change in the broadcasting industry. War themes faded, of course, but otherwise radio continued along the same path it had followed for more than a decade.

The industry produced more than 60 new major programs that year, the record for the business. And radio continued to be the "magic box" that brought welcome diversions from daily routines.

Radio did well at providing new diversions for its audience throughout the balance of the decade. Newcomers *Sky King* and *Straight Arrow* provided youngsters with excitement. *This Is Your Life* gave the curious a look at the famous. *Sam Spade*, *Richard Diamond*, *The Fat Man*, and *Dragnet* afforded challenge to those yearning to solve crimes. *Escape* offered a change for those wanting to get away from it all. *My Friend Irma*, *Life With Luigi*, *Our Miss Brooks*, and the *Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show* brought laughter to those in need of it. And the ever-popular Bing Crosby was

still around for those who were content to simply lean back and enjoy a mellow voice and soft music.

Radio still had something for everyone. But its best days were drawing to a close.

The second half of the forties witnessed a new phenomenon in the radio industry, a marked decrease in the number of new major programs going on the air each year. And by 1949, the number of newcomers was the lowest it had been in 15 years.

By 1950, radio was beginning to notice the loss of its audience to television. Nevertheless, the medium kept several of its best performers on the air and turned out more than 80 new major programs during the decade. However, more than one-third of the newcomers premiered in 1950. From then on they averaged little more than a handful annually.

There were essentially five categories of new programs during the 1950s: adventure, drama, science fiction, situation comedy, and western adventure. "Excitement" seemed to be a common element in many of these shows and appeared to be in them to keep the existing audience interested and to attract new listeners at the same time.

A classic science fiction offering in 1950, *Dimension X*, offered listeners a sense of wonder as well as excitement and produced many memorable programs. Then, in 1951, a new adventure show, *Silver Eagle*. *Mountie*, went on the air for the younger set.

There was a minor upsurge in new programs in 1952 which included two situation comedies, *I Love Lucy* and *My Little Margie*, and a western adventure, *Gunsmoke*. All three had very successful counterparts on television.

Although it was mostly downhill from then on, there were some worthwhile additions to the airwaves in the following years.

In 1953, for instance, movie celebrity



MARIE WILSON  
"MY FRIEND IRMA"

Jimmy Stewart went on the air in *Six Shooter*, another western adventure. This was ironic in a way, for it was the opposite of what had happened in the early forties when Hollywood hired radio celebrities to star in films.

The mid-fifties saw the emergence of *X Minus One*, a successor to *Dimension X*, and NBC's *Monitor*, a weekend "service" made up of comedy skits, music, news, and talk.

As the decade drew to a close, a unique comedy, the *Stan Freberg Show*, came on the air. And it was followed by two more westerns, *Frontier Gentleman* and *Have Gun. Will Travel*.

During the fifties, the radio industry realized that its glamorous days were ending and that it needed to find a new audience and new programming. It could not expect Arthur Godfrey's popular morning shows or the remaining soap operas to last forever. Nor could radio expect its well-established evening programs like *Fibber McGee and Molly*, *Mr. District Attorney*,

and *Great Gildersleeve* to retain their audiences indefinitely.

During its search for a new audience, radio accepted the loss of its listeners to television. As always, they wanted entertainment, and the visual nature of the new medium provided more of that than radio could.

There were certain kinds of programming, however, in which radio found it could excel: music, news, and talk. And it could broadcast these kinds of programs to people who were not in front of their television sets. Thus, radio's new audience became people in offices and factories, people in cars, and people working around the house.

By the 1960s, the music-news-talk format was so successful that it became the pattern for the entire industry. And, except for some revivals of vintage radio programs, these three categories still represent much of what is on the air today.

Radio has traveled a long and interesting road during its 75 years. Its voice has grown from a muted whisper barely audible in the earphones of a simple crystal set to the rich, full sounds pouring from the speakers of a sophisticated sound system.

In its prime, radio created a thousand different programs, made stars of fascinating people, and broadcast matchless entertainment through the air. It was a cornucopia that, for many years, overflowed with adventure, drama, humor, music, and mystery.

Millions listened to radio in those days. All it took was the turn of a knob and twist of a dial. Then a polished wooden box came to life and pulled voices and music from the air. And those wondrous sounds often touched the heart and stirred the imagination.

To many listeners, radio was magic in the air. ■



Ken Alexander  
Remembers . . .

## Sweet Tooth



The George W. Tilton School, which I attended from fourth grade to graduation, is in a four-story yellow brick building at 4152 West End Avenue. Just east of the playground was the little school store, where we pupils bought our basic school supplies.

Probably because the family that owned the store couldn't have made a living on school supplies alone, they had a candy counter installed. I think that was a smart move, because when we kids stocked up on school supplies in September, we were pretty well set for the school year. But we'd stop in for candy any time we had the money to spend — which was about twice a week, all year 'round.

We're talking about the late 1930's here — hard times. Our candy money was counted not in quarters or dimes but in pennies. Today some people argue that the one-cent coin should be abolished — it won't buy anything and it's just a nuisance. In those days, though, a penny was worth something. Two of them would buy a copy of the *Chicago Daily News*; ten would get you a *Sunday Tribune*. For three cents a kid could ride the streetcar and get a transfer; adults shelled out seven cents. A loaf of bread cost ten cents. At school, kids could buy a half-pint bottle of milk to drink at morning recess — three cents for the

"white" milk, as we called it: four for the chocolate. A three-cent stamp would deliver a letter anywhere in the U.S. and Canada. Air mail was five cents. A postal card would set you back just one of the copper coins.

As for the candy counter at the school store, I don't remember what the prices were. Some candies were a penny apiece, some two for a penny. I do remember that a few pennies were sufficient to satisfy a kid's sweet tooth for several days.

We liked Mary Janes — peanut-butter caramels individually wrapped in yellow waxed paper with a red band. Then there were Gem caramels — the boy downstairs of us called them Jims — which were bigger than Mary Janes, and expensive; I think they were two cents apiece, but they were worth it. There were Walnettos — little square caramels that contained ground walnut meats — but they came only in packages of a dozen or so. Too expensive.

Licorice — the other kids called it LICK-rish — was a favorite flavor, and we had our choice of Black Crows, little dome-shaped lozenges which came in a box; some hollow cylindrical candies which also came in a box and whose name I've forgotten; or the licorice whip. The entire whip was edible. The handle was black and the whip itself was red and about ten

inches long, with spiral grooves running its length to give it a twisted appearance.

Lollipops? Ah, yes, there were lollipops — but we called them suckers. Not all of them were on a wooden stick; I remember Reed's Paloops, which had a loop of twisted paper rope instead. They were safer than a stick for small children, in case the tot should fall with a lollipop in his or her mouth.

The best lollipop was the all-day sucker, and, though it didn't last a whole day, there was enough to it so that it lasted a lot longer than an ordinary sucker. It was three or four inches across, and white, with swirls of red marbling. Yum.

Speaking of suckers, I have a recollection of something called Holloway. It seems that it was chocolate-flavored and was in the form of a lollipop and that's all I remember about it, but the name Holloway still evokes a smile today.

There were peppermint sticks — white with a red spiral stripe — and sticks of other colors and flavors: spearmint, cinnamon, sassafras, and wintergreen.

The school store used to sell — but not to me — a strip of white paper a couple of inches wide with regularly spaced little discs of magenta-colored candy stuck to it. I used to see other kids buy it, but it certainly didn't do anything for me; as far as I was concerned, it wasn't worth the paper it was stuck on.

Bubble gum was always a treat. There was Fleer's, which had a tiny comic strip wrapped inside the outer wrapper. And there was, of course, the gum that came with a baseball card — you might get a Billy Herman or an Eddie Waitkus. Next to the door was a gum-ball machine. For a cent, the machine would deliver a gum ball that was guaranteed. But if your gum ball happened to be a certain color, it was redeemable for five, or maybe even ten cents' worth of merchandise.

There was always a good stock of bulls eyes, Milk Duds, jawbreakers, jujubes, and other confections — none of which, I'm sure, had the endorsement of the American Dental Association, but all of which had the hearty approval of us kids.

Grown-ups bought their candy at a different kind of store: Fannie May, Mrs. Snyder's, Mrs. Stevens', or Andes ("The Peak of All Candies"). We kids couldn't afford to buy that kind of candy. Sometimes, though, in the holiday season, a relative would bring a box to our family. Nougat, cream, caramel, coconut, or toffee filings, some covered with light or dark chocolate, some with pastel coatings of pale pink, delicate green, or white — you wouldn't find anything like *that* at the school store; that candy was *special*.

At my grandparents' house, there were always a couple of overflowing candy dishes on the buffet in the evening. (My grandfather would travel downtown on Saturday morning and would return home with white paper bags of candy from the big Woolworth's store on State Street.) There might be nonpareils, spice drops, Hershey's chocolate kisses, or malted-milk balls. Horehound drops were another thing my grandfather would sometimes buy.

Years afterward, I began going to that Woolworth's myself. What a selection of candy they had! There were gum drops of all flavors and colors; jelly beans; spearmint leaves; peanut-butter kisses; peppermint patties; orange slices; saltwater taffy — you name it — all sold in bulk. The store is still there and the candy counter is still there, but the candies are either individually wrapped or pre-packaged; it isn't like the old days. The present system is more sanitary, but the old system was more enticing.

Around the corner, on Washington, Hillman's — now gone; the entire block is gone — had another great candy depart-

## SWEET TOOTH

ment. Lemon drops, chocolate-covered raisins, marzipan, circus peanuts, anise squares, chocolate-covered cherries, several kinds of fudge — it was all there. I would browse for a while, then buy a quarter-pound of something good to munch on the way to the train station.

There were special kinds of candy for special days. For Valentine's Day there were tiny, shiny, red, cinnamon-flavored hearts — pretty spicy — and pastel hearts a little larger, each bearing a printed message: OH YOU KID; I LOVE YOU; BE MINE. And for the adults, there were the big red heart-shaped boxes of chocolates.

Easter brought jelly beans and candy eggs in spring colors; chocolate-covered eggs — some filled with marshmallow, some with cream — and chocolate rabbits. The quality of the rabbits varied widely; some were of solid fine milk chocolate, while others were hollow and waxy.

Around Halloween there would be a plentiful crop of orange and black jelly beans, tiny pumpkins made of sugar candy, and candy corn.

When I think of Christmas candy, I remember the hard candies — some filled, some solid — that were available only at the Christmas season. They had characteristic shapes: pillows, logs, chicken bones, raspberries, candy canes, etc. Just the sight of one piece of Christmas candy today can evoke a host of memories.

It seems to me that candy bars are smaller than they were when I was a boy, even though they cost a lot more today. They had cost five cents for many years. Then, some time around 1960, the first price increase took effect. On the first day of the increase, I was standing at the candy counter at the Chicago & North Western terminal when I heard a clerk behind the counter instructing a younger co-worker:

"All nickel candy bars are six cents." The statement, as I perceived it, was paradoxical but true: the candy bars *did* cost six cents, but they *were* nickel candy bars. Today, the vendor in the train station is getting sixty-five cents for them, but I still think of them as nickel candy bars.

Many of the candies I recall from my childhood are still with us. Baby Ruth, Oh Henry! and Butterfinger bars have been around ever since I can remember. The Clark bar is a classic. Bit-O-Honey is an old friend. Nineteen ninety marked the fiftieth anniversary of M&Ms. The Tootsie Roll just keeps rollin' along. And it would be hard to imagine a world without Hershey bars — with or without almonds.

But there were candies which exist no more. Back around 1940 there was a round candy bar called Whiz; it used to be advertised on the radio: "Whizzzz — best nickel candy there izzzzz." I haven't heard of them for decades.

More recently, one of the candy-makers introduced a bar named for baseball's star outfielder Reggie Jackson. I don't see them around any more, either.

And what ever became of Holloways?

Mars, Incorporated, which sponsored Doctor I.Q. in Radio's Golden Age, used to advertise five marvelously sweet candy bars on the program. Four of them were Milky Way, Mars, Snickers, and 3 Musketeers, and they are still very much in evidence at candy counters everywhere. The fifth — a particular favorite of mine — I thought would always be in our midst. It was taken off the market a dozen years ago. Irony of ironies — its name: Forever Yours. *Sic transit gloria candy.* ■

*Author's note: Although the Forever Yours has been discontinued as such, the same candy bar, made by the same company, is available once more but under a new name: Milky Way Dark.*

# Youthful Fantasy Revisited

BY HERB HARRIS

Depression era kids in Chicago went to the movies a lot.

I was one of those kids and I certainly saw more than my share of Hollywood's product. One dime would buy two full length features along with sundry other short subjects at the local neighborhood second and third run theatres.

One summer day in 1939, I planned a special excursion. It was quite elaborate for a twelve year old with his eight year old brother in tow. We boarded a streetcar for a trip far beyond our small domain. Our destination was The Avalon Theatre, one of the grandest of the large, primary run movie palaces.

Just entering the Avalon, a huge, opulent Moorish Temple was an adventure in itself. The trolley fare each way was seven cents for me and three cents for my little brother, but all that we surveyed was worth every penny.

From high in the balcony, we viewed the feature film on the giant screen. It was *The Great Victor Herbert*, a veritable concert

*Herbert M. Harris of Carrollton, Texas is a great fan of actress Susanna Foster.*



SUSANNA FOSTER

of most of that great composer's major works drawn together by a light fictional story.

The leading female roles were played by two actress/singers, each appearing in their first film, Mary Martin and Susanna Foster.

It was the latter that fascinated me.

As part of the grand finale, Susanna Foster appears, center stage, for a magnificent duct, dressed in a white, fur-trimmed Cosack costume. At the time, I thought it might be ermine, but whatever it was, it had my heart pounding. We sat through the film a second time to see that scene and when we left, the theatre was packed with people and there was a long waiting line on the street.

I never saw *The Great Victor Herbert* again. I don't believe it was ever reissued

## YOUTHFUL FANTASY REVISITED

nor did I ever notice it listed for TV even after cable came in and many obscure films were shown. I did, however, try to see subsequent films starring Susanna Foster.

In 1943, Susanna starred as Christine in an extravagant, big-budget, Technicolor version of *Phantom of the Opera*. Her singing co-star was Nelson Eddy and the Phantom was played by Claude Rains.

After my high school graduation, I went into the army near the end of World War II and served two years. Returning home, my thoughts were absorbed with employment, college, marriage and establishing my own career. I didn't even notice that there were no more Susanna Foster films.

I have a friend in Los Angeles, Bob Board, who was employed in the motion

picture and television industries his entire working life. I try to visit with him whenever I am in California.

In his retirement, Bob is an avid film historian and collector of rare movie memorabilia. He has known many of the stars, character actors and lesser lights from cinema's Golden Age.

In 1991, I somehow got around to telling Bob about the beautiful, blond soprano in the white Cossack outfit I had "met" fifty-two years earlier. He laughed and said, "I have a 16mm print, in excellent condition, of *The Great Victor Herbert*. Come back tomorrow and we will run it."

The next day, Bob asked if I minded if someone else came over to watch the film. I said, "Of course not!"

"Good," he said. "I'll arrange to pick up Susanna Foster."

I was "thunder-struck."



"THE GREAT VICTOR HERBERT" (1939) The star of the show (Mary Martin) has throat problems. The doctor (Lee Bowman), the producer (Pierre Watkins) and the great composer Victor Herbert (Walter Connolly) are very concerned. Their concerns are solved when Susanna Foster, also in the scene, agrees to go on. The result is the girl in the white cossack costume.

When Susanna arrived, I told her that the last time I had seen this film had been fifty-two years earlier and more than two thousand people were present.

How could I have imagined then that one day there would be a private viewing with the star at my side.

Susanna talked quite candidly that evening about her career and her life experience. She was just fourteen years old when *The Great Victor Herbert* was produced and age eighteen when starring in *Phantom of the Opera*. In these films, she appeared much older and more mature, as was the case in most of her roles.

Sometimes, she played her own age. Universal teamed her with Donald O'Connor a couple of times as its answer to the MGM team of Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney.

She also felt that Universal used her as a tool to keep its top "meal ticket", Deanna Durbin, in line. Universal's two female singing stars never met and Susanna felt that this was by design.

Susanna's film career was all over by the time she was twenty one. She walked away and went to Europe to study opera. Returning, she did live operetta which was still popular in that period. She married her leading man, Wilber Evans, and the two performed together for a few years. After a divorce in the middle fifties, Susanna Foster never performed or sang again in any medium.

Life has not been easy for Susanna over the last four decades. Largely forgotten by a much younger public, she endured many personal hardships. When Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera* opened in Los Angeles, Susanna did receive some attention from the local media. Her version marked the only time that Hollywood had ever done this story as a talking picture.

A few years ago, she was invited, and



SUSANNA FOSTER AND NELSON EDDY  
"PHANTOM OF THE OPERA"

attended, the seventy-fifth birthday party of Universal Pictures. It was a wonderful occasion for her as she visited with people from decades past.

After my memorable evening, I returned to my home in Texas and sent Susanna some small gifts of appreciation from an old fan. Included was a radio cassette of Lux Radio Theatre doing *Phantom of the Opera*. Cecil B. DeMille presented Susanna Foster and Nelson Eddy reprising their movie roles. Susanna enjoyed this and said that she was in unusually good voice that night.

Susanna lives modestly today, alone in a small apartment in North Hollywood. Her health is not too good, but she has toughed out the worst of her times.

I thank her, so much, for helping recreate an experience from my innocent childhood. ■

Note: The Lux Radio Theatre production of "Phantom of the Opera" starring Susanna Foster and Nelson Eddy will be heard on TWTD Saturday, Nov. 4. Check listings on page 24.

# OCTOBER 1995

## Old Time Radio Classics -- WBBM-AM 78 SEVEN NIGHTS A WEEK MIDNIGHT to 1:00 A.M.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Frank Race Little Orphan Annie	2 Dimension X Jimmie Allen	3 Sam Spade Moon Over Africa	4 Family Theatre Lum and Abner	5 Mysterious Traveler Bob and Ray	6 Cisco Kid Hop Harrigan	7 Suspense Superman
8 Charlie McCarthy Sherlock Holmes	9 Duffy's Tavern Fibber McGee	10 Suspense Fibber McGee	11 Great Gildersleeve Fibber McGee	12 Ellery Queen Fibber McGee	13 Life of Riley Fibber McGee	14 Man From Homicide Superman
15 Nightbeat Jerry of the Circus	16 Suspense Editor's Daughter	17 This Is Your FBI Ceiling Unlimited	18 Life of Riley Perry Mason	19 S x Shooter Charlie McCarthy	20 Lum and Abner Bill Stern	21 Rocky Jordan Superman
22 The Shadow Jimmie Allen	23 The Shadow Moon Over Africa	24 The Shadow Speed Gibson	25 The Shadow Perry Mason	26 The Shadow Sgt. Preston	27 The Shadow Easy Aces	28 Life of Riley Superman
29 Archie Andrews Stan Freberg	30 Baby Snooks The Dark	31 Ozzie and Harriet Boris Karloff	PLEASE NOTE: Due to WBBM's commitment to news, <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> may be preempted occasionally for late-breaking news of local or national importance. In this event, vintage shows scheduled for <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> will be rescheduled to a later date. All of the programs we present on <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> are syndicated rebroadcasts. We are not able to obtain advance information about storylines of these shows so that we might include more details in our <i>Radio Guide</i> . However, this easy-to-read calendar lists the programs in the order we will broadcast them. Programs on <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> are complete, but original commercials and network identification have been deleted. This schedule is subject to change without notice.			

# NOVEMBER 1995

## Old Time Radio Classics -- WBBM-AM 78 SEVEN NIGHTS A WEEK MIDNIGHT to 1:00 A.M.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
5 Meet Corliss Archer Jimmie Allen	6 Abbott & Costello Cinnamon Bear # 3	7 Escape Moon Over Africa	1 Jack Benny Cinnamon Bear # 1	2 Mysterious Traveler Jimmie Allen	3 Box Thirteen Cinnamon Bear # 2	4 Cisco Kid Superman
12 Fibber McGee & Molly Easy Aces	13 The Shadow Cinnamon Bear # 6	14 I Was A Communist Editor's Daughter	8 Burns and Allen Cinnamon Bear # 4	9 Archie Andrews Lum and Abner	10 Cisco Kid Cinnamon Bear # 5	11 Ellery Queen Superman
19 Aldrich Family Bob and Ray	20 Great Gildersleeve Cinnamon Bear # 9	21 Our Miss Brooks Bill Stern	15 The Clock Cinnamon Bear # 7	16 Great Gildersleeve Lum and Abner	17 Phillip Marlowe Cinnamon Bear # 8	18 Jack Benny Superman
26 The Saint Lum and Abner	27 Dragnet Cinnamon Bear # 12	28 Rogue's Gallery Easy Aces	22 Life of Riley Cinnamon Bear # 10	23 Cavalcade of America Charlie McCarthy	24 Sam Spade Cinnamon Bear # 11	25 Halls of Ivy Superman
			29 Famous Jury Trials Cinnamon Bear # 13	30 Family Theatre Sgt. Preston	DEC. 1 Green Hornet Cinnamon Bear # 14	DEC. 2 Johnny Dollar Superman

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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

## OCTOBER 1995

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

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7th

**RED SKELTON SHOW** (4-15-47) The Skelton Scrapbook of Satire: Deadeye gets involved in a duel over a woman; Junior, the mean little kid, panhandles his Aunt Edna's boyfriend for money for his piggy bank. Cast includes Verna Felton, GeGe Pearson, Pat McGeehan, Wonderful Smith, singer Anita Ellis, announcer Rod O'Connor, David Forrester and the orchestra. Raleigh Cigarettes, NBC. (26:48)

**I WAS A COMMUNIST FOR THE FBI** (1952) Dana Andrews stars as Matt Cvetic "who lived for nine years as an undercover agent for the FBI." Cvetic visits a prison to recruit about-to-be parolees for membership into the Party. Syndicated. (26:06)

**POP CHRONICLES -- THE 40s** (1972) Third program in the eight-part series telling the lively story of pop music in the 1940s, hosted and produced by John Gilliland. Music from the war years. KSFO, San Francisco. (44:52)

**BULLDOG DRUMMOND** (1940s) Ned Weaver as Capt. Hugh Drummond, with Luis VanRooten as Denny. Drummond investigates intrigue at the race track. AFRS rebroadcast. (25:55)

**TWENTY QUESTIONS** (9-18-48) It's the "animal, vegetable, mineral game" as listeners try to stump the panel. Fred VanDeventer, Herb

Polesie, Florence Rinard, and Bobby McGuire try to find the answer in twenty questions. Master of ceremonies is Bill Slater and guest panelist is entertainer William Gaxton. Ronson Lighters, MBS. (25:02)

**BLONDIE** (2-16-50) Arthur Lake stars as Dagwood Bumstead and Ann Rutherford is Blondie, with Hanley Stafford as Mr. Dithers. When Alexander gets a part in the school play, he adopts the affectations of a great actor! Ford Motors, ABC. (29:58)

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14th

#### WE REMEMBER GALE GORDON

**GALE GORDON, one of radio's greatest actors, died June 30, 1995 at the age of 89.**

He leaves a legacy of wonderful performances and we'll spend the entire afternoon

tuning in to his fantastic radio career. We'll share our lengthy telephone conversation with him from May 13, 1990 during which he reflects on his career and takes calls from listeners. And we'll have clips from his appearances as Mayor



LaTrivia and Foggy Williams on the *Fibber McGee* show; as Osgood Conklin on the *Our Miss Brooks* series; as Mr. Scott the sponsor on the *Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show*; and as Gildy's neighbor Mr. Bullard on the *Great Gildersleeve*. You'll also hear him working with Jim Jordan and Chuck Schaden in an excerpt from the 1974 series, *Fibber McGee and the Good Old Days of Radio*. Plus these complete broadcasts:

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (12-26-39) Molly's old boy friend Otis Cadwallader visits Wistful Vista. To impress him, Fibber has neighbor Gildersleeve act as the McGee's butler. Jim and Marian Jordan star with Gale Gordon in an early appearance on the series as Cadwallader. Hal Peary is Gildersleeve,

Isabel Randolph is Mrs. Uppington. (This is Jim Jordan's favorite show and one fondly remembered by both Jim and Gale.) Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:17)

**OUR MISS BROOKS** (10-1-50) Eve Arden stars as the Madison High school English teacher with Gale Gordon as principle Osgood Conklin, plus Richard Crenna as Walter Denton and Jeff Chandler as Mr. Boynton. Miss Brooks is assigned to type a long speech for Mr. Conklin to deliver at his Goodfellows club meeting. Colgate, Lustre Cream, CBS. (30:00)

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21st

#### WE REMEMBER PHIL HARRIS

**PHIL HARRIS, one of radio's most popular personalities, died August 11, 1995 at the age of 91.**

A major portion of his career was spent before radio microphones and we'll spend the

afternoon tuning in to a number of his on-the-air performances. We'll also share the lengthy conversation (50 minutes) we had with him in his home in Palm Desert, California on June 15, 1988 during which he recalled his days as a bandleader-singer, with Jack Benny, and on his own series with his wife Alice Faye. We'll have an excerpt from his first appearance on the Jack Benny Program (October 4, 1936), and these vintage broadcasts:



**FRED ALLEN SHOW** (5-19-46) Excerpt with Fred trying to convince guest Phil Harris to leave the Benny program and join the Allen show. Fred has Phil lead the band, then takes him down Allen's Alley where he meets Senator Claghorn. Phil and Claghorn sing "That's What I Like About the South." AFRS. (12:25)

**PHIL HARRIS AND HIS COCONUT GROVE ORCHESTRA** (1932) Early 1930s dance music provided by Phil Harris and his Orchestra in a remote broadcast from the Coconut Grove of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. Vocals by Phil, Leah Ray, and the Three Ambassadors. Phil sings "The Old Man of the Mountain." Syndicated. (13:35)

**JACK BENNY PROGRAM** (3-22-42) It's Spring and everyone is feeling great: Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris, Dennis Day, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Don Wilson. Mary tells what happened when Jack and Phil played golf together. Jell-O, NBC. (29:20)

**KOLLEGE OF MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE** (8-16-44) While Professor Kay Kyser is on vacation, Phil Harris subs in this broadcast before an audience of servicemen in San Luis Obispo, California. Phil asks musical questions of the contestants from the audience, with some help by announcer Bill Foreman, Ish Kabibble, and the King Sisters. AFRS rebroadcast. (29:15)

**PHIL HARRIS-ALICE FAYE SHOW** (1-2-49) Phil and Alice star with Elliott Lewis, Walter Tetley, Robert North and Walter Sharp and the orchestra. Phil gets a draft notice from the government and must go to the draft board to straighten it out. Rexall, NBC. (29:17)

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28th

#### ANNUAL HALLOWEEN SHOW

**INNER SANCTUM** (12-18-45) "The Undead" starring Anne Seymour as the wife of an actor who discovers that her husband is a vampire. Lipton Tea and Soup, CBS. (30:00)

**THE WHISTLER** (4-30-45) "The Master's Tree." A woman, whose husband disappeared five years ago, plans to live in the abandoned mansion in a small village where she and her husband once lived. Her family warns her that the house is haunted. Signal Oil, CBS. (30:36)

**MOLLÉ MYSTERY THEATRE** (5-21-48) "Solo Performance" starring Everett Sloane with Elizabeth Morgan. Murder takes center stage when an actor and his producer argue over the actor's wife. Mollé Shaving Cream. (28:04)

**BABY SNOOKS** (11-1-46) Fanny Brice stars as Baby Snooks with Hanley Stafford as Daddy. Annoyed with Halloween, Daddy vows to teach Snooks and her friend a lesson as they go Trick or Treating. Cast includes Arlene Harris, Ben Alexander, Frank Nelson, Sara Berner, Georgia Ellis. Jell-O, CBS. (30:25)

**SUSPENSE** (12-15-49) "Flame Blue Glove" starring Lana Turner as a woman hired by her ex-boss, a detective, to investigate the murder of her husband's first wife. AutoLite, CBS.

**LIGHTS OUT** (12-1-42) "Mr. Maggs" by Arch Oboler. When Mr. Maggs buys a locked chest at an auction, his wife is upset when she finds it empty except for a layer of dried blood. Ironized Yeast, CBS.

**NOTE-- Chuck Schaden** will be participating in the **Radio Hall of Fame Pioneer Induction luncheon** at the Swissotel on this day, so our **GUEST HOST** for this Halloween show is **KEN ALEXANDER** who will be joined by members of the **Mighty Metro Art Players** to present a special Ghost-to-Ghost broadcast.

Don't miss it if you can!

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# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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

## NOVEMBER 1995

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4th**

**ADVENTURES OF SAM SPADE (10-24-48)**

"The Insomnia Caper" starring Howard Duff as Dashiell Hammett's famous detective. Sam can't get any sleep because of a lovers' quarrel outside his room. AFRS rebroadcast.

**FLYWHEEL, SHYSTER AND FLYWHEEL**

(1994) Program 16 in the 18-part series of reenactments of the 1932 Marx Brothers radio show. Cast features Michael Roberts as Groucho Marx as Waldorf T. Flywheel, Frank Lazarus as Chico Marx as Emmanuel Ravelli, and Lorelei King as Miss Dimple. BBC. (30:02)

**LUX RADIO THEATRE (9-13-43)**

"Phantom of the Opera" starring Nelson Eddy and Susanna Foster in their original screen roles from the 1943 film. Basil Rathbone co-stars as the Phantom, a disfigured composer who lives in the catacombs under the Paris Opera house, who kidnaps a young soprano. Cecil B. DeMille

hosts this first show of the series' tenth season on the air. Cast includes Edgar Barrier and Bea Benadaret. Lux Soap, CBS. (21:00; 22:10; 15:35)

**JUDY CANOVA SHOW (10-4-47)**

Judy is scheduled for a screen test at "Paragon Studios." Cast includes Mel Blanc, Joe Kearns, Ruby Dandridge, Hans Conried, the Sportsmen, Charles Dant and the orchestra. Colgate-Palmolive, NBC. (29:44)

**GUNSMOKE (1-31-53)**

William Conrad stars as Marshall Matt Dillon, with Parley Baer as Chester and Howard McNear as Doc Adams who is being sought as a fugitive by a deputy from Virginia. Sustaining, CBS. (29:25)

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11th**

**GRAND CENTRAL STATION (9-18-48)**

"Too Young to Understand" featuring Will Geer and Sara Fussell. A story of a family down on their luck and in financial difficulties. Pillsbury Snow-Sheen Cake Flour, CBS. (29:30)

**ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET (9-2-45)**

Ozzie tries to repair a dripping faucet. Cast features Bea Benadaret, John Brown, Veola Vonn. Music by the King Sisters. International Silver Co., CBS. (29:51)

**MR. AND MRS. NORTH (1-17-45)**

A fake murder turns real in "The Frisby Klisby Case" starring Joseph Curtin and Alice Frost. AFRS rebroadcast as the "Mystery Playhouse" introduced by Peter Lorre. (25:37)

**POP CHRONICLES -- THE 40s (1972)**

Program four in the eight-part series about a great era in popular music. This time: music from WW II thru V-J Day. KSFO, San Francisco. (39:20)

**MR. PRESIDENT (1940s)**

Edward Arnold stars as a president of the United States who averted a war with Canada. The program does not reveal the identity of the chief executive portrayed until the very end. Sustaining, ABC. (25:55)

**MURDER AT MIDNIGHT (1946)**

"Death's Goblet" starring Eric Dressler in a drama directed by Anton M. Leader. The story of a goblet with a curse: "pour your own wine and drink from the goblet and you will murder someone." Syndicated. (25:25)

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18th**  
**ANNUAL THANKSGIVING SHOW**

**SONGS BY SINATRA (11-21-45)** On the eve of the first peacetime Thanksgiving after World War II, Frank Sinatra offers a program with a patriotic flavor, singing "America the Beautiful" and "The House I Live In." Featured are Marilyn Maxwell, Louis Prima, the Pied Pipers, Axel Stordahl and the orchestra. Old Gold Cigarettes, CBS. (27:03)

**EDDIE CANTOR SHOW (11-21-45)** It's turkey troubles for Eddie as he tries to serve Thanksgiving dinner to friends at the Waldorf Hotel. Cast features guest Billy Conn plus regulars Thelma Carpenter, Bert Gordon, Leonard Seuss. Les Tremayne subs for announcer Harry Von Zell. Ipana, Sai Hepatica, NBC. (28:47)

**POP CHRONICLES -- THE 40s (1972)** Fifth program in the series. Music in the post-war years. KSFO, San Francisco. (42:37)

**HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (11-24-49)**

"Courtship of Miles Standish" starring David Niven in an adaptation of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's story in verse about the early days of the Plymouth Colony. Host is James Hilton. Cast includes House Jamison. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (29:10)

**JIMMY DURANTE SHOW (11-26-47)**

The Schnozzola has a live turkey for Thanksgiving. Cast includes guest Victor Moore and regulars Arthur Treacher, Hans Conried, Candy Candido. Rexall, NBC. (28:30)

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25th**  
**RADIO TO GET INTO**  
**THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT BY**

**BREAKFAST CLUB (9-2-60)** From the College Inn of Chicago's Hotel Sherman, Don McNeill and company are on the air with their regular program, but since it's being recorded for the Armed Forces Radio Service to be played for military audiences on Christmas morning, they offer unseasonal (for September) seasonal material (for Christmas day, 1960). Regulars include Fran Allison as Aunt Fanny, Dick Noel, Lorraine Peters. AFRS. (29:30)

**SUSPENSE (12-13-55)** "A Present for Benny" starring Jack Krushen in "a story of Christmas shopping and a present that went astray." Cast features Stacy Harris, Eve McVey, Benny Rubin, Joe Kearns. Sustaining, CBS. (28:00)

**POP CHRONICLES -- THE 40s (1972)** Sixth program in the series produced and hosted by



**DON MC NEILL**  
**"BREAKFAST CLUB"**

John Gilliland features music to 1947. KSFO, San Francisco. (44:21)

**VISIT TO A DOLL FACTORY (12-9-38)** It's 14 days to Christmas and listeners are treated to a sound picture of the Ideal Novelty and Toy Factory plus a description of how dolls are made. MBS. (13:55)

**LUX RADIO THEATRE (12-24-45)** "I'll Be Seeing You" starring Joseph Cotten and Dorothy McGuire in a radio version of David O. Selznick's 1944 film. It's a World War II story of two people who find themselves very much in love, but whose Yuletide happiness is shadowed by a stranger threat. Mr. Cotten repeats his screen role. William Keighley is host. Lux Soap, CBS. (18:41; 17:12; 24:25)

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# FAR AS THE CURSE IS FOUND

BY CLAIR SCHULZ

**He and she are sitting on the porch swing looking at a full moon. She snuggles close and whispers dreamily, "What does that moon make you think of?" Without a moment's hesitation he replies, "Lon Chaney, Jr."**

He can hardly be blamed for his impulsive answer even if he gets the cold shoulder the rest of the evening. Lawrence Talbot, the character Chaney played in five motion pictures, dreaded lunar beams as much as Dracula disliked the dawn's early light. In *The Road to Morocco* moonlight became Dorothy Lamour; in moonlight Lawrence Talbot became the wolf man.

Just as Talbot's lycanthropy was a curse not of his own making so Chaney had a burden thrust upon him from birth: he was in the shadow of a father whose leading roles in *The Phantom of the Opera* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* are legendary.

He was certainly Lon Chaney's son, but he wasn't always Lon Chaney, Jr. He was born Creighton Tull Chaney on February 10, 1906. He got the shock of his life shortly after his premature birth. Because he weighed less than three pounds and showed no signs of life he was dipped in a nearby lake to start him breathing.

Despite the fact that he was shuttled around from boarding houses to step-mother to grandparents during his youth he grew up healthy and was soon strong enough to pick baskets of fruit all day for three cents a bushel. The elder Chaney lived until 1930, long enough to see Creighton married and gainfully employed as a boilermaker.

But the sound of banging metal is nothing

compared to the sirenic charm of the casting call. Chaney followed the advice of a director who, after hearing him sing at a party, suggested that he try the Hollywood studios. By 1932 he had a contract with RKO and was appearing in westerns and other adventure films.

It was to be expected that he was often cast as a heavy in the early years. Because neither of the Chaney's had the pretty boy looks of a William Boyd or a Gene Autry they usually portrayed villains or social outcasts in those days of typecasting. In the thirties Lon played the same type of role so often that he almost had a patent on the line "So you won't talk, eh?"

During the middle of the decade he became Lon Chaney, Jr. in the credits but not in his heart. He later claimed that he had been coerced into making the change in order to continue working in movies. To keep from starving he allowed them to use the new name that certainly had more marquee value than the old one.

Another disappointment occurred when his screen test for *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was shelved, and thus he was deprived of recreating the role of Quasimodo that his father made famous. However, in that same year of 1939 he landed one of the best parts of his career.

Chaney, who had played Lennie, a slow-thinking but humane migrant worker, in the dramatic adaptation of *Of Mice and Men* on the west coast, was a natural choice to star in the United Artists version of John Steinbeck's novel. Critics weren't the only ones awed by the pathos Lon brought to the character; Lennie's innocence and unfulfilled dreams touched the heartstrings of audiences across the country. But even

this success had a downside to it. Some producers who had formerly seen him as a meanie now only wanted him to be a dimwit.

Even if he still had to battle stereotypes at least he had credibility as an actor and steady employment with a contract from Universal. Although he was the title character in *Man Made Monster*, his first film for the studio, Lionel Atwill got top billing as a mad scientist intent on using a carnival worker's tolerance for withstanding jolts of electricity as the first step in creating a race of zombies. Fifteen years later Chaney would be the featured player in a similar movie called *The Indestructible Man*, but in early 1941 he was content to play second fiddle just to keep the wolf from the door. Before the year was over Lon opened the door and let him into his life.

*The Wolf Man* is a landmark horror film for any number of reasons. Few motion pictures in the genre can boast of having a better cast than this one that featured Claude Rains, Warren William, Ralph Bellamy, Bela Lugosi, Evelyn Ankers, and Maria Ouspenskaya in support of Chaney. The music and mist-shrouded sets create an atmosphere that can chill even when the creature is not stirring. The dialogue written by Curt Siodmak, author of *Donovan's Brain*, is as close to poetry as can be found in any spine-tingler. This movie established the folklore surrounding werewolves (e.g. the mark of the pentagram, effect of the moon, aversion to sil-



ver) that persists to this day. The wolf man was a horror that was truly horrific; a pale count or a monster made from cadavers may seem more dead than alive, but this was a normal man who became a snarling beast right before our eyes, kindling that fear of being chased by a wild animal that lies within us.

*The Wolf Man* marked the beginning of Chaney's ascent past Lugosi and Boris Karloff during the war years to become Universal's leading nightmare. As such he left behind the appendage that had been forced on him and was billed simply as Lon Chaney.

When Universal decided to remake *The Phantom of the Opera*, Chaney wanted to be the Phantom, but when Claude Rains won the job he consoled himself by stepping into the big shoes of the monster in *Ghost of Frankenstein*. To become the wolf man Chaney had to sit for five hours a day under the hands of makeup wizard Jack

## FAR AS THE CURSE IS FOUND

Pierce. Although it took less time to shape the head of "old sew and sew," Lon developed an allergy to the rubber base Pierce used and was sidelined for a week.

He was right back undercover in his next film, *The Mummy's Ghost* and *The Mummy's Curse*, but all three movies failed to live up to earlier entries in the series. Maybe it was the move to less exotic locales like sleepy New England towns or the use of bland starlets whose fates seem of little consequence or it could have been the ludicrous prospect of a limping, prune-faced, unraveling refugee from a first aid kit being somehow menacing. Chaney himself was not fond of being the mummy because he had nothing to say and no identity under all that makeup.

He was back as the doomed Talbot in *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*. Originally there was some thought given to having Chaney play both major parts with the use of doubles and trick photography, but this proved too unwieldy so Lugosi was brought in to play the stumbling monster. Though the two creatures were allied for awhile audiences knew it wouldn't be long before they were engaged in hand-to-claw combat.

Talbot sought cures for his affliction at the *House of Frankenstein* and the *House of Dracula*. With each film audiences were drawn to feel more sympathetic toward his plight because Chaney made his fear of the approaching night seem very real. At the conclusion of *House of Frankenstein* he appears to find both romance and release from his predicament when he is shot with a silver bullet "fired by someone who loves him enough to understand." When he showed up hale and hairy at the *House of Dracula*, he found a doctor mad enough to cure him and closed the picture by taking a moonlit stroll with the leading lady.

But there seems to be an unwritten rule that monsters can't live happily ever after so he suffered a relapse into his feral state when Abbott and Costello met Frankenstein and company in 1948.

Chaney did have a chance to go almost completely without makeup through one creature feature, *Son of Dracula*. The character he portrayed was actually Dracula because his name of Alucard was just a palindrome to hide his identity as he sought new blood in Louisiana. This movie, with its foggy cemetery and spooky mansion, earns higher marks for mood than for story, but that was what made the films from Universal so appealing. We weren't frightened by a veiled threat; it was what might be lurking behind the decaying headstones or in that cobweb-covered coffin that was really scary. Chaney's vampire was more calculating and relentless than Lugosi's, although the comment is often made that he looked too healthy for a parasite. Perhaps it was his bulk that made him so formidable a figure: here was a vampire who looked like he could tackle Bronco Nagurski.

Universal did allow him more opportunities to show his face in a sequence of mysteries based on the *Inner Sanctum* radio program, but these low-budget efforts with lurid titles like *Weird Woman* and *Calling Dr. Death* were predictable melodramas that barely qualified to fill the bottom half of double bills. When *Pillow of Death*, the last picture in the series, was released in 1946, the studio turned its focus away from horror films and Chaney found himself once again relegated to character actor rather than star.

Of all the headliners in the field of horror Chaney seemed to age the fastest. Karloff and Lugosi were at least in their mid-forties when they started scaring people in talkies; Chaney was only thirty-five when he first bayed at the heavens ten



THE FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER  
AND LON CHANEY, JR.

years later. In 1952 when Bela was cavorting with Old Mother Riley and Boris was solving crimes as Colonel March Lon was playing a spineless, aged sheriff in *High Noon* who was of little help to Gary Cooper, a man who was born five years before him in 1901. Bags under his eyes, puffy cheeks, and a hangdog expression had set in early and grew more pronounced as Chaney approached his sixties. He began to look like a hard-drinking man so more roles as drunks were offered to him. Then he began to drink like a hard-drinking man.

He was still able to perform capably in a few respectable movies like *The Haunted Palace* and *Welcome to Hard Times*, but more and more frequently he was just making token appearances as warlocks or madmen in exploitation films. Cult status has

been conferred on some of these oddities as the curious still seek out videos of *Hillbillies in a Haunted House* to discover what business Chaney and John Carradine have in the same frames with Joi Lansing and Ferlin Husky and also *Spider Baby* to hear Lon sing the title song.

The years that had not been kind to him turned more vicious near the end. Throat cancer, gout, and beriberi as well as hepatitis brought on by bouts of drinking made his last days unpleasant ones. He died "in agony" on July 13, 1973.

He lived in agony as well. He was reminded of the distant father whose achievements he could never hope to match every time he signed his name or looked in the mirror. The profiles, mien, and diction of Basil Rathbone or Lionel Atwill worked both in the laboratory and the drawing room; Chaney was all too aware of the limitations his face and tongue placed upon him. The torture that his father inflicted upon himself in order to become a skeletal Phantom and a truly deformed hunchback were equaled by the torment the son endured: the transformation from human to werewolf what takes only seconds on the screen required Chaney to be virtually immobile all day while he endured twenty-one changes of makeup. The easy way was not the Chaney way.

"The way you walked was thorny through no fault of your own," the words Malva (Maria Ouspenskaya) speaks in *The Wolf Man* as she stand over the dead Talbot, could have been Chaney's epitaph. Although he alone accomplished the grand slam of horror, Lugosi and Karloff had first dibs on Dracula, Frankenstein's monster, or the mummy. Even Henry Hull had gone hirsute before him in *Werewolf of London*. Let the others have their day. For as long as "the wolfbane blooms and the autumn night is bright" Lon Chaney, Jr. will haunt the night. ■



# NOTES FROM THE BANDSTAND

## Trombone-Playing Leaders

BY KARL PEARSON

During the Big Band Era many bandleaders were often identified by the instrument they played. Artie Shaw and Benny Goodman immediately come to mind as clarinet-playing leaders, while Coleman Hawkins and Freddy Martin are best-remembered as saxophone-playing bandleaders. In this issue of the *Nostalgia Digest* we'll take a brief look at a few of the better-known trombone-playing leaders.

Tommy Dorsey was undoubtedly the most famous trombone-playing leader of the Big Band Era. Tommy was equally gifted as a musician and a bandleader, and he led one of the most popular dance bands of the era. Dorsey was well known for his smooth, silken tone and for his ability to create long, seamless phrases on his instrument. These skills took a great deal of concentration and breath control to accomplish. Frank Sinatra has often mentioned that during his tenure as a Dorsey vocalist he learned much about singing from watching Tommy play his trombone on the bandstand. Sinatra was once quoted as saying, "Tommy taught me everything I know about singing."

While Dorsey's musicians admired his skills, they often found their leader to be a hard-driving taskmaster. This was often true, but it was widely known that Tommy drove himself even harder. Tommy's hard-driving and perfectionistic approach is illustrated by an incident that occurred one night during a 1942 engagement. On this

particular evening Tommy had (in the phrase of the day) "fallen off the wagon" and had consumed a few too many drinks. During the course of the evening the alcohol began to affect the great Dorsey's playing. Later that evening Tommy had the band play "Sleepy Lagoon," a specialty number that opened with a particularly difficult solo. During the solo Tommy, much to his embarrassment, missed a high note. One of the men in his band found this unintentionally funny and started to giggle. Dorsey stopped the band, turned towards the unfortunate sideman, and yelled "You're fired!" The band began to play "Sleepy Lagoon" again, and once more Tommy missed the crucial note. This time two more musicians started to laugh. Tommy fired them and had the band begin the tune once more. Tommy missed the note once again, and several musicians began to laugh uncontrollably. Dorsey fired the additional offenders, and made several more unsuccessful attempts at the solo, with equally disastrous results. By the end of that evening approximately half of the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra found themselves unemployed! The very next morning a very sober Tommy, realizing the humor of the previous night's situation, re-hired all of the musicians.

One of the other most memorable and most popular big bands of the Swing Era was the one led by trombonist Glenn Miller. Although Miller did not have a tone like Tommy Dorsey or the solo abilities of



JACK TEAGARDEN

a Jack Teagarden, he was a competent trombonist, one who was very much in demand prior to forming his own band. As leader of his own band Miller rarely soloed, preferring to play trombone parts within the section. Bill Finegan, one of Glenn's arrangers, recalled how Miller could "belt out" the bass trombone parts in an arrangement. Finegan felt that although Miller rarely soloed, "He was better than his records show him to be."

While Glenn may have not been one of the best trombonists, his musical skills lay in the areas of arranging and organization. Miller had been instrumental in organizing a band for Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey in 1934, and was also responsible for organizing Ray Noble's first American orchestra in 1935. Glenn knew where to find talented players, a skill that came in handy when he formed his own orchestra. Miller's arranging talents were equally well

known in the music business, and his unique clarinet-lead "Miller Sound" is one of the most recognized sounds of the Big Band Era.

The orchestra led by trombonist Russ Morgan was equally popular for many years. Morgan's style was a more commercially oriented one that was very successful. Billed as "Music In The Morgan Manner," the Morgan orchestra played in a very danceable style that featured Russ's muted trombone on numbers such as "Does Your Heart Beat For Me" (his theme song) and "Wabash Blues." Morgan was a triple-threat musician; in addition to playing trombone, he was also an accomplished pianist and a capable vocalist. The band played many of the better hotels in the country for many years, until he died in 1969.

A number of new orchestras were formed during the year 1939, a particularly successful year for big bands. At least four of the men who led new bands that year were trombone players. The best-known of these four "slihorn" men was Jack Teagarden, who had just left Paul Whiteman's large orchestra after five years of service. Teagarden was well known to both fans and musicians as one of the best jazz soloists in the business. His blues-tinged solos and vocals were heard on many records in the late 1920's and early 1930's. Jack felt that it was time to make a move and lead a band of his own.

Teagarden's first year as leader looked promising; a string of successive engagements were booked, a recording contract (with the newly reorganized Columbia Records) was signed, and the band was scheduled for a string of almost-nightly radio remotes. The band was made up of many of the best musicians in the business and the arrangements they played were excellent. The Teagarden band, for a variety of reasons, never made the big time.

## NOTES FROM THE BANDSTAND

Some felt that Teagarden appeared uneasy in the role of bandleader. The distribution chain used by Columbia Records was not large, and while a number of the Teagarden sides were musically satisfying, they did not sell well. An August 1939 engagement at Frank Dailey's Meadowbrook was unsuccessful. Many of the late-night broadcasts from the Meadowbrook were preempted to make way for late-night news broadcasts covering the increasingly tense situation in Europe. In early 1940 the band was reorganized with less-expensive sidemen. The Teagarden Orchestra was eventually able to achieve a small degree of success, although never to the level originally predicted. Jack continued leading a big band until 1946.

Bobby Byrne was another member of the "Trombone Class of '39." Bobby first became known to the public when he joined Jimmy Dorsey in 1935 at the age of 16. Bobby had the unenviable task of filling the shoes of Tommy Dorsey, who had departed from the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra earlier that summer after an argument with brother Jimmy. Due to Bobby's high degree of musicianship he was able to fill Tommy's vacated spot, a position he held until leaving Jimmy to form his own band in 1939. Bobby was an excellent musician, who like Tommy Dorsey, was a real perfectionist who placed great demands on himself and on his musicians. This approach often put extra pressure on the musicians, which in turn gave the band a somewhat stiff and unrelaxed sound. Byrne continued leading the band until he accepted a commission with the Air Corps during World War II. After the war Bobby resumed his bandleading career for a short time, but as big bands faded from the scene he chose the security of studio work. A few years later Byrne gave up the trom-

bone for a very successful career in the recording industry.

The third trombone player to launch a band during 1939 was Wilbur Swichtenberg. Wilbur was a well-respected studio musician known for his excellent tone, fantastic technique and tremendous talent. Band booker Willard Alexander felt that Wilbur could achieve a degree of success when paired with drummer Ray McKinley, who had just left Jimmy Dorsey's Orchestra. Convinced that "Swichtenberg" wouldn't fit on a theater marquee, his name was changed to Will Bradley. The Will Bradley-Ray McKinley band was fairly successful during its three-year existence, and the band is best remembered for its countless string of boogie woogie hits. By mid-1942 Will disbanded and the band was no more. Ray McKinley had left to form a group of his own, and Bradley, along with other leaders, found it increasingly difficult to replace musicians who were being drafted into the armed forces.

The fourth trombonist to form a band of his own during 1939 was Jack Jenney, whose trombone talents and story were similar to Will Bradley's. Jenney was also well known in New York studio circles as an excellent trombonist. Unlike Bradley, Jack's career as a bandleader was unsuccessful and short-lived. The arrangements were dull, for the most part, and Jenney lacked the discipline needed to be a successful bandleader. The band did produce a memorable version of "Star Dust," that featured an outstanding solo by Jenney. A year later Jenney had given up the band and had gone to work for Artie Shaw. Jenney recreated a portion of his "Star Dust" solo while with Shaw, a record that became one of Shaw's classics. Jack Jenney had been making plans to organize a totally different band (including strings) just shortly before he died in late 1945. ■

# TUNING IN ON SPUTNIK

BY JED SKILLMAN

I came along well after the hey-day of network radio. I was raised in Dayton, Ohio, which beside being my home, was also the home of the Wright Brothers, the inventors of the airplane. I never met them. I only mentioned it to lead into the fact that in Dayton, Ohio during the 1950's, when I was a kid, everyone was aware of the footprint they left.

In those cold war-era days, that large footprint was most noticeable to the east of the city where the old Wright flyer testing grounds, a wind-swept expanse originally known as Huffman Prairie, had, over the years, been developed into Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

How well I remember the windows and cupboards of Dayton rattling under the explosions of sonic booms, the concussion of shock waves left in the wake of planes as they flew over at super-sonic speeds. I haven't heard one in years.

Wright-Patterson was a huge operation; a sprawling maze of mile-long runways, parking ramps, massive hangars, and top-secret aerospace research facilities. It was a big deal when we were kids and would drive past, my little brother and I sitting in the back seat, to look through the high, barbed wire-topped chain link fences and marvel at all the planes and wonder about what must be locked in those hangars out of view. Even adults were impressed and would often discuss the base with each

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*Jed Skillman is a Director of Photography who is a fan of old time radio and a member of the Those Were The Days Radio Players.*

---

other across the flower beds. The taxpayers felt they were getting their money's worth. What force on earth could possible match this?

In 1957, we lived within a few miles of the base. My pesky brother was just starting first-grade and still had a perpetual look of surprised confusion on his face — as if he'd been cleaning his cap-gun and it went off. I, on the other hand, was a fourth grader. I had an inkling that out there beyond my neighborhood, my school, and my church lay a big world, where big things happened.

On October 4th, a piece of that big world came to our breakfast table. While my brother and I were eating our bowls of oatmeal, I became aware of my parents' heightened interest in the morning newscast. Early reports were sketchy, but it was clear that...the Russians had done it! They'd launched a satellite and put it in orbit around the earth. It was already sending back signals from space, probably in code.

In hindsight, some may grumble that it really wasn't much of a satellite. Sputnik, as it was called, was itself of only minor scientific usefulness. It did little more than record the temperature up there and transmit the reading back to Moscow. It was a metal sphere, less than two feet in diameter, with four extra long car radio-like antennas sticking out from it. It weighed less than 185 lbs.—much of that weight due to the clunky radio equipment needed to send back the temperature readings. In fact, the sour-grapes among us grumbled, with some justification, that Sputnik was

## TUNING IN ON SPUTNIK

just a big version of a Soviet-made wrist-watch. Nevertheless, there it was, over our heads, careening around the earth every ninety-two minutes, in a wobbly goose egg of an orbit.

Well, Sputnik may not have been pretty or had much real use, but the act of putting it up there was a magnificent accomplishment. It was the world's first step into the Space-Age and the Russians had taken it.

Mom and Pop discussed this event with a note of mild concern. The U.S. program had been sputtering with the SNAFU-loaded Vangurad rocket. In their analysis it was a matter of priorities and focus: "While Americans have been going crazy with the Elvis Presley fad, the Russians have been getting the job done!" I can hear them now.

Sputnik was all the talk at school that day. During current events period a couple newspaper front pages were thumb-tacked to our bulletin board. "Ruskies Launch Man-Made Moon!" read one giant headline. Another read "U.S. Lags in Space-Race" with a sub-head "Missile Gap Widens". So, there it was in black and white. Mocking us out of our complacency. Last night we had all slept warm in the knowledge that we were coasting along in first place. This morning we woke up in second place. It happened just that fast.

There were a lot of Air Force families in our neighborhood, and a few civilian scientists. It wasn't long before I noticed the subtle change in their demeanor. We'd been given a reality-check and had come up short. America began to look over its shoulder and listen for the sound of footsteps coming up from behind. It wasn't long, too, a couple weeks at the most, before our school began to put an increased emphasis on "science".

Science class in the fourth grade is noth-

ing to write home about. Our teacher, an earnest, pretty young woman fresh from college, taught our class in all subjects; reading, arithmetic, and geography. She'd demonstrate some simple point, such as how a glass prism can separate white light into a continuous spectrum—but she conveyed no sense of wonder or magic, no hint that this could be a small key to a whole big universe. For her, science was simply the subject she taught in the afternoon just before art period.

Then, one day, the clouds parted and the sun came out. It was announced that an after-school advance science program was being organized, and students from the fourth grade on up were eligible to join. This class would be taught by none other than an officer in the United States Air Force, the father of one of the older kids at school. HOT DOG! Just what I'd been waiting for. *This* would be what science is all about. No more goofy experiments with baking soda that didn't quite work. *We'd* do *neat* things. I signed up right away, as did several of my gung-ho classmates.

The officer who taught the class was a real-life "Mr. Wizard" and was a natural when it came to wrangling youngsters, boys mostly, from several grade levels. He was not foolhardy and never faced us without re-enforcements, one or two other parents, usually with special knowledge in the field of that week's topic. These parents helped ride herd and often served as guest lecturers.

It's too bad things like this aren't more common. The class was a lot of fun. Once a week we'd go back to school after supper and meet in one of the classrooms. It was very hands-on oriented and had as its continuing theme the lesson that the purpose of science is to find the relationship between seemingly unrelated objects and events, to seek order in chaos.

Typically, we'd arrive at class in the



**AT WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE** a young Jed Skillman pronounces our Nation's defense capabilities "good to go and ready to launch!" To be on the safe side he covers his ears just in case they *do* launch.

evening to find a lay-out of paraphernalia and household items on the demonstration table. This could be a mix of low-tech scientific gadgets and stuff from a basement or garage. For instance one evening we found an empty aquarium, a galvanized bucket and a short piece of rubber hose. Naturally, as you'd imagine, the big kids got to do most of the neat things, while us young whipper-snappers were assigned the go-for jobs.

Our teacher sent a couple of us to fill the aquarium. Then he settled us down for an explanation of air pressure. He showed us how a column of water can be made to rise up inside an upturned glass in the aquarium, or, how with a piece of rubber tubing that column of water could be made to rise up and over the edge of the tank and flow into a bucket placed on the floor. I recall that over the year we worked with

ultra violet light, sound waves, simple atomic radiation, electricity and aerodynamics. All neat stuff.

One evening we were told the subject of an up-coming class would be radio. My father, a local real estate salesman, had been a radio operator in the Army Air Corps in China during WWII. I suggested he'd be a good expert on the topic, as he always seemed to be an expert on any subject I'd ever asked him about. Like our instructor, Pop, who'd been called "Pop" even in WWII because he was one of the oldest men in his outfit who flew, was also a good one with kids. His qualifications as a highly touted expert on radio, however, were mighty thin, as our class teacher learned with a phone call. I remember that, too.

I was at the dining table doing my arithmetic (which I *hated*, and which eventu-

## TUNING IN ON SPUTNIK

ally was my un-doing in the realm of science), when the phone rang. Pop answered and I heard him say, "Yes, this is Mr. Skillman...Oh, yes...He did?...Radio?..."

Oh, yeah. I'd forgotten to tell him.

"...Most of what I know about radio I could tell you in two minutes...I'd hate to put you on the spot. Let me see what I can come up with."

When Pop walked back into the room I could see the wheels in his head going around. Anything he knew about radio was already hopelessly out of date and could be found in any number of back issues of *Popular Science* or *Boy's Life*. Nevertheless, he loved an unusual challenge. A couple days to think about it and another phone conversation with our instructor was all he needed to get his bearings.

One evening, the week of class, he came home, set his briefcase on the kitchen table and took from it a sack of seemingly unrelated stuff; rolls of copper wire, little pieces of stamped out metal, a fragment of what looked like a small metallic rock, and...a pair of headphones.

"Hey, Pop. What's this for?" I asked.

My dad knew how to weave a spell of mystery with the best of them. He simply held up his index finger and silently nodded in a way that said, "Patience, my son." He was homing in on his objective.

That week in class after a few preliminaries, my dad was introduced. The fact that he lacked anything close to "expert" credentials was totally unnoticed. Pop skillfully spread a patter of jargon and charm, delivering a Horatio Alger-type biography, very loosely based on events in the life of Marconi: He had to overcome obstacles, and how he was forced to try and try again before he was able to make his invention, radio, a success. "No one has ever succeeded at anything by quitting,

whether inventing radio or launching satellites." This good lesson made clear, we moved on to the evening's main event, building a real "experimental" radio.

The items I'd seen from the briefcase earlier were to be our materials. Pop and our instructor supervised as we wound a copper coil, then mounted it onto a 12"x12" piece of board, along with the small rock crystal and the other stray parts. When we finished, as I remember, that radio looked like an example of the junk-art you can see in any number of galleries these days, a tangle of wire and hardware thrown together in an apparent random and abstract pattern. How could Guglielmo Marconi have conceived of such a contraption?

When the last connection was soldered into place, Pop put on the headphones, attached the leads, and set about slowly sliding the tuning bar across the coil, while periodically moving the "cat's whisker", a needle-thin piece of spring wire mounted on a swivel, across the crystal in search of a "hot spot". Presently his face broke into a smile and he began bobbing his head and snapping his fingers.

Success.

He'd found some music to his liking, probably Frank Sinatra or Nat "King" Cole. Each of us kids took turns with the headphones. Once the crystal had been tuned, all we had to do was slide the bar to a different spot on the coil to bring in another AM radio station. This was amazing. Science in action. We were able to receive nearly a dozen stations that evening.

We built the radio near the end of the school year. By then Sputnik had dropped out of orbit and burned up in the stratosphere. The United States had successfully launched the Explorer satellite. And, Elvis Presley was in the Army.

For our final class meeting we put on a special Parent's Night program, which allowed us to show off our new-found knowl-

## LETTERS...WE GET LETTERS

**TINLEY PARK, IL** — Another year just slipped by... a year filled with interesting information in the *Nostalgia Digest* and wonderful radio shows to enjoy. Thanks to you and all who help make our reading and listening hours so enjoyable. — **AUDREY SUTENBACH**

**OGLESBY, IL** — I enjoy listening to *Old Time Radio Classics* on WBBM every night. When my wife and I go to Chicago and the Westmont area it gives me a chance to stop in to Metro Golden Memories and purchase some cassette tapes of radio shows. When my son and I visited MGM last month, I signed up for a subscription to the *Nostalgia Digest*. My son is seven and a half years old

### TUNING IN ON SPUTNIK

edge. Afterwards, we "divided-up" the goods and I got to keep the radio.

At that time my brother and I had bunk beds. Pop mounted the radio on the wall next to my bed, then ran a long antenna wire out the window to a tree.

The late 1950's, when all this happened, were the last days of old time radio. Dayton's CBS affiliate, WHIO, still regularly broadcast what was left of the old shows in production; "Gunsmoke", "Suspense", "Amos and Andy", and "Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar". I remember them all very well. I listened to them on my crystal radio.

At night I'd get into bed and before going to sleep, I'd put on the headphones. There in the dark, as other satellites orbited far overhead, I'd blast off for another kind of space. The world of radio.

So, now I think you've got the picture. If it hadn't been for Sputnik, I wouldn't have built the radio. And, as our teacher showed us, the art of science is to find the connection between seemingly unrelated objects and events. And that's exactly what we've done here. ■

and enjoys the tapes of the Shadow that I purchased. For Christmas last year I purchased the Cinnamon Bear tapes and book for him to enjoy. — **DREW & VINCENT JESSEN**

**RACINE, WISCONSIN** — A word of thanks for many hours of listening pleasure. Saturday afternoons are a real treat! Congratulations to you for 25 years of great radio. — **FRANK HUELLER**

**WHITING, INDIANA** — I am renewing my subscription for two years, my 21st and 22nd as a reader. Congratulations to you and your family on 25 years on the radio. I especially like Bill Elwell's "Yesterday in America." It brought back memories of the '40s when he mentioned different kinds of food dishes from that era. My mother's favorite for her three children when she was a widow was cooked cabbage with potatoes or cooked cabbage with dumplings. And only on Sunday we had our favorite soup, which we called "Sunday Soup." It consisted of 15 cents worth of soup bone plus her homemade noodles with a few vegetables thrown in. I very much enjoyed Ken Alexander's article on the Ragman, the Peddler and the Good Humor Man. I wonder if Ken would remember anything like what we had in our neighborhood in Whiting, Indiana. A couple of older ladies, in their late 60s or 70s, who were like walking dime stores. They carried either leather or cloth oversized shopping bags which contained items like needles, thread, thimbles, shoe laces, can openers, etc. Prices ranged from two cents to a quarter. In Slovak, the children used to call them *bobca*. They would come around once a week to sell different articles to mothers in the neighborhood. Nine out of ten times my mom would buy something for a penny or two, to please the women. — **GEORGE PIETERS**

**CHICAGO** — I am a long-time listener. Some of my favorite Saturdays are before Christmas. I cook, clean, bake and wrap presents while I listen to *TWTD*. My nine year old daughter and eight year old son enjoy the old programs as well. We know that the younger children will also. It is



## WE GET LETTERS

great practice for their small minds. — **BETH MERSCH**

**HAMMOND, INDIANA** — Your August-September issue got my memory churning. I was eleven years old when I came out of the Orpheum Theatre in Elkhart, Indiana to find "extra" editions on the street with the first news of Pearl Harbor (how old would you have to be to remember what an "extra" was?). That afternoon was the start of four of the greatest/worst, meaningful/screwiest, patriotic/comballest years a boy could ever become a teen-ager in. I remember the ration books and the parades, the local factories receiving their Army-Navy E Flags, the blackouts when there wasn't a German plane capable of getting within a thousand miles on a suicide mission, Lucky Strike green going to war, war stamp sales in school (and God help the poor kid who forgot to bring his dime or quarter that Friday morning), the service flags hanging in the windows, and how even a kid felt when they had a gold star.

My dad was a fireman and extra engineer on the New York Central western division and I can still remember the jolt of picking up the phone and hearing "Main Train" and his "on duty" time. That was a troop train and they weren't kept waiting. Later on there were the hospital trains and, when it ended, the mortuary trains. Old brakemen whose every second word was an obscenity took their hats off when those cars went through the yard. It was the best of times and the worst. I don't want to live it over, but I'm glad I didn't miss it. At least then you had no doubts as to which country was the greatest and were proud to be in it. — **DON LOEFFLER**

**FOUNTAIN HILLS, ARIZONA** — Just as World War II had to end, so do the WW II commemorations. So for one last time, thanks for the memories of what certainly were the most pivotal years of twentieth century history, and among the most pivotal years in world history. Also worth noting again is your unique role in these commemorations. Fifty years after the events, most of the people who actually participated in them can no longer be interviewed. The best books on the subject were written decades ago (in my opinion) and television

specials, of course, are limited to newsreel film. I'll bet you were the only person in the country who thought to resurrect the sounds of the war and use them in such a creative way. I'm sure future historians will be as appreciative as current listeners. — **JIM WARRAS**

**WOODSTOCK, ONTARIO, CANADA** — Like so many others, I am happy to renew my subscription. Being 45 years old, I was born just in time to be titillated by the sunset of real radio entertainment. My pre-school days started with the Breakfast Club and progressed through Arthur Godfrey. Lunch was often spent with Big Jon and Sparky or maybe Bob and Ray. The afternoon began with Ma Perkins, followed by Helen Trent, Nora Drake and Our Gal Sunday. At night perhaps a little Bing Crosby, Jack Benny or Charlie McCarthy. It wasn't bedtime until after the Great Gildersleeve or Fibber McGee and Molly. Much of this programming resonated from my first radio, a cathedral model which, sadly slipped out of my possession, but left me hooked on a broadcasting career and an unquenchable thirst for radio culture.

My hoped-for vocation failed to fully materialize, but radio is my avocation. I have developed a modest archive of equipment and material. The great thing about this hobby comes in sharing it with others. It is so gratifying to observe (when the opportunity of a demonstration presents itself) that Fibber McGee and Digger O'Dell can tickle a new audience, or that Lowell Thomas describing Lucky Lindy's feat, and Clem McCarthy's rasping account of Sea Biscuit's victory still fill a room with an expectant hush.

In its own right, Canada has a colourful and exciting radio history, but it's largely kept locked away. That only serves to emphasize how very important your work is in letting radio live. You richly deserve all the awards and honours bestowed on you for your generosity in sharing these treasures. By the way, Mr. Alexander's articles reflect much of the same spirit. His reflections are real, down-to-earth vignettes that even someone in a small community hundreds of miles away can relate to and savour the sweet flavours of our own past.

I hope your WBBM series continues to flourish. It is one of the few embers in the ashen rubble AM radio has devolved into

over the past twenty years. Best wishes from a loyal admirer. — **RICK SPURGEON**

**POTOSI, MISSOURI** — I am ten years old and I really enjoy your midnight shows. I also enjoy the *Nostalgia Digest*. Will you please play more Lone Ranger, Lum and Abner, Hopalong Cassidy and the Shadow? I can't pick up your Saturday afternoon shows but I listen to your midnight shows all the time. Thank you for being on the air! — **DAVID J. BRIDGEMAN**

**NORTHFIELD, IL** — How can I tell you how much I enjoyed the "Show Boat" afternoon! It was marked in my date book, circled in the WNIB Guide, and in the *Nostalgia Digest* in the unlikely event I'd forget. Betty Bryant was so much fun to listen to, I called Metro Golden Memories during the program to order her book, *Here Comes the Showboat*. The line was busy for a while, so I assume I was not the only one so inspired. I've now read it and loved it. The next week's program, celebrating the 40th anniversary of WNIB, was great, too. I used to love the Railroad Hour, and the voices of Gordon MacRae and Dorothy Warrenskjold were lovely in the Friml music. Thanks for that, too. When my son, now a musician, was four, he used to love to hear Marty Robinson's theme, *Eine Kleine Nachtmusic*, and then hear Marty's voice. Billy would toot the opening bars on his kazoo, then stop, and say "Good evening, this is Marty Robinson," just as Marty himself did. Thanks, Chuck, for those two wonderful afternoons and for all the other wonderful afternoons. You rightly belong in the Radio Hall of Fame. — **MARY FRAN PURSE**

**SWEETWATER, TENNESSEE** — I would like to tell you how much I enjoy *Old Time Radio Classics* on WBBM. I have been listening and collecting old time radio shows for three years now and have found it so enjoyable that I would choose classic radio over television anyday. Thanks for keeping old time radio alive and introducing a whole new generation to the "theatre of the mind." — **BRIAN R. HICKS**

**ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS** — I first heard your show on that small station in Evanston (WLTD if I remember correctly). I loved hearing the old time radio shows again, and I became one of your loyal

listeners. But then, ten years ago, I moved from Chicago to Boston, and I haven't heard any good old time radio since. Oh, sure, there have been shows on local stations from time to time, but I tell you, Chuck, no one presents the old shows with the same love and respect that you do. Now I don't suppose I'll be able to hear your programs again unless I move back to Chicago, but would you do me a favor? Would you take a peek in your Hall Closet and see if you might have some books or tapes in there that would satisfy my craving for old time radio? — **RICHARD LIMBUSKY (ED. NOTE— We've sent you our Metro Golden Memories catalog and that might help until you move back to Chicago!)**

**OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE** — Thank you for being the Number One person in the country working to preserve this art form which we call "old time radio." I grew up during the 1940s and remember well many of the fine programs which you broadcast on WBBM. When atmospheric conditions are satisfactory, I tape each of your programs here in Oak Ridge, then transfer a selected few to more permanent tapes for later enjoyment. — **VICTOR J. TENNERY**

**CHICAGO** — My wife kids me about my large liking of old time radio and motion pictures, but I persist in it anyway. I was a subscriber to your magazine, fell away for a while, and now I return. I can tell from the August-September issue that your Silver Anniversary was truly a joyous occasion. — **JAMES M. MAROTTA**

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## NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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Museum of Broadcast Communications

# museum pieces

Reported by Margaret Warren

**NAME A CATEGORY** and the Museum Archives probably has a new television program acquisition to fit. Archives director Cary O'Dell has assembled a veritable smorgasbord of new-new and new-old shows waiting to be watched. Read on.

All nine parts of Ken Burns' home run-of-a-documentary on baseball. He covers it all from Abner Doubleday to the current player/owner battles.

Remember "Medic," the program back in the 50s that set the standard for medical shows on TV? The Museum has an episode. For kids, we have their purple pal, Barney. And if you missed Channel 11's wonderful look-back at Chicago 50 and 60 years ago, come in and enjoy, "Remembering Chicago."

From across the seas comes a British import that most of us have only heard about. We have an episode of "Absolutely Fabulous," the raucous adventure of two wacky English girls.

Still in the contemporary mode, footage from L.A.'s KCAL-TV, the first station on the scene when O.J. made his famous Bronco ride. They captured it all. Stay in L.A. and drop by "Melrose Place." The Museum has an episode for fans who can't get enough of that glitzy soap.

Go back nearly 20 years for a helping of

sophisticated nostalgia with a 1977 "Playboy's Playmate Party." A much younger Hef with Bill Cosby, Wilt Chamberlain, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Barbara Mandrell and Jay Leno.

You want music? What better than the Peabody Award winning concert by Barbra Streisand.

Ask to watch David Susskind in hysterical conversation with Mel Brooks and George Segal as they talk about life as a Jewish son. Try the Jane Goodall National Geographic special as she observes her chimpanzee friends in the wild.

Lee Phillip and Bill Bell, always good friends of the Museum, have provided some wonderful episodes and other footage of their highly-rated, "The Young and the Restless." Watch 1987 episodes with a young David Hassellhoff. Also



LEE PHILLIP

peek behind the scenes at a Y&R actors' audition where Corbin Berensen and Jason Alexander were among the hopefuls.

This is just a sample of the great new television acquisitions waiting to view in the Archives of the Museum of Broadcast Communications. Stop in soon.

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