

# NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE



ARCH OBOLER

# Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald

## America's Singing Sweethearts in a pair of Lux Radio Theatre broadcasts

### "NAUGHTY MARIETTA"

June 12, 1944

Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald recreate their original screen roles in this beautiful radio adaptation of their 1935 MGM film based on Victor Herbert's 1905 musical production. They first appeared as a team in the movie and this was their first pairing on radio.

Jeanette is a French princess who runs off to America where she falls in love with Nelson, an Indian scout. The radio version of the story is filled with wonderful music. Jeanette sings "Day by Day" and "Italian Street Song." Nelson sings "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp" and "Falling in Love with Someone." The team sings the duet, "Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life." Director Cecil B. DeMille is host and

the supporting cast includes Verna Felton, Jack Mather, Norman Field, Virginia Gregg, and Howard McNear. Announcer is John Milton Kennedy; Musical Director is Lou Silvers. Complete with curtain call and commercials for Lux Soap. CBS.



### "MAYTIME"

September 4, 1944

Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy are reunited on the Lux Radio Theatre three months after their success with "Naughty Marietta" in this excellent radio adaptation of their 1937 MGM film based on Sigmund Romberg's 1917 operetta. It's the story of the romance between Nelson, a penniless singer, and Jeanette, an opera diva trapped in a loveless marriage to an older man. Marvelous music fills this radio version of the story. Nelson sings "Student Drinking Song" and "Le Regiment de Sambre et Meuse." Jeanette sings "Reverie" and "Jewel Song." Together they sing "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" and the great classic "Sweetheart." Director Cecil B.

DeMille is host and the supporting cast includes Edgar Barrier (as Jeanette's older husband). Announcer is John Milton Kennedy; Musical Director is Lou Silvers. Complete with curtain call and commercials for Lux Soap. CBS.

**TWO FULL HOURS OF ENCHANTING ENTERTAINMENT**

**TWO CASSETTE TAPES  
IN ATTRACTIVE ALBUM**

**\$13.95**  
PLUS TAX AND SHIPPING

**METRO GOLDEN MEMORIES**

**1-800-538-6675**

CALL FREE DURING DAYTIME STORE HOURS

# CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

BOOK TWENTY-TWO

CHAPTER THREE

APRIL - MAY 1996

## Hello, Out There in Radioland!

*Wouldn't it be great to be able to take a course on the history of radio?*

That's a comment we've heard often during the many years that we've been on the air with our vintage broadcasts.

Now we have found an excellent 30-part audio-course on our favorite subject and we're going to present it, in sequence, from time to time, throughout the next year on *Those Were The Days* beginning with our 26th Anniversary program, April 27.

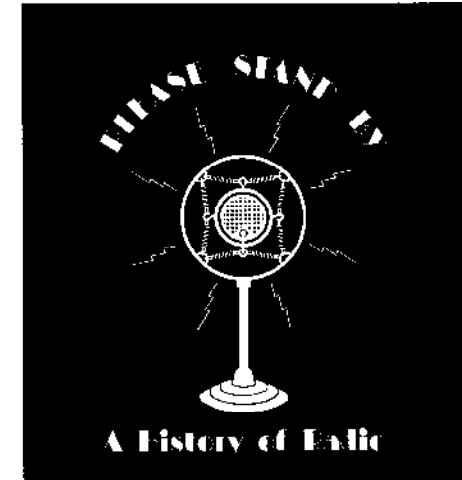
This audio-course, called *Please Stand By -- A History of Radio*, was produced in 1986 by the Southern California Consortium and the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters.

It is a labor of love by and for old time radio fans, produced at the site of the original NBC studios, from which many of the early radio shows were actually broadcast.

The series host/historians are Les Tremayne and Jack Brown. Les Tremayne was the star of radio's *First Nighter* and of thousands of broadcasts during the Golden Age and was just last year inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame. Jack Brown, a veteran performer, was Director of Programming for the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service for 30 years.

*Please Stand By -- A History of Radio* documents the medium's birth and development, explores its social significance, and examines its impact on our culture and economy. Anecdotal accounts of events and personalities and excerpts from early shows punctuate radio's emergence as an American art form.

*You do not have to enroll to take this*



*course and it costs you nothing. All you have to do is tune in, listen, enjoy and learn.*

(If you wish to take an additional step or two, you can purchase the textbook and study guide. The textbook is "Don't Touch That Dial" by J. Fred MacDonald and many old time radio fans already have a copy in their library. "Please Stand By: A History of Radio Study Guide" by Jack Brown and Milton P. Kahn helps coordinate the material in the text and in the audio programs. The text (\$23.95) and study guide (\$8.95) are available from Metro Golden Memories in Chicago. To order, or for more information, call 1-800-538-6675 during daytime store hours.)

*Please Stand By -- A History of Radio* is your tuition-free opportunity to stretch your knowledge of old time radio.

Thanks for listening.

—Chuck Schaden

# Turn Off Your Lights... ...Turn On Your Mind

*A peek at the life of radio playwright Arch Oboler*

BY ERIK J. MARTIN

## *Lights...Out...Everybody!*

Listeners of the thirties and forties are not likely to forget the sinister, whispering command that introduced radio's greatest horror show. Nor are its new generations of fans who dare to play tapes or records of the classic series in the dark. Think some of the show has lost its fright after 50 years? Try it yourself sometime. Just as wine improves with age, "Lights Out," much like a good Universal horror film from the 30s, can still tingle a spine with the best of them.

During its time, the program was so blood curdling that it had to be tucked away in an after-midnight time slot to safeguard the peaceful slumber of children. "Lights Out," featuring popular creepsters of the era like Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi and Peter Lorre, thrilled audiences with its pioneering use of sound effects: one heard decapitations at their goriest, bodies being turned inside out, a woman being drowned in concrete, a decapitated head thumping slowly down the stairs, a revenge-bent dentist ready to drill holes into his victim's body, and perhaps the grisliest sound of them all, the eating of human flesh.

Even more importantly, fans remember the scripts themselves—terrifying tales of

*Erik J. Martin of Oak Lawn, Illinois is a longtime fan of old time radio who has listened to and much appreciated the work of writer Arch Oboler.*

bodies rising from their graves, movie monsters coming off the screen to terrorize your town, and pulsating, protoplasmic organs growing in gargantuan size—most wrought as monstrous cause-and-effect morality myths and fables of supernatural fate meant to scare the evil out of all of us. And the person responsible for giving people more nightmares than anyone else was a peculiarly named playwright: Arch Oboler.

Oboler was a dwarfish, energetic man with dark hair, thick, horn-rimmed glasses who, it was said, preferred wearing casual polo shirts, unpreserved pants and a fedora hat in the stuffy, business-suit-only world of radio. Though he looked about as intimidating as an English sheepdog, behind the power of his pen, Oboler terrorized a nation every week on the super-heterodyne with his horrifying yarns, and went on to revolutionize the medium in the process.

Oboler was born in post-turn of the century Chicago to parents Leo and Clara Oboler, and grew up with aspirations of becoming a naturalist. In his bedroom he kept a variety of animals, from turtles and salamanders to snakes and scorpions, always fascinated by the animal kingdom. He sold his first story, about a zoo, at the tender age of ten. Later, while attending the University of Chicago, he submitted a science fiction manuscript to NBC called "Futuristics" as a joke to see if the net-



ARCH OBOLER

work would actually buy it. To his surprise, NBC gave him \$75, and used it as a salute program during the Radio City Music Hall opening ceremonies in 1934.

Oboler soon found steady work with NBC and quickly became one of the most prolific penmen of the airwaves, landing writing jobs for "The First Nighter Program," and "Grand Hotel." Before he knew it, he was scripting sketches for the biggest names in Hollywood: Don Ameche, Henry Fonda, Joan Crawford, Walter Huston and Edward G. Robinson, all who were thrilled to appear behind the "Grand Hotel" mike with an Oboler script, even for union scale (\$21).

Faithful to his Windy City roots, Oboler worked in Chicago, buzzing about the NBC-based Merchandise Mart on a daily basis. In the same building worked another

curious radio author, Wyllis Cooper, who was making waves with his fifteen-minute overnight sensation, "Lights Out." Cooper founded the program, and along with writer Ferrin N. Fraser spearheaded the writing and production for two years until 1936, when he departed the series after an illness. This opened the door for Oboler to produce his own show. With innovative sound effects and memorable tales, he brought "Lights Out" to an all time high, continuing the tradition of Cooper the visionary, who happened to be Oboler's favorite writer.

Oboler's very first "Lights Out" play, "Burial Services," almost got him blacklisted from radio for good. It depicted a woman buried alive while her griev-

ing relative watched. Audiences, to say the least, were shocked. Other highlights of the series include "The Chicken Heart," "The Dark," and "Cat Wife," starring Boris Karloff as a frustrated man whose cruel wife turns into a human sized feline.

"Lights Out" fan clubs popped up across the country, and ratings skyrocketed. Everyone seemed to be loving the "Lights Out" craze—everyone, that is, except Arch Oboler. The writer was simply all horrified-out after two years on the show. He wanted to expand his horizons and earn notoriety for other creative facets besides his morbid storytelling.

He had already begun to delve into side work with writing stints for "The Rudy Vallee Hour." His play, "Rich Kid," excited Vallee enough to repeat it several times on his show and prompted a long

## ARCH OBOLER

friendship between the two that led to more performances of Oboler plays on the Vallee program. With his previous imaginative work for NBC, Oboler had so impressed the network that in 1938 he was invited to christen a new program, "Arch Oboler's Plays." "Lights Out," meanwhile, died.

But the new series made Oboler a household name, bringing weekly radio drama to the collective ear of the country in all shapes and genres: fantasy, satire, mystery and tragedy. It was his work on this program that earned Oboler the reputation of having perfected the art of monologue and stream-of-consciousness storytelling for radio. He was rewarded later in 1938 when his play "Alter Ego," starring Bette Davis, was chosen as the best original air drama of the year. Oboler's all-time favorite story even made it to broadcast, a one-hour dramatization of "None But the Lonely Heart," starring the famous Russian actress of the time, Alla Nazimova. It was also during this time that Oboler found a star to cast in the lead of his life: Eleanor Helfand, a sweetheart from his college Alma Mater. For their honeymoon, they toured all of the haunted houses in New England.

1940 was truly Oboler's year. By this time, he had already authored more than 400 plays, and later in the year became the first radio dramatist to publish a body of scripts, "Fourteen Radio Plays" (several other published script compilations followed over the years). Though "Arch Oboler's Plays" had begun to flicker in popularity after only two years, Oboler jumped ship to Oxydol's "Everyman's Theatre," broadcast on Friday nights. That same year, he even landed a three-and-a-half year contract as author-director in Hollywood, and penned the screenplay for the film "Escape," adapted from Ethel Vance's best selling anti-Nazi novel.

By 1942, however, audiences of "Everyman's Theatre" simply weren't tuning in. It seemed that the time was ripe for the resurgence of radio horror. And with the United States now involved in World War II, Oboler, now financially strapped, seized the moment. "Lights Out" was reborn, this time on CBS for a full 30 minutes on Tuesday nights.

Murder and gore was rampant again on the airwaves, but with the Fascists and Nazis creating a very tangible fear, Oboler began to concentrate more on horror verite, or realistic terror: stories, for example, about sadistic Nazi generals struck by grisly fate and physically and psychologically wounded soldiers struggling to stay alive.

He perpetuated these subtle, patriotic themes in a new side venture, "To the President," a fictional series in which a citizen would address a wartime issue to the U.S. Commander in Chief. By 1945, Oboler's work had earned him another of radio's top accolades, the Peabody Award for radio drama.

"Lights Out" didn't last much longer, however, and as the golden age of radio began to fade, Oboler found himself back in Hollywood. His film "Five," depicting life in a postnuclear future, was released in 1951.

In 1952, he directed, wrote and produced the screen hit "Bwana Devil," the world's first 3-D movie (yes, before 1953's "House of Wax") utilizing a new polarized process called Natural Vision, which garnered him the inaugural award of the Academy of Stereoscopic Arts and Sciences for his realistic techniques employed in the film.

In the 1960s, Oboler Productions brought its proprietor much producing, directing, and writing work, including "Night of the Auk" (a science fiction play he wrote for Broadway), the teleplay "Af-

rican Adventure," "The Bubble" (another 3-D film released in 1966 that failed at the box office), "House on Fire" (a 1969 thriller novel), and the motion picture "Domo Arigato" in 1973.

Oboler had unique eccentricities that only add to his rich legend. Many remember him prowling around New York City in old clothes, always in search of new plot material. Stories would sometimes come from sleeping dreams, or by listening to the classical masterworks of great composers. It was rumored that Oboler kept a horned toad in his studio as a sort of mascot that eventually died of overindulgence. Those who collaborated with him recall Oboler standing on a table in the radio studio—not in the control room where directors usually reside—wearing big, bulky earphones and pointing, always, pointing.

In an interview with Chuck Schaden several years back, Oboler said he "challenged the listener to remember the (television) play that moved him a week ago." In radio, however, Oboler has "had listeners remind me of plays that they heard 40 years ago. (One man) told me a story that I wrote that I had completely forgotten. It was done that long ago and it stayed there in his neuron, so to speak, because he gave of himself when he listened to that. In radio...you give of yourself, you're part of



ARCH OBOLER

PHOTOFEST

communication."

In 1987, Arch Oboler died at the age of 77 due to heart failure following a stroke. Millions revere him as the real voice of radio drama—the man who stirred the embers of patriotism with programs like "To the President" during World War II; the playwright who brought of lump to our throats with heartwarming morality plays like "The Ugliest Man in the World;" and the architect of anxiety who literally got away with murder on the infamous "Lights Out" series. ■

**NOTE:** An Arch Oboler *Lights Out* drama, "Murder Castle" will be broadcast on *Those Were The Days* May 18. See listing on page 23 for details.

*Ken Alexander  
Remembers . . .*

*The Way It Used to Be*



More and more lately, I find myself thinking of life as it was when I was a boy, in the 1930s and early '40s. One reason for this, I think, is that life has changed so much in the past fifty years.

I'm not talking about space exploration, the harnessing of the atom, the computer revolution, or other cataclysmic changes. What I'm thinking about are the minor alterations in the way we live our day-to-day lives — the customs, the manners, the attitudes that have changed with the times.

There's no need to talk here about life as it is today — we're very much aware of that. Let's recall the way it used to be:

When a gentleman met a lady on the street, he would tip his hat to her. It was done as a gesture of respect.

Baseball players, who spent the summer doing what they loved to do and got paid for it, seemed to be the happiest of men.

Once in a while, a movie was released which, because of its subject matter, was designated ADULTS ONLY. All the other films were considered appropriate to be seen by people of any age.

When you thanked someone for a favor, the standard response was "You're welcome," not "No problem."

A person who had an arithmetical problem to solve, did it with pencil and paper.

Butterflies were abundant in the city in

summer — small white ones and yellow ones, large black-and-blue ones, and beautiful orange-and-black monarchs.

If an 11-year-old child was written up in the newspaper, it probably was because the kid had won a spelling bee.

Once you bought your ticket and entered a movie theatre, you could stay until the house closed for the night, if you so desired.

Just about the only beards we saw were on men born before the Civil War.

On a sweltering summer night, you could take a blanket to one of the parks — Garfield Park, Lincoln Park, Douglas Park — spread it on the grass and sleep there. Nobody would bother you.

A man seated on a bus or streetcar would generally offer his seat to a woman standing in the aisle. And teenagers and young adults would give up their seats to elderly standees.

We had no shopping malls. There was one Marshall Field's and one Carson's — on State Street.

When teens went on a date, the girls wore skirts and sweaters, saddle shoes and bobby socks. (For a more formal occasion, the footwear would be nylons and heels.) Boys would wear a dress shirt, tie, sport jacket, slacks, and polished leather shoes. A boy's hair would be neatly trimmed. In summer,

he might sport a crew cut.

There was just one variety of Coca-Cola. Most movies were in black-and-white. When a film was released in Technicolor, that was a special event.

Popular songs were *pretty*; the prettier a song, the more popular it would be.

Radio didn't bring us traffic reports — we had no need for them. The thought of turning on the radio in the morning to hear a reporter in a helicopter advise us what route to take to work would have smacked of science fiction.

Every household had a bottle of ink.

If you drove a few miles beyond Chicago's city limits, you'd very likely see cows grazing in a pasture.

In department stores — in fact, in stores of any kind — there were employees on the floor whose job it was to inform you about the merchandise and sell you some of it.

Milk was supplied in bottles made of thick glass.

There were no supermarkets. You'd tell the grocer what you wanted and he would retrieve the items from the shelves for you.

Most people, when they traveled cross country, took the train.

Although wrist watches were available, most people carried pocket watches. Men wore two-inch-diameter watches — railroad watches — with a chain attached. "Turnips" these watches were called.

Cars had running boards; some had rumble seats.

Hardly any stores were open on Sunday.

The population of the United States was about half of what it is today.

People would write long letters to friends and relatives in distant cities — or in the same city.

Cash registers didn't compute the amount of change you had coming. If you made a 32-cent purchase and gave the cashier a five-dollar bill, the cashier would

---

***"You never had to be afraid to invite radio into your home; it was always a well-behaved guest."***

---

count out your change: "Thirty-three, thirty-four, thirty-five, forty-five, fifty, seventy-five, one dollar, two, three, four, five dollars."

Record albums had names such as "Music for Dining," "A Night with Sigmund Romberg," "Candlelight and Silver," and "Satin Strings."

Every elevator was run by an operator — a man or woman who called out floors, opened and closed the elevator doors, and admonished passengers, "Kindly step to the rear of the car, please."

Fifty-cent pieces were common.

News reports on radio and in the papers would refer to women as *Miss Crawford*, *Mrs. Roosevelt*, *Miss Anderson*.

A telephone would be answered — if it was answered at all — by a live human being.

Chicago's Loop held a dozen palatial movie houses, several legitimate theatres, and a host of nightclubs. Seven days a week, from early morning to well past midnight, the Loop was teeming with people.

The models in ads for perfume and cosmetics had an innocent, wholesome look.

Many people of a certain age would refer to an automobile as a "machine." For example, "Whose machine is that out in front?"

If you were ailing and didn't feel up to making a trip to your doctor's office, the doctor would come to your home; physicians set aside a part of each day for making house calls.

Chicago's tallest skyscraper was the Board of Trade Building — 45 stories and 445 feet.

About the only graffiti we ever saw were

## KEN ALEXANDER REMEMBERS

scrawled with soap on windows. And the only time we saw them was around Hallowe'en.

When they went downtown, men wore suits, ties, and fedoras; women wore suits or dresses, hats, and gloves.

Burglar alarms and security systems were installed in *banks* and *stores*.

You might have worked for a dollar an hour, but that dollar would buy you a bag of groceries.

Men wore their hair short; women wore theirs long.

For a free lesson in Standard American English pronunciation, one had only to switch on the radio and listen to any announcer.

A girlfriend or boyfriend was a person with whom you went dancing or to the movies — and maybe had a soda afterward.

Neighbors, in pleasant weather, would sit on their front porches after supper and converse.

Pre-teens would go downtown — indeed, all over the city — unescorted, on the streetcar.

Mail was delivered twice — morning and afternoon — Monday through Friday, and once on Saturday.

Singers of popular songs didn't wail — they crooned.

Whether you bought a car, a suit of clothes, or a pack of gum, the person who accepted your money would say "Thank you."

A portable radio was about the size of an attaché case.

Horses — pulling milk wagons, produce wagons, garbage wagons — were a common sight in Chicago's streets and alleys.

The bandleader would blow through a straw into a fishbowl of water next to the microphone while the band played. The public hailed Shep Fields' Rippling

Rhythm as an exciting new sound.

We called refrigerators ice boxes. And that is what they were.

Girls and young women wore blue jeans — when they went on a hayride.

Mailing addresses had no nine-digit zipcodes; instead, there was a one- or two-digit zone number, such as 3 or 51.

If there was a lady riding in an elevator, the gentlemen in the car would remove their hats.

You never had to be afraid to invite radio into your home; it was always a well-behaved guest.

The city had numerous empty lots — we called them prairies — where weeds and tall grass and wildflowers grew.

That is the way it used to be.

The 1940s — notwithstanding the war — were a wonderful decade. Not that I would have everything as it was in the '40s. In some respects, we're better off now. In other ways, we've gone downhill. Sometimes it's a matter of opinion — I'll leave that up to you to decide.

But the music, the movies, the radio entertainment, the innocence, the civility of the people, the spirit of the time — all these combined to make the '40s a very special era. It was a different age entirely, and I grieve for its passing.

I realize that it is human nature to regard the past with fondness. We tend to repress distasteful memories and focus on the pleasant times. Soldiers have a saying that the best outfit in the army is always the one that you just left. An eight-year-old child may tell you that it was more fun being six. I suppose that all of us, regardless of our age, or our youth, yearn at times for "the good old days."

And possibly, a few decades hence, the people who are growing up today will regard the 1990s with the same bittersweet longing that I feel for the '40s. But I find that hard to imagine. ■

## AND NOW, A WORD FROM OUR PRANKSTER

BY CLAIR SCHULZ

There are some creative people we should thank daily: Edison when we flip a switch, Bell when we call someone, Goodyear when we go for a ride, and Freberg when we see or hear a commercial that makes us laugh. Freberg? How did he get in there? With his wit and hard work, some luck, and more than a little *chutzpah*.

Stan Freberg's life story reads like it was written by Stan Freberg. (In fact, Stan did write his life story — at least up to 1963 in a 1988 memoir entitled *It Only Hurts When I Laugh*.) As the saying goes, they couldn't even get the name

right. His grandfather's name was Paul Andrew Johnson, but because so many Swedes had been coming into Ellis Island with that surname and impatient immigration officer badgered him into selecting another name. He added the last name of his mother before she was married and became Paul Johnson Friberg, which the officer wrote as Paul pronounced it:

*Clair Schulz, a Nostalgia Digest subscriber from Stevens Point, Wisconsin, is an occasional contributor to these pages.*



STAN FREBERG

PHOTOFEET

Freberg. As Stan might say, "It's a good thing her maiden name wasn't Hammerschlauger!"

Stan's maternal grandparents were ordained ministers and so was his father. Rev. Victor Freberg had aspirations of becoming a missionary, but the closest he got to

darkest Africa was in naming his son, born Aug. 7, 1926, after the man who found Dr. Livingstone.

Stanley Freberg credits his father for having a moral influence on his life, but he certainly also taught Stan by example how to be versatile. To make ends meet during the depression Victor not only was the pastor

of a church fifty miles away from their home but also sold vacuum cleaners and insurance policies. One day officials of the insurance company were pleased to hear that he had sold hefty accident policies to one family until they learned they were high-wire aerialists in a circus.

Among Stan's fondest memories of childhood are the days after his uncle Raymond (*aka* Conray the Magician) came to live with his family in South Pasadena. It must have seemed like a road company production of *You Can't Take It With You*

## A WORD FROM OUR PRANKSTER

to see a prestidigitator following a Baptist minister around the house, imploring him to "pick a card, any card" as they side-stepped the cages for doves and other paraphernalia, but it was all grist for Stan's mill. Stan even contributed his rabbit to his uncle's act and thereby got his first taste of show business. Raymond would advertise that some lucky boy or girl would be given a rabbit during the performance. Guess which boy was picked to come up on stage to assist with the silk hat trick time after time.

During the thirties Stan was also tuned in to another form of magic, radio. While other boys his age were out playing baseball he was being carried away on the wings of imagination to Hollywood and beyond. He acknowledges that hours spent listening to Fred Allen and *Vic and Sade* were most influential in determining his sense of humor, and it is hard to argue with that belief. From Allen he inherited that keen blade of satire that he has swung so adroitly for decades and from the quarter-hour offerings of Paul Rhymen he acquired the talent of deftly mingling the ordinary with the absurd or surreal.

Other youngsters his age loved their Louisville Sluggers; Freberg treasured the discarded scripts that Raymond would bring home from his job as a security guard at CBS in Hollywood. Stan would play all the parts and even sing the songs to a truly captive audience: his rabbits and guinea pigs. He eventually got up the nerve to perform an original script complete with sound effects at a high school assembly. The sound of the standing ovation he received was soon replaced by the droning of the show biz bug.

Thousands of people have headed for Hollywood on a bus with hopes of making the big time. Freberg was one of the few

who cashed in right away. Talent agents in the building right where he got off the bus arranged for him to try out his repertoire of voices for Warner Bros. and before one could say, "Wilhelmina Klapenscott" he was providing voices for cartoons alongside the man of a thousand voices, Mel Blanc.

Maybe Stan didn't have a thousand personalities in his arsenal, but he did develop a regular menagerie in his throat while working in *Tell It Again*. When a show called for a particular animal sound, Freberg would go to the Griffith Park Zoo to hear it from the horse's mouth. At least then if someone claimed that the impersonation did not sound authentic Stan could say, "Can I help it if the leopard had a cold today?"

Uncle Sam called Freberg in 1945 and so for two years his career was on hold except for some entertaining of injured soldiers for Special Services and an infrequent pass that would allow him to record some *Looney Tunes*. After his discharge, he joined a novelty band called Red Fox and his Musical Hounds who at times out-Spiked Jones. Stan was the group's comedian and he was also supposed to play guitar, although he faked it convincingly until one night in South Bend when he was called upon to do a solo.

Actually he left the band of his own volition to do a televised children's show called *Time for Beany*. Freberg and another master of voices, Daws Butler, not only operated all the puppets and played all the characters but they also wrote the show. The scripts were the hardest part, not because of what they were writing but where. In the early days Butler and Freberg were led on a merry chase by the producer who had them typing scripts in restaurant booths, back seats of strangers' cars, and a condemned building. As Stan might have said, "Are you sure George S. Kaufman



STAN FREBERG

started like this?"

But living on the edge must have appealed to Stan in the early fifties. Not only was he doing *Beany* five days a week and a weekly show called *Musical Chairs* but he was also writing and recording the musical parodies that would bring him national attention. His tongue-in-cheek versions of "Cry," "Sh-Boom," "Heartbreak Hotel," "The Yellow Rose of Texas," and "The Banana Boat Song" are still funny today because Freberg had a way of lampooning both the singers and songs. Stan is also responsible for that granddaddy of all recorded satires on television, "St. George and the Dragonet," which, in the words of the bandleader who was another of his targets, remains to this day "wunnerful, wunnerful!"

It was apparent that such a gifted performer deserved his own show and CBS finally gave him his chance to shine in 1957. Nothing like it has ever been on network radio. Interviews with the abominable snowman and extraterrestrial

visitors, musical acts like a tuned sheep chorus, the Skin Divers Mandolin Club, and a man who played the Hawaiian nose flute, and panel discussions with puerile experts on comic characters like Little Orphan Annie and Tarzan were served up alongside his record parodies and spoofs of western, detective shows, and *Lux Radio Theatre*. The two longest sketches, "Incident at Las Voraces" and "Gray Flannel Hat Full of Teenage Werewolves," were two-edged swords that cut deeply to get right to the heart of advertising sham. More than a few listeners were probably confused by the proceedings, but the radio critics loved the inventive audacity of the program. Unfortunately, it had no sponsor and it appeared after the battle with television had been lost so it was taken off the air after fifteen weeks.

One character who appeared on the program was the network censor who found so many things objectionable with Freberg's version of "Old Man River" that Stan threw in the towel before finishing the song. That conflict is indicative of the battles he has fought with legal departments, ad agencies, network officials, and company executives over the years. These differences of opinion rarely concerned off-color material, for Freberg has a reputation of moral integrity that is exemplary. In fact, he has turned down lucrative offers to handle campaigns for manufacturers of tobacco products and even rejected the dollars of two cigarette companies who wanted to sponsor his radio show.

Shortly after the demise of his radio show he walked away from the possibility of doing a television series in the same vein when network bigwigs turned down his pilot script because he took potshots at inane commercials and because they wanted him to conform more to the sitcom formula.

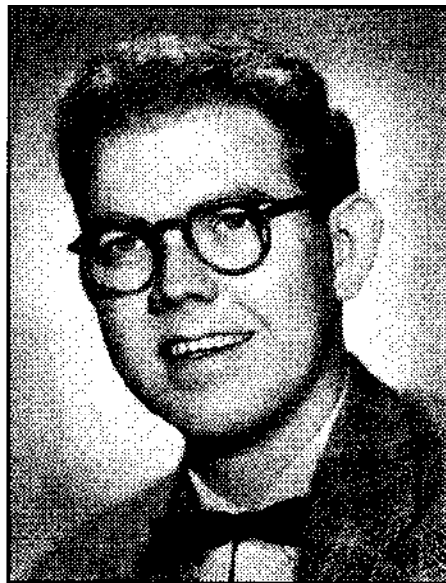
Freberg stood his ground on the record

## A WORD FROM OUR PRANKSTER

"Green Chri\$tm\$a\$," a satire on the materialism of the holiday that cut too close for comfort to the world of business. Capitol Records caved in and released it, but with so little publicity that Stan took out ads to promote it himself.

It may have been a Pyrrhic victory for Freberg when he walked out on David Merrick, who wanted to produce a version of "Stan Freberg Presents the United States of America" on Broadway because of Merrick's capricious decisions and his tampering with the production. But some of Stan's most satisfying triumphs occurred not in the arena of show business but rather behind the closed doors of corporate boardrooms.

After his rejection by CBS Television in 1958 Stan decided to form a production company called Freberg, Ltd. to inject some truth (and humor) into advertising. It was not easy convincing sponsors that weaknesses could be turned into strengths if a light touch was employed, but Stan was persuasive. If only five percent of the population have tried a certain food product, use that statistic in a singing commercial that sticks in the ear. If the package is small, tell the folks how many tomatoes are in that "little bitty can." Don't gripe about stores that won't stock a certain brand of aluminum foil; instead, make fun of it in a cartoon showing a persistent salesman and a tough-sell grocer. Face the fact that prunes aren't pretty, but at least consumers can be told that they are pitless and that the problem of wrinkles may soon be ironed out. Freberg kept reminding advertisers that if they could get people to smile and to think, they could get them to buy. Today the type of witty ads that he pioneered are now so ubiquitous that it may be difficult for many to remember a time when they were not on the air.



STAN FREBERG PHOTOFEEST

It would certainly be a mistake to dismiss Freberg as merely a prankster, for surely his humor cuts deeper to the bone than that, but on one level he has been just that: a whimsical conjurer who, without being deceitful, has played mischievous tricks on us for over thirty years.

With Stan Freberg it appears that there's always more where that came from. He still plans to have his complete "Stan Freberg Presents the United States of America" both recorded and performed on the stage. Perhaps now he even takes time to reflect on his many accomplishments and awards, including a Grammy, Emmies, prizes from film festivals, induction into the Radio Hall of Fame, and so many Clios for advertising excellence that there doesn't seem many other honors left to a nonconformist wit. As Stan might say, "I'm still hoping for the Ignatius J. Reilly Trophy in the shape of Spade Cooley that plays 'Pincapple Princess' when you twist the head."■

**ED. NOTE—** For yet another look at the career of Stan Freberg, keep reading...

## ANOTHER WORD ON STAN FREBERG

BY STEVE DARNALL

The history of radio humor can be divided into two major categories: comedians and satirists. Those in the first camp — like Eddie Cantor, Abbott and Costello and Burns and Allen — usually came out of vaudeville and relied mostly on routines that needed little context and bore little relation to topical issues of the day.

The second group — satirists — used the same methods, but with a much different intent. The radio satirists used their humor not only to entertain their audiences, but to educate them to what the comedian saw as society's ills. Probably the most legendary satirist of radio's golden age was Fred Allen (who can forget his game show lampoon "King for a Day" in which contestant Jack Benny's biggest prize was losing his pants!?), but others in this group included Will Rogers, Stoopnagle and Budd, Goodman Ace, Robert Benchley, Henry Morgan, Bob and Ray — and one of the best, and last, of the era, Stan Freberg.

"Satire is more than just pointless fun-poking," Freberg said during a 1956 *CBS Radio Workshop*. "Satire is criticism, first, last and always, but criticism disguising itself in the bright robes of barbed wit."

For someone who didn't become a major star until radio's sunset years, Freberg had plenty of time to develop not only a strong love of radio, but a healthy contempt for its excesses of greed and stupidity. Freberg had grown up during radio's peak years, and it was a guiding force in his life, all the while thinking of a career as a performer.

---

*Steve Darnall of Chicago is a free-lance writer who contributes occasionally to this magazine.*

---

He made his radio debut on a local morning show in Hollywood, *Coffee Time at Harmony Homestead*, and soon he began auditioning for — and getting work on — network programs, working with top comedians like Henry Morgan and Jack Benny. (In his biography, *It Only Hurts When I Laugh*, Freberg notes that the most memorable part of working with Benny was at dress rehearsal, when he accidentally walked on one of the star's punchlines and got a brief chewing out). With his talent for voices, Freberg was also the last actor to impersonate President Roosevelt before his death, on a documentary called *Destination Tomorrow*.

Freberg's career changed forever in 1949 when his friend Bob Clampett called him to help write and perform for a televised puppet show, *Time For Beany*. For five years, Freberg and Daws Butler did all the voices and held the puppets, combating the hazards of early, live TV (on one show, the cue-card man dropped the cards containing the program's lines, and Butler and Freberg had to ad-lib for thirty minutes straight) and winning huge ratings, three Emmys and a Peabody award along the way.

The 1950s were literally a case of one thing after another for Freberg; the success of *Time For Beany* led to the release of "John and Marsha" on Capitol Records. In his autobiography, Freberg recalled, "Everybody but the legal department seemed happy to have me on the label," especially when his next record was a send-up of Johnnie Ray's melodramatic "Cry." He often said that his records weren't so much released as they "escaped." Freberg angered Capitol's legal wizards by recording records that made fun of Ed Sullivan



## ANOTHER WORD

(it wasn't released) and Lawrence Welk (it was). His "St. George and the Dragonet" was a hilarious look at medieval times with a knight who sounded like *Dragnet's* Joe Friday (Jack Webb later claimed that Freberg's use of "Just the facts, ma'am" forced Webb to rewrite his shows to accommodate the catch-phrase).

One unreleased gem was a savage swipe at Arthur Godfrey called "That's Right, Arthur." With Daws Butler in the Tony Marvin role, Freberg portrayed Godfrey as an out-of-touch, just barely benevolent despot ("I see where the Douglas Aircraft Company is havin' a one-cent sale. You buy one DC-3 for five million dollars, you get another one for a penny. You folks should take advantage of that." "That's right, Arthur.").

Freberg angered young fans of rock and roll with his versions of The Chords' "Sh-Boom" and The Platters' "The Great Pretender." Those fans couldn't stay mad forever, though, particularly when Freberg took a poke at Mitch Miller (a very non rock and roll sort) and his snare-heavy version of "Yellow Rose of Texas." Thirty-five years later, Freberg noted with some pride that during the Beatles' first trip to America, Paul McCartney told an interviewer that the group's sense of humor was shaped in part by listening to Lenny Bruce and Stan Freberg records.

In 1953 he starred on radio as the title character in a sitcom called *That's Rich*. When that show died a quick death, he entered the world of radio advertising and his success has been legendary. In 1957 he was offered a weekly show on CBS. He brought with him the cast who had been so essential to his successful records: Peter Leeds (best known as the beatnik bongo player on "The Banana Boat Song"), the fabulous June Foray (who later became the

voice of Rocket J. Squirrel), and old standbys Daws Butler and Billy May.

Despite getting nearly unanimous raves from the press, *The Stan Freberg Show* was doomed almost from the start. By then radio was on its last legs and Stan wasn't exactly endearing himself to the few potential sponsors left in the medium. After fifteen memorable weeks, the show, sponsorless, was cancelled.

Perhaps his greatest success from this period was his 1961 LP recording, "Stan Freberg Presents the United States of America," a hilarious spoof of America's early years which showed us, among other things, that the first Thanksgiving dinner was actually going to be roast eagle; that Ben Franklin hesitated to sign The Declaration of Independence because he feared reprisal from "The Un-British Activities Committee"; and that George Washington wanted a flag with polka-dots instead of stripes. Stan Freberg fans have been waiting since 1961 for the follow-up album in the series: what happened to America after the revolution.

In 1991, National Public Radio lured Stan back to the microphone for a 60-minute special. The show was a hit-and-miss affair, but was notable for presenting material from the as yet unreleased sequel to "The United States of America."

These days, Stan Freberg is host of two syndicated radio series heard throughout the country. One is a daily commentary, and the other, *When Radio Was*, features rebroadcasts of old time radio shows.

"In seeking to blow away mankind's absurdities in a gust of ridicule, [satirists] hope to make mankind's burden a little easier to bear," Freberg said in 1956. With his recordings, his radio programs and even his commercials, Stan Freberg has provided the world with a humor acrid enough to be admired and funny enough to be durable. ■

## I Was A Child Radio Star - And Lived!

BY NEIL ELLIOTT

In 1943, a heyday of Chicago's show business yesteryear out of which the hot hoofbeats trod, advertisers spent \$40 million on NBC, CBS and the Mutual (WGN) network for the purchase of time alone, with \$5 million added for talent, music and production costs. I was one of those "talents" who shared in that uncanny windfall of time and place, and I confess it now in print for the first time. That I was a child actor in those wild and wooly days has been previously unknown to my family, friends, creditors, to the *Chicago Tribune*, and to the luckless producers who hired me. I am prepared to face the consequences.

The average network station devoted a full five hours - in fifteen minute slots - to daytime "soapies." Add to that the two hours devoted to persuading kids to nag their mothers into getting a certain type of cereal because it would supply a Junior G-man badge or Lone Ranger mask or magic decoder or some other damned thing with each boxtop, and you had cut the heart out of the day before the prime-timers were even prepared to come on smooth.

The soap opera, as well as the juvenile serial and many other staples of radio, in fact, began about 1930 in the offices of Chicago's Blackett-Sample-Hummert advertising agency. As Anne Hummert put it: "The silence throbs...the empty hours are endless...then a friend in need is brought into the room by the turning of a dial...misery loves company...worry, for women, is entertainment."

*Neil Elliott of Evanston, Illinois is an actor and writer who has worked on stage, screen, radio and TV. This article is condensed from Chicagoland Magazine and is reprinted with permission of the author.*



The success of the soap opera was attributed to the fact that they presented simple, everyday problems anybody could identify with. Like getting amnesia, being paralyzed from the waist down, fighting off a half-dozen wealthy suitors, and being tried for murder.

Writer Irna Phillips had three stories going at once - "Guiding Light," "Women in White," and "Road of Life" - and had to write more than 5,000 words per day to keep their hungry yaws fed.

"Guiding Light" was the story of a kindly cleric, Reverend Rutledge, who showed people how to live and by his deep understanding, extricated his townfolk from the most convoluted moral and ethical positions you ever heard of.

"Women in White" was the never-ending story of a young surgeon who, while healing the sick, himself was suffering excruciating torments from his hopeless love affair with a beautiful nurse (her decibels

## I WAS A CHILD RADIO STAR

were beautiful, in any case). It was never quite satisfactorily explained why he did not just forthwith up and marry her.

I often used to see Miss Phillips carousing the studios. She was slight and sharp-featured, but at age seven she seemed to me beautiful, awesome and goddess-like. She was one of the first artistic women in any medium to affect the smoking of small cigars, and they did wonders for her general air and attractiveness. She was receiving in the forties something like three thousand dollars a week (remember that \$75 a week was a pleasant wage then) for guiding the lives of some sixty characters in her three serials. If this seems outlandish for the times, we might consider that her rate of production in book form would have produced 22 novels a year!

Occasionally I would saunter into her office, sit down and watch her at work. I'm not sure what I expected to come from it, but I was game for anything. She was at work each morning at eight in her three-room suite at WGN. Darting back and forth across the workroom, she would dictate hurriedly the daily installments of all three shows to her secretary, Gertrude Prys. Miss Prys was a beautiful young thing, and I had a mysterious yen for her. She could identify each character by the change of inflection, and most of the time knew what sound effects to insert without being told ("door slamming and rattling on rusty hinges"). Once Miss Phillips paused, rattling through her cigar smoke like a machine gun, and peered at me. "Who are you, little boy?"



IRNA PHILLIPS

"Actor," I explained. "Temporarily unemployed."

"Oh." And then she went on.

The mechanics of the other serials were equally exciting. In "Against the Storm," mists of distrust were constantly arising between lovers and beloved. These mists affected the lives of us serial actors as direly as smog at Donora, and set scenes as black tragic as any since the Lisbon earthquake. But we could also be filled with tears of joy and happiness - so long as there were tears.

Actors heard on the daytime serials were usually unknown in the theater or on the screen. It was a tremendous field for the dramatically ambitious who lacked the beauty necessary for screen or stage success. Few of us received more than several hundred dollars per week, and most received much less, but our satisfaction was paramount. We kids loafed around the studios, cutting school whenever humanly



RICHARD WIDMARK with Florence Williams

possible, gaffing with the engineers, and making general nuisances of ourselves. Acting was the least of our worries. All that involved was sitting down at a round table, grabbing up a script and keeping one eye on the drunks in the control booth. And for that you were paid in American money, remarkable as it may seem.

I was glad to be just a kid on "Helen Trent," as most of her lovers met violent deaths. But I wept on all of them. Either my pa was in the hospital with a broken collarbone suffered as he was saving my younger sister from an onrushing train, or Mom was running off with the butcher, or sister Sally had set fire to cousin Bullrush's hair again. To keep so many complicated and tragedy-laden lives running simultaneously without mistakenly putting the wrong character in the wrong show was slightly miraculous. I remember once a fill-in writer chose to amputate the leg of one popular character while its producer-creator was on vacation. The sound mogul returned furious, and we had a hell of a time creating the sound of a man limp-

ing around the studio.

The soap operas gave away premiums, too. Once a new actress had been over-rehearsed and she said over the air: "Helen, darling, what a delightful necklace! It gives you an aura of freshness and youth, hope and beauty - Do I actually have to say this garbage?"

Occasionally, I was flown to San Francisco to work on "One Man's Family" at Carlton Morse's baronial estate, Seven Stones, which dripped with moss and featured a real moat. Pretty Teddy Barbour was continually falling in and out of love with her foster father and her foster uncle, while Joan Roberts Lacey fell in love with her uncle Paul. If such problems had arisen in Rushville Center, no doubt Ma Perkins would have been catapulted into a state of catatonic shock. Today we're somewhat more sophisticated.

A great many film stars came out of radio. It's probably a good thing for Richard Crenna that people have forgotten that he played Oogie Pringle in "A Date With Judy." Howard Duff, Van Heflin, Jose Ferrer, Frank Lovejoy and Richard Widmark were all radio regulars. Dick liked to paraphrase Will Rogers: "I never met a producer I couldn't stand." And would you believe that Art Carney used to play Franklin Delano Roosevelt on "The March of Time?" Who remembers today that Orson Welles once played The Shadow to Agnes Moorehead's Margo Lane?

Film producer George Seaton (*The Bridges of Toko-Ri*) was the first Lone Ranger, and John Hodiak and Danny Thomas (then Amos Jacobs) got their starts on the "Lone Ranger." Danny usually played a bad guy, and John the kindly young rancher who got bumped off. Danny used to say that he was glad that television was just a laboratory experiment, as otherwise he would have to go to work for a living.

Don Ameche (whoever he was) got his

## I WAS A CHILD RADIO STAR

start on "Jack Armstrong" and in "First Nighter," which ostensibly originated from "The Little Theater off Times Square," but which never got any closer to Broadway than Lake Michigan. Don was also a fixture on the National Farm and Home Hour ("It's a beautiful day in Chicago!"). I'm still waiting for that Don Ameche revival at the Clark Theater.

Dick York of the TV series "Bewitched" was the last Billy Fairfield (an earlier teenage Billy had gone on social security) on "Jack Armstrong." Chuck Flynn was the hard-drinking, fast-punching Jack, Billy Fairfield his sidekick. "Until I got tired of him kicking my side," said Dick.

The All-American Boy ("Have you tried Whcatics? They're whole wheat with all of the bran!") gave away whistling rings, hike-o-meters and Norden bombsights without consulting the War Dept. He upheld every law in the book - except the one decreeing that kids under sixteen must stay in school. The creator admitted that he had gotten the name from looking at a box of Arm and Hammer Soda.

The producer of "Jack Armstrong," like all producers, usually figures that one radio writer was pretty much the same as another. One time he hired Bob Bloch, the author of *Psycho*, who had been working on "Stay Tuned for Terror." For several weeks we were reading scripts that featured skull bludgeoning, strangulations, and assorted gruesomeness.

Usually two or three microphones were used in the shows, and we would sit casually about, reading our lines from a script mimed on rustle-proof paper with the utmost lack of emotion. Often I had to watch an actress bewailing the loss of a loved one over a live mike while she chewed vigorously on the world's largest lump of chewin' gum. Other performers could be



DICK YORK

more dainty, and would shove their gum to the back of the mouth; this was the correct procedure. But we all sat around comfortable in studio chairs, even while millions of listeners might hear us undergo the most excruciatingly painful operations ("There, I think I've found the cataract, doctor." "Good. Hand me that electric drill.")

We usually were handed the next day's script at the conclusion of each broadcast, read it through once with the director-producer for timing and interpretation, and then retired to either get drunk or pull little blond girls' pigtails. ■

# BUFFALO BILL

By RUSS RENNAKER

I remember seeing the real live Buffalo Bill and his Wild West Show when I was about six years old.

It was advertised as Buffalo Bill's "101 Ranch Wild West Show." It was held on the grounds where the circus usually did their thing and was under a huge tent similar to that used by the circus. I always wondered what the "101 Ranch" meant and in later years I learned that was the name of his real ranch in California.

My father took me to the show sometime in the summer of 1912. I read recently in a Bill Cody biography that he toured the Midwest in 1912 with his Wild West Show. I was six years old that year.

The sight that sticks in my mind was Buffalo Bill, in a white buckskin suit with tassels around the waste and shoulders, standing there in the center of a darkened arena with a bright spotlight shining directly on him.

He took off his white wide-rimmed cowboy hat and raised it high in the air with a great flourish. "Ladicees and gentlemen," he intoned in a ponderous voice. "May I present my 101 Ranch Wild West Show!" A band broke into raucous music and cowboys and cowgirls on dashing horses roared into the tent from an end entrance as the full arena lights came on.

The riders rode around the arena several times shooting their pistols into the air, shouting blood-curdling whoops. Then they disappeared into the arena and circled the tent. On the second round a dozen or so Indians rode in and caught up with the stagecoach. Shots came fast and furious and for a minute it looked like the Indians had the best of it. Then came a blare of a bugle and a troop of U.S. Cavalry showed

up in the nick of time, leaving "dead" Indians in the wake of the stagecoach. The Troop dashed around the arena with a huge American flag flying from the lead horseman.

Then there were several stunts performed by the cowboys. One I remember was snatching up a hat on the ground from a dashing horse. Another was a cowboy riding two horses at the same time with one foot on each horse. That was exciting! One rider stood on his head on the back of a galloping horse.

But the final act was again introduced by Buffalo Bill himself. "And now may I present the greatest sharpshooter of all time." And he waved his hat again. "Miss Annie Oakley!"

And there she stood in the center ring of the huge arena with her trusty rifle and a spotlight shining brightly on her. Someone threw glass balls into the air and Annie proceeded to shoot each in turn with never a miss. Sometime three or four balls would be in the air at one time. Annie would hit them all before they reached the ground. For the final sequence a cowboy on horseback came dashing around the track and Annie shot the ten-gallon hat right off his head as her and his horse dashed past. This brought a great gasp from the spectators. Annie bowed gracefully, mounted a spotted pony and dashed out of the tent.

Buffalo Bill, still standing there in the center of the arena, raised his hat once again. "Thank you all for coming," he shouted and bent over almost to the ground swinging his hat in a generous bow. That was the end. The band played "For He's a Jolly Good fellow" as the crowd filed out of their seats. ■

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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

APRIL 1996

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

## SATURDAY, APRIL 6th EASTER GREETINGS

**PHIL HARRIS-ALICE FAYE SHOW** (4-2-50) Phil tells his daughters the story of the Easter Bunny. Cast includes Elliott Lewis, Walter Tetley, Jeanine Roos, Anne Whitfield, Robert North, Arthur Q. Brian, Mel Blanc. Rexall, NBC. (28:29)

**OUR MISS BROOKS** (1952) Eve Arden stars as Connie Brooks, English teacher at Madison High School who has decided to work through the Easter Week vacation to earn money to buy a new dress for the holiday. Gale Gordon appears as Mr. Conklin; Jeff Chandler as Mr. Boynton; Richard Crenna as Walter Denton. Colgate-Palmolive, CBS. (30:00)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (4-16-54) Jim and Marian Jordan star with Bill Thompson and Arthur Q. Brian. Fibber plans to color twelve dozen Easter eggs while Molly goes to

see a Wistful Vista production of "South Pacific." Sustaining, NBC. (14:35)

**LIFE WITH LUIGI** (4-8-52) J. Carroll Nash stars as Luigi Basco who has invited his night school class to Easter dinner. Cast features Alan Reed, Hans Conried, Jody Gilbert, Mary Shipp, Wrigley's Gum, CBS. (30:00)

**PRIVATE LIVES OF ETHEL AND ALBERT** (1940s) Peg Lynch and Alan Bunce star. Grandma sends daughter Susie a bunny for Easter. Sustaining, ABC. (30:40)

**GREAT GILDERSLEEVE** (4-9-52) Willard Waterman stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve. Leroy (Walter Tetley), Marjorie (Mary Lee Robb) and Birdie (Lillian Randolph) persuade Gildy to get up at 4 a.m. to attend the Easter Sunrise Service. Birdie sings "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?" Kraft Foods, NBC. (29:35)

## SATURDAY, APRIL 13th REMEMBERING GENE KELLY

**GENE KELLY**, one of America's best-loved performers died February 2, 1996 at the age of 83.

Although he was best known for his work on the screen, singing and dancing his way into our hearts in all those wonderful movie musicals, he did a fair amount of work on radio as an actor, singer and comedian. Today we focus our spotlight on Gene Kelly's radio career:

**SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS** (3-22-43) "For Me and My Gal" starring Judy Garland, Gene Kelly and Dick Powell in a radio version of the 1942 screen musical, the story of a vaudeville couple determined to play the fabled Palace Theatre on Broadway. The movie was Gene Kelly's film debut and in this broadcast he and Judy recreate their original screen roles. Lady Esther Products, CBS. (28:45)

**STUDIO ONE** (12-8-47) "To Mary With Love" starring Gene Kelly with Mercedes McCambridge and Everett Sloane in "the story

of ten years and three people — a warm and realistic study of a marriage and a delirious decade— as seen from the point of view of the other man." Host and director is Fletcher Markle. Sustaining, CBS. (31:24; 30:00)

**SONGS BY SINATRA** (10-17-45) In New York City, Frankie is joined by Gene Kelly, his co-star in their current film "Anchors Aweigh" as they have fun singing and even dancing in some scenes from the picture. Music by the Pied Pipers, Axel Stordahl and the orchestra. Old Gold Cigarettes, CBS. (28:05)

**RAILROAD HOUR** (1-10-49) "The Red Mill" starring Gordon MacRae, Gene Kelly, and Lucille Norman with Alan Reed in this Armed Forces Radio Service rebroadcast under the program title "Showtime." It's Victor Herbert's musical comedy about two Americans traveling to Europe for romance. AFRS (29:43)

**SUSPENSE** (9-28-44) "The Man Who Couldn't Lose" starring Gene Kelly in "a tale of dawn 'til midnight in a man's life... a tale of murder and money ...and luck!" Roma Wines, CBS. (28:53)



GENE KELLY

## SATURDAY, APRIL 20th THIS DAY — THAT YEAR

**JACK ARMSTRONG** (4-20-48, exactly 48 years ago today) "House of Darkness" is the complete story told in this half-hour adventure starring Charles Flynn as Jack Armstrong who now works with Vic Hardy at the S.B.I., the Scientific Bureau of Investigation. Dick York is Billy Fairfield. Wheaties, ABC. (29:11)

**YOUR HIT PARADE** (4-20-57, exactly 39 years ago today) It's the top seven songs of the week as performed by Dorothy Collins, Snooky Lanson, Giselle MacKenzie, Russell Arms, the Hit Paraders and Dancers, and Raymond Scott and his orchestra. This is the audio track from the television show. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, Quick Home Permanent, Bromo Seltzer, NBC-TV. (27:35)

**GEORGE SOKOLSKY** (4-20-52, exactly 44 years ago today) Commentary by the nationally syndicated columnist, author and lecturer. "President Harry Truman announced on March 29th that he will not be a candidate for presi-

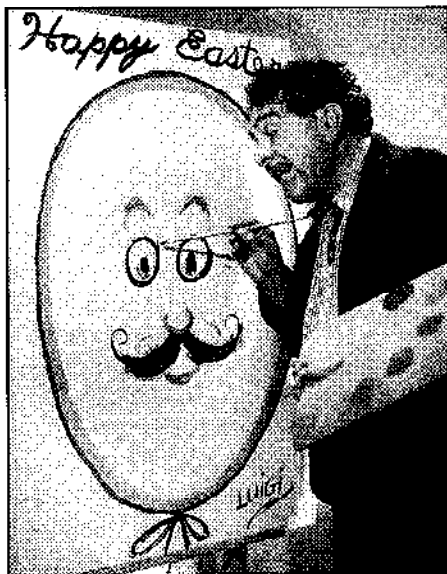
dent. ...That means for nearly ten months, he will be a 'lame duck' president." Sustaining, NBC. (14:24)

**SUSPENSE** (4-20-50, exactly 46 years ago today) "Pearls Are a Nuisance" starring Ray Milland with Hal March in a Raymond Chandler story, a "muscular drama" about missing pearls, a possible blackmail plot, and a jealous boyfriend. AutoLite, CBS. (29:06)

**CBS RADIO WORKSHOP** (4-20-56, exactly 40 years ago today) "A Living Portrait of a Man in Action," William Zeckendorf, a successful real estate developer in New York. Martin Welden reports in this episode of the series "...dedicated to man's imagination, the theatre of the mind." Sustaining, CBS. (28:00)

**NEWS** (4-20-49, exactly 47 years ago today) John Holtman reports the news of the day. "China's peace... exploded in a new communist offensive along four hundred miles of the Yangtze River today. Two British warships became involved in some of the first shooting." Norm Barry announces. Shell Oil Co., WMAQ, Chicago. (14:35)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (4-20-36, exactly 60 years ago today) When the streetcar motorman leaves his post after winning a sweepstakes prize, Fibber takes over! Jim and Marian Jordan star with Hugh Studebaker, Bill Thompson, Bernardine Flynn, Cliff Arquette, singer Audrey Call, Rico Marcelli and the orchestra, announcer Harlow Wilcox. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (25:00)



J. CARROLL NASH as Luigi Basco

FOR AN  
AUDIO  
TRANSCRIPT  
OF ANY COMPLETE 4-HOUR  
**THOSE WERE THE DAYS**  
BROADCAST  
Reproduced on two, C-120  
audio cassette tapes  
Send \$25 plus \$5.69 S&H  
**TOTAL \$30.69**  
TWTD TRANSCRIPTS  
Box 421  
Morton Grove, IL 60053  
For further information  
Call (847) 965-7763

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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

APRIL and MAY 1996

## SATURDAY, APRIL 27th 26th ANNIVERSARY SHOW "Thanks For Listening!"

As we observe our twenty-sixth broadcast anniversary today, we'll express appreciation to our listeners ...and to some special friends from radio and television who helped us call attention to our program during the first few years we were on the air.

**CROMIE CIRCLE** (7-17-70) Bob Cromie, writer, reviewer and host of "Book Beat" on Public Television, was moderator of this late night TV talk show. This audio excerpt features a discussion of old time radio with some people who appeared on the air in the good old days— Paul Barnes ("Captain Midnight"), Sarajane Wells and John Gannon ("Billy" and "Betty" on Jack Armstrong), Norman Gottschalk (many roles) and an old time radio fan who just started a new radio program: Chuck Schaden. WGN-TV, Chicago. (40:21)

**KENNEDY & CO.** (7-31-70) Personalities Bob Kennedy and

Jenny Crimm in an audio excerpt from their early-morning TV talk show discuss old time radio with guests Shirley Bell Cole ("Little Orphan Annie"), Harry Elders ("First Nighter" and "Curtain Time"), Paul Barnes ("Captain Midnight"), and Chuck Schaden ("Those Were the Days"). WLS-TV, Chicago. (19:00)

**RAY RAYNER SHOW** (5-19-71) Popular morning TV host Ray Rayner in an audio excerpt of his show with guest Chuck Schaden who has brought along some secret decoders and other radio premiums for Ray's audience to see. Ray sings the "Little Orphan Annie Song." WGN-TV, Chicago. (23:10)

**JACK EIGAN SHOW** (9-7-71) Late night radio's premiere interview personality Jack Eigan, broadcasting from studios in the Merchandise Mart, with guests actress Carmelita Pope, dress manufacturer Norman Kaplan, and radio host Chuck Schaden. In these excerpts from Eigan's 90-minute program, the panel talks about the good old days of old time radio and Jack tells

how comedian Fred Allen helped his career. WMAQ, Chicago. (14:50; 17:00; 10:15)

**CONTACT** (8-24-72) Dave Baum with his nightly radio show devotes some time to the subject of old time radio with his guest Chuck Schaden. In this excerpt, callers join in the discussion. WIND, Chicago. (15:15)

—PLUS—

**PLEASE STAND BY — A History of Radio** (1986) This is the beginning of an audio-

course devoted to a study of radio's development and programming history. Les Tremayne and Jack Brown are hosts for the 30-part course which will be presented throughout the next twelve months on *Those Were The Days* (see article on page 1 of this issue of *Nostalgia Digest*). Lesson 1: **The Little Black Box**, an overview of radio as a broadcast medium with emphasis on its early years; a taste of things to come in future lessons, serving up a variety of those items from radio's news, sports, and entertainment bill of fare which account for the passion with which the new medium was received. (30:00)



## SATURDAY, MAY 4th

**IT PAYS TO BE IGNORANT** (9-7-45) Tom Howard moderates this zany quiz show with panelists Harry McNaughton, Lulu McConnell and George Shelton. Typical question: "What is carried in a mail pouch?" AFRS rebroadcast. (29:45)

**BLUE RIBBON TOWN** (1-8-44) Groucho Marx stars with guest Charles Laughton. After an auto accident, Groucho decides he needs help from someone who has a lot of influence with the City of Beverly Hills. He recruits actor Laughton. Cast features Leo Gorcey. Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer, CBS. (29:07)

**COLUMBIA PRESENTS CORWIN** (3-21-44) "The Undecided Molecule," Norman Corwin's trial in verse starring Vincent Price, Groucho Marx, Robert Benchley, Norman Lloyd, Keenan Wynn, and Sylvia Sidney. Groucho is the Judge, Price is the prosecutor. Sustaining, CBS. (31:04)

**FLYWHEEL, SHYSTER AND FLYWHEEL** (1994) Program 17 in the 18-part series of reenactments of the 1932 Marx Brothers radio show. Michael Roberts stars as Groucho Marx as Waldorf T. Flywheel, with Frank Lazarus as Chico Marx as Emmanuel Ravelli, with Lorelei King as Miss Dimple. BBC. (30:00)

**NICK CARTER, MASTER DETECTIVE** (8-1-48) "Case of the Midway Murders" starring Lon Clark as Nick, with Charlotte Manson as Patsy Bowen, his "girl Friday." A man is found dead on a roller coaster. Old Dutch Cleanser, MBS. (26:34)

**PLEASE STAND BY — A History of Radio** (1986) Lesson 2: **In The Beginning**, dealing with many of the steps that became the foundation for the development of radio. (30:00)

## SATURDAY, MAY 11th RADIO FOR MOTHER'S DAY

**MY FAVORITE HUSBAND** (1950) Lucille Ball and Richard Denning star as Liz and George Cooper, "two people who live together and like it!" Both mothers are coming to visit the Coopers, but neither George nor Liz are excited about it. AFRS rebroadcast. 24:25)

**LUX RADIO THEATRE** (1-4-55) "Mother Wore Tights" starring Dan Dailey and Mitzi Gaynor in a radio version of the 1947 film success, the story of a vaudeville family. Lux Soap, CBS. (22:04; 10:05; 15:05) **NOTE: Be sure to read the article about the Lux Radio Theatre beginning on page 31 of this issue.**

**SUSPENSE** (1-4-59) "Don't Call Me Mother" starring Agnes Moorehead with Cathy Lewis and James McCallion. A young man's mother is not very pleased when he brings a young lady home for dinner. Multiple Sponsors, CBS. (28:50)

**HALLMARK HALL OF FAME** (5-10-53) "George Washington's Mother." Host Lionel Barrymore presents the true story of Mary Washington, the mother of the man who became the first president of the United States. Hallmark Cards, AFRS. (22:10)

**WHISPERING STREETS** (1958) "The Distraught Mother." Bette Davis is hostess and narrator for this daytime radio series. In this complete story, a widow of 18 months still clings to the memory of her husband in spite of the urging of her friend and her 15-year old son. AFRS. (24:16)

**SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS** (11-23-42) "Bachelor Mother" starring Ann Sothern, Fred MacMurray and Charles Coburn in a radio version of the 1939 RKO film farce. A sales girl unwittingly becomes guardian for an abandoned baby, causing a scandal in the department store where she works. Lady Esther Products, CBS. (28:46)

## SATURDAY, MAY 18th

**BULLDOG DRUMMOND** (1940s) "Death Uses Disappearing Ink" starring Ned Wever as Captain Hugh Drummond with Luis Van Rooten as his sidekick Denny. A woman on the train tells Drummond she fears her life is in danger. MBS. (26:30)

**TRIBUTE TO IRVING BERLIN** (8-3-38) An all-star salute to Irving Berlin on the occasion of the release of the film "Alexander's Ragtime Band." In a broadcast from New York, Chicago and Hollywood, we hear Walter Winchell, Ted Husing, Ethel Merman, Al Jolson, Eddie Cantor, Sophie Tucker, Lew Lehr, Ben Bernie, Rudy Vallee, Tomy Dorsey and the orchestra, Guy Lombardo and the Royal Canadians, Paul Whiteman, Connee Boswell, and, of course Irving Berlin. Louella Parsons and Darryl F. Zanuck introduce Tyrone Power and Alice Faye in scenes from the movie. This program, originally scheduled to be one hour, runs 15 minutes overtime! CBS. (20:55; 23:35; 31:15)

**NOTE: Tune in next week for the Lux Radio Theatre version of "Alexander's Ragtime Band." See May 25th listing.**

**LIGHTS OUT** (8-3-43) "Murder Castle" starring Joe Kearns with Mercedes McCambridge. A businessman lures women to his castle on

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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

MAY 1996

the pretense of employment, but they are never seen again! Arch Oboler hosts. Ironized Yeast, CBS. (29:20) NOTE: *Be sure to read the article about Arch Oboler beginning on page 2 of this issue.*

**DUNNINGER** (1944) The Master Mentalist amazes audiences with his mind-reading abilities. Bret Morrison narrates an incident in the life of Abraham Lincoln. AFRS rebroadcast. (23:50)

**PLEASE STAND BY — A History of Radio** (1986) Lesson 3: **The Sounds of Time**, continuing the discussion of the works of inventors and scientists in the 19th and 20th centuries: Michael Faraday and Sir William Crookes in England, Thomas Edison in the United States, and Guglielmo Marconi in Italy. (30:00)

## SATURDAY, MAY 25th

**STORY OF DR. KILDARE** (2-8-50) Lew Ayers stars as Dr. James Kildare, with Lionel Barrymore as Dr. Leonard Gillespie. An automobile accident victim has retreated into a self protective shell after losing her leg. Syndicated. (27:49)

**BOB HOPE SHOW** (1949) Guest Jimmy Durante joins Bob and the regulars, Doris Day, Irene Ryan, Bill Farrell, Les Brown and his Band of Renown, announcer Hy Averback. Swan

Soap, NBC. (28:38) NOTE: *Bob Hope's 93rd birthday is May 29th!*  
**ADVENTURES OF PHILLIP MARLOWE** (10-1-49) starring Gerald Mohr as the tough private detective created by Raymond Chandler. A piece of diamond jewelry leaves a trail of death for those who try to sell or pawn it. Sustaining, CBS. (29:49)

**LUX RADIO THEATRE** (6-3-40) "Alexander's Ragtime Band" starring Alice Faye, Ray Milland and Robert Preston in a radio version of the 1938 film, a show biz story with a cavalcade of Irving Berlin songs. Cecil B. DeMille hosts. Lux Soap, CBS. (22:44; 21:08; 17:00) NOTE: *Be sure to read the article about the Lux Radio Theatre beginning on page 31 of this issue.*

**PLEASE STAND BY — A History of Radio** (1986) Lesson 4: **A Voice in the Wilderness**, concluding the discussion of radio's inventors; a communications medium begins to emerge. (30:00)

**COMING IN JUNE**  
*Radio in 1936 - Sixty Years Ago*  
**COMING IN JULY**  
*One Man's Family*

## ...and for more good listening...

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

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

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

**WHEN RADIO WAS**-- Carl Amari hosts a two-hour Sunday night edition of the series, fea-

turing old time radio broadcasts and interviews. *WMAQ, 670 AM, Sunday, 10pm-midnight.*

### ...old time radio in cyberspace...

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

## "When Radio Was" -- WMAQ-AM 670

Monday thru Friday Midnight to 1 am Host Stan Freberg

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<i>April, 1996 Schedule</i>				
1 Green Hornet My Friend Irma Pt 1	2 My Friend Irma Pt 2 Dragnet	3 Suspense Burns & Allen Pt 1	4 Burns & Allen Pt 2 Phillip Marlowe	5 Lone Ranger Strange Dr. Weird
8 Gangbusters Fibber McGee Pt 1	9 Fibber McGee Pt 2 The Shadow	10 Six Shooter Stan Freberg #9 Pt 1	11 Stan Freberg #9 Pt 2 Sergeant Preston	12 Box Thirteen Vic and Sade
15 The Saint Abbott & Costello Pt 1	16 Abbott & Costello Pt 2 Frontier Gentleman	17 Suspense Duffy's Tavern Pt 1	18 Duffy's Tavern Pt 2 Family Theatre	19 Lone Ranger Gunsmoke
22 X Minus One Charlie McCarthy Pt 1	23 Charlie McCarthy Pt 2 Nightbeat	24 Hopalong Cassidy Great Gildersleeve Pt 1	25 Great Gildersleeve Pt 2 Directors' Playhouse	26 Jack Benny Lum and Abner
29 Suspense Martin & Lewis Pt 1	30 Martin & Lewis Pt 2 Hermit's Cave	<b>SPECIAL PROGRAM NOTE:</b> Due to WMAQ's Bulls' basketball coverage, "When Radio Was" has moved temporarily to the Midnight to 1 a.m. time period.		
<i>May, 1996 Schedule</i>				
		1 Green Hornet Mel Blanc Show Pt 1	2 Mel Blanc Show Pt 2 Dragnet	3 Suspense Unexpected
6 The Shadow Burns & Allen Pt 1	7 Burns & Allen Pt 2 Gangbusters	8 Lone Ranger Fibber McGee Pt 1	9 Fibber McGee Pt 2 Boston Blackie	10 Six Shooter Vic and Sade
13 Box Thirteen Stan Freberg #10 Pt 1	14 Stan Freberg #10 Pt 2 Suspense	15 The Saint Great Gildersleeve Pt 1	16 Great Gildersleeve Pt 2 Frontier Gentleman	17 The Shadow Lum and Abner
20 Abbott & Costello Johnny Dollar Pt 1/5	21 Family Theatre Johnny Dollar Pt 2/5	22 Charlie McCarthy Pt 1 Johnny Dollar Pt 3/5	23 Gunsmoke Johnny Dollar Pt 4/5	24 Jack Benny Johnny Dollar Pt 5/5
27 Directors' Playhouse Duffy's Tavern Pt 1	28 Duffy's Tavern Pt 2 Suspense	29 Lights Out Life of Riley Pt 1	30 Life of Riley Pt 2 Hermit's Cave	31 The Shadow Unsolved Mysteries

# Those Lovable Rascals

BY GINO LUCCHETTI

We have a tendency to place our movie idols and television icons on pedestals, overlooking any personality flaws which might exist in them.

We shower these fortunate people with fame, adulation and wealth. But who, or what, do we find when we tip those lofty pedestals back just a wee bit to see what slithers out from under?

Why, it's those Lovable Rascals wriggling into the sunlight. Those often unheralded "second bananas," "sidekicks," or "characters" in their own right, who have many personality traits we'd find absolutely unforgivable in our idols, but which we happily overlook and forgive in them because they're so — well, so lovable.

Lovable Rascals exist in movies, television, comics and literature.

They are characters who get away with all sorts of knavery, deviousness, and chicanery, yet we still love them. They may be the "comic relief," or the "buddy," the "goat," the foil the star plays off: the other end of the personality stick.

They can lie, cheat, insult, kick dogs, or abhor babies, but they are so "cute" we can't hate 'em. They have a certain quality that isolates their persona from their deeds, so we can laugh about, or at, their vile acts and irascible personalities without guilt. It's as if we know it's the devil makes them that way; it's not their fault.

*Gino Lucchetti of Oak Park, Illinois is an observer of the past and present; his thoughts can be found on the Op-Ed pages of Chicago newspapers and, occasionally, in the Nostalgia Digest.*

They're too cute, too lovable, too much fun.

Actors who portray such characters we tend to believe are "type cast," meaning that although we realize they're acting, we kind of suspect they really are as eccentric as the characters they portray. Actors who, if we were to meet them personally, wouldn't surprise us if they turned out to be completely different from what they seem to be when they're acting — but we just couldn't be sure.

It doesn't take too long to scan one's memory bank to recall some of these ne-



W. C. FIELDS

farious but forgivable types, and the preeminent example which comes to mind almost instantly is "Mr. Curmudgeon" himself: W. C. Fields.

Fields stands out among rascallions, misanthropes, connivers and mountebanks like a Mt. Everest among ant hills. There wasn't anything too low for him to stoop to: cheating at cards, snatching candy from a baby, licentiously ogling a well-turned ankle, or nipping a bit of sneaky Pete. Why, he even made a two-reeler film about how to cheat at golf!

He hated kids. He'd kick dogs. He avoided and disdained water and complained once he was forced to live a whole week with food and that awful liquid to sustain him, a frightening thought. He shuddered at the recall. The mere reminiscence turned his face into a grimace of distaste. But how do we remember him? He's often remembered for a famous photo of him guardedly, but suspiciously and warily, peeking out over a closely held, tightly clutched poker hand.

W. C. Fields bathed with his trademark stovepipe hat and gloves on. He could tumble down a flight of stairs, head over heels, holding a glass of booze, unmindful of bodily harm, without spilling a drop of that precious liquid. If caught in a lie or red-handed at some underhanded deed, the phony, forced smile, which reduced his eyes to slits and crinkled his generously proportioned, rosy nose which, along with his "who, me?" mien was disarming.

If it came to finding the reason for something going awry, he'd not be above blaming it on a hapless kid. W. C. Fields never apologized, never explained. Even his



THE MARX BROTHERS

tombstone wouldn't belie his character. It is purported to read, "All things considered, I'd rather be in Philadelphia."

While Fields epitomized the beloved curmudgeon genre on the old silver screen, there were others, but Walter Matthau comes closest to inheriting the mantle on the modern screen or TV, and in color to boot.

From his Mr. Wilson character in the "Dennis the Menace" movie to Oscar Madison, the terminally sloppy and unkempt half of the "Odd Couple," to the sleazy shyster in "The Fortune Cookie," or his many other dark, but always comical roles, he proved his curmudgeon-ness. He'd glower at Felix, the epitome-of-neatness half of the odd couple, with blood in his eye and mayhem in his heart, but you knew he'd never succumb to his murderous impulse. Lovable Rascals are never intransigent. You forgave him because you've felt the same way hundreds of times

## THOSE LOVABLE RASCALS

yourself, and his apoplectic display of barely controllable anger was funny.

Raffish audacity in one man was personified by Groucho Marx, the ringmaster of the memorable Marx Brothers trio of Lovable Rascals.

There has never been a sin invented or a Commandment handed down that Groucho, Chico or Harpo didn't break with impunity or hesitate to commit with even so much as a hint of guilt. But whatever the transgression, we laughed it off and loved 'em for it.

Even if they were only acting, would anyone really ever want to be trapped in a room with them, as for instance in that incredibly chaotic scene in the cramped stateroom of an ocean liner which included, besides that zany trio, a madcap gang of stewards, ship's officers, doctor and crew, and their favorite female foil, prim and archly proper, grand dowager Margaret Dumont.

Or would you dare shake hands with that benign nut Harpo, who could literally tie you up, helpless and frustrated in a knot with his handshake before he beguiled you with an unsuspected display of true musical talent for playing the harp.

Besides harp playing, he displayed an equal ability to convey his emotions and intentions with an old air horn possibly lifted from Jack Benny's Maxwell. It would materialize from under the baggy overcoat, worn day and night, winter or summer, awake or asleep. A few "honks" from it, produced by his squeezing the rubber bulb by hand or tucked under his arm, did his "talking" for him. That, plus his mimicry conveyed more than spoken words.

Harpo never broke his mute screen or stage persona, even though biographers aver that in "real life" he may have been



PHIL SILVERS

the most intelligent, truly cultured and eloquent of the trio.

How long would it take to render a person frustrated trying to make sense of someone's contorted logic, mad puns, and malapropisms that involved a scam, all in broken English, which was Chico's claim to fame, along with his unorthodox piano keyboard technique.

Like Harpo, he too had exceptional musical talent, but for the piano. He must have driven piano teachers — who were trying their best to inculcate proper fingering and piano playing technique in their students — absolutely crazy as his fingers glided blithely and playfully up and down the keyboard, emphasizing notes by shooting at the ivories with his index finger, as if his hand were a pistol.

One time he incorporated an orange in his playing, rolling it up and down the keyboard, making perfectly delightful music! Audacious, zany, madcap, rollicking, flippanant and outrageous enough to coax a laugh from a mummy, the Marx Brothers certainly qualified as Grade A Lovable Rascals.

On television, the nonpareil of Lovable Rascals was, unquestionably, Phil Silvers,

aka Sgt. Ernest Bilko on many an MP sergeant's desk blotter. Along with his sometimes unwittingly, yet often quite willing and conniving squad of conspiratorial GIs, he and they could have been the army training films' epitome of what GIs shouldn't be and, indeed, must avoid being.

No matter what infringement of army regulations it meant; no matter how detrimental to honorable military conduct it might be; no matter what extremes it took; or no matter what it cost the US Army, Bilko stopped at nothing to achieve an immediate, personally gratifying goal. If it meant buttering up in the most fulsome way his patient, forbearing but befuddled Colonel Ford, or shamelessly, patently, and outrageously flattering the Colonel's wife, to wheedle his way, he did it without qualm.

His faithful girl friend suffered every indignity possible, but because he was such a lovable rascal, she forgave him his trespasses each time, just as we all did. Without shame he Bilko-ed ...ooops, bilked... his own faithful squad, or any handy sucker who happened to fall in his clutches, with his grubby schemes. But then why wouldn't anyone forgive the "Sarge" with such an engaging smile, such a line of US Grade A baloney, with those sincere, horn-rimmed pleading eyes, ever ready to shed a crocodile tear.

We give a 21 gun salute to Sgt. Bilko. We loved and laughed a lot at that Lovable Rascal.

Lest the women feel left out, we'll elevate one to the rank of Lovable Rascal-ette: Mae West who, at the drop of a hankie could lead a helpless male down the primrose path. Even suave, urbane Cary Grant got one of those invitations to "come up and see me some time." And W. C. Fields himself was no match for her wiles the times they co-starred in flicks. Mae, in real



W. C. FIELDS and CHARLIE MCCARTHY

life, on stage or in films, for anyone's money, certainly qualifies as a Lovable Rascal.

What other Lovable Rascals can we recall, for instance, on radio? How about Red Skelton's "mean widdle kid" who bedeviled his poor mother or grandmother? Or Fanny Brice as Baby Snooks who drove her hapless daddy berserk with her endless questions, paradoxical logic and copious phony tears shed on cue. And Archie of "Duffy's Tavern" who, "wasn't... ahem... not exactly no angel," as he himself might confess in flawless Brooklynese.

And if Charlie McCarthy, the wisest ventriloquist's "dummy" who ever owned his own ventriloquist, wasn't a Lovable Rascal there never was one.

This wide-eyed, brash young squirt, rakish in tux and top hat and sporting a monocle, was such a strong personality, it was hard to think of him except as flesh and blood. Charlie could dream up scandalous schemes. He'd use any ploy to lure the favors of any and every girl singer, dignified star or starlet guest on the show.

A regular Cottonwood Cad, an Oaken



## THOSE LOVABLE RASCALS

Oaf, a Teakwood Terror, he never let up. Even the redoubtable W. C. Fields had difficulty matching barbed witticisms with that imp. Flummoxing and shamelessly insulting Edgar Bergen was his other forte. He never let poor Bergen forget who was really the boss in that talky team. He was most definitely a loquacious Lovable Rascal.

But the pair of radio's Lovable Rascals who stand apart from the crowd would be Jack Benny's infamous, eternally-in-the-Twilight Zone guitar player, Frankie Remley and his leader in mischief as well as music, Jack's bandleader Phil Harris.

On Benny's program, Remley was only a name to be conjured with, but on the Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show he materialized as Phil's booze-em buddy and coconspirator in every sort of shady cabal.

Frankie, completely ingenuous and without a twinge of conscience, could blandly conceive shameful propositions. At the presumably sad thought of Phil's death, his only concern was how he could benefit from it, even asking Phil for permission to woo Alice when he died. The bond between that unsavory couple was 90 proof.

But still, these incorrigible wags would get their comeuppance from a pony league Lovable Rascal, Julius Abruzzio, played by Walter Tetley, the rotten little kid who could outwit and put them to shame with a few brash words and who wasn't above hatching an insidious scheme

of his own or embellishing one of theirs. But together their irrepressible outrageousness made us laugh along with that augmented pair of Lovable Rascals.

There are many other examples, even in the comic strips. Andy Capp wasn't handy-capped when it came to milking the British welfare system, and satirizing the foibles of that society. His penchant for a pint or two in a pub often led him in desperation to commit slightly illegal acts, but he was always good for a laugh.

And, one has to admire a character who can ask a passerby for a light by bringing his near-spent cigarette stub up to the donor's freshly lit whole ciggie, face to face, and walk away puffing the fresh new one while leaving the bewildered, good-hearted donor with the rancid butt to smoke. That's a true Lovable Rascal.

Finally, in the comic strips, there's Hagar the Horrible, the epitome of semi-civilized humanity. A looter, a ravager, a bully, but Helga, his faithful and forgiving wife and moral compass, loves him, just as do his young, naive, unspoiled son, Arn, and pubescent daughter, Honi, as well as those of us who faithfully follow the antics of that Lovable Rascal.

What enjoyment we'd miss without Lovable Rascals. Do we love them because they do the things we'd like to get away with without guilt, and only in fun? Possibly and probably.

So let's proffer a toast to Lovable Rascals and wish them long lives and many more daffy adventures. ■



PHIL HARRIS



ELLIOTT LEWIS



WALTER TETLEY

## LUX PRESENTS HOLLYWOOD

BY ED KNAPP

The grand call for entertainment had begun. It is Monday night and the radio loud-speaker reverberates with the announcer's passionate voice:

*Lux presents Hollywood!*

Music wells up as an introduction to an evening that promises to be sheer movieland glamour.

During the depression thirties and forties and even into the fifties, the airwaves flourished with the Lux Radio Theatre (October 14, 1934 thru June 30, 1955).

The faithful tuned in week after week; an estimated listening audience of some thirty-five to forty million, approximately one-third of the nation's radio listeners.

The sixty minute program favorite was always among the top ten most listened to radio shows in America. Much of the appeal of this network giant could be attributed to several valid reasons. This theatre of the air broadcast radio versions of famous film features. Automatically they had a primed audience among some of the eighty-five million people who were weekly box office patrons at movie houses across the nation. Those dedicated movie fans became enthralled with the prospects of being entertained within the privacy of their own living room, without spending a dime to enjoy these screen favorites.

The dedicated movie fans tuning in weekly associated closely with the program's opening format and musical signature, winningly played by a full-piece orchestra under the direction of Louis Silvers. Expressive, velvet-voice announcer

*Edwin S. Knapp of Three Rivers, Michigan is a retired professional photographer who spends his free time writing and collecting.*



CECIL B. DeMILLE

Melville Ruick introduced the director/host to a round of thunderous studio applause. "Ladies and Gentlemen, your producer, Cecil B. DeMille."

Mr. DeMille's undisputed reputation as a legendary director of screen epics with casts of thousands was well-known to the movie public, adding class to the Tinsel Town proceedings that were to follow.

DeMille, who was the program's most popular host (June 1, 1936 thru January 22, 1945) would extend with relish, "Greetings from Hollywood" — a showman delivery that held radio audiences in awe. The program was off to a glittery, first-nighter movie opening. The announcements that followed, of the about-to-begin radio-adapted movie presentation and its alluring screen stars, brought a burst of enthusiastic response from the studio gathering. There always seemed to be a perfect blend

## LUX PRESENTS HOLLYWOOD

of select Hollywood performers and screen stories. Next, the studio musicians struck up the opening mood and Mr. DeMille's narrative set the stage for the production.

Traditionally, at the beginning of each of the three acts presented, set between commercial passages, DeMille, in his distinguished style, would paint the scene about to continue.

Sometimes the featured radio-movie presentation boasted the same cast that appeared in the film; but more often, in a unique fashion, the Lux show used different stars in the lead roles. A perfect example of this was in the radio casting of Hedy Lamarr and Alan Ladd in the radio interpretation of "Casablanca" (January 24, 1944) which starred Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman in the film original.

Star-struck listeners welcomed the favorite movie idols into their homes for an hour of enchanted make-believe. The velvet and precise oratory of Ronald Colman spoke wistfully of the utopia Shangri La in the radio version of "Lost Horizon" (September 15, 1941). Male audiences were taken by the sultry sound of Marlene Dietrich's husky voice drifting across imagined desert sands of Morocco in the Lux/DeMille affiliation in 1936 for "The Legionnaire and the Lady" (June 1, 1936, DeMille's first broadcast for Lux). Those who had tuned in to Wallace Beery's "Aw shucks" and often bellowing characterization in "The Champ" (November 13, 1939) will never forget this tear-jerker, which had a popular repeat airing (June 29, 1942). The movie musical romantics were fulfilled when the beautiful voices of Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy were teamed for Lux Radio Theatre productions of "Naughty Marietta" (June 12, 1944) and "Maytime" (September 4, 1944).

Every Monday night for one hour, ev-

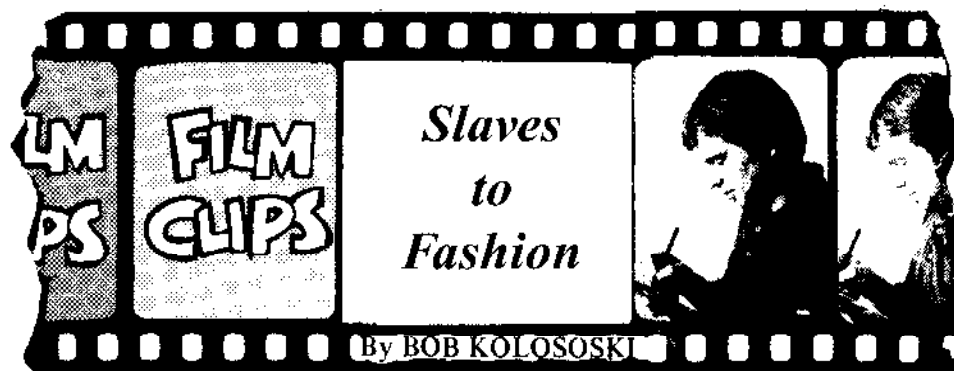
ery home in America's cities, suburbs, hamlets and out of the way places became *Hollywood* during those magical minutes — filled with stars, glamour, bright lights and the fascination of that mythical city of dreams come true.

The Lux programs, broadcast from the stage of the Music Box Theatre (6126 Hollywood Boulevard, now known as the Henry Fonda Theatre), created a mystic for unseen listeners that likened it to attending a star-studded movie premiere, spotlighted on opening night at Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood. Such was the influential magnitude created by this favorite theatre of the airwaves.

An extra bonus, realized by adoring movie fans, came at the end of the third and final act. Then, the showcased evening's stars stepped out of their character roles and were brought before the microphones again with Mr. DeMille for a final curtain call. Exchanging words with their host in a short, but candid chit-chat, they discussed future plans and film roles, vacations and family life. This was also the opportunity for the leading female star of the night to make an off-hand endorsement of the sponsor's product: "Used by nine out of ten screen stars for a beautiful complexion, I use it faithfully every day, Mr. DeMille."

Finally, Mr. DeMille announced next week's screen adaptation and stars and this news was greeted with a gasp from the awestruck studio audience (and probably from the folks at home, too). The program's closing theme music rose and the illustrious host said farewell, "This is Cecil B. DeMille saying goodnight to you from *Hollywood*," in a manner of expression that brought goosebumps to the greatest share of star-struck listeners.

The Lux Radio Theatre was an experience of a lifetime in the remarkable era of radio's Golden Age. ■



Hollywood was once the Mecca of the fashion world and studio designers like Edith Head, Orry-Kelly, Adrian, and Irene were the Kings and Queens of fashion.

Most of the designers who reigned supreme over the studios, and therefore the civilized world, were either trained or influenced by the salon designers in Paris. The universe of fashion was centered in Paris, France in the 1920s, and the movie moguls were aware of the power of fashion. The studios created stars and the image of a star projected was often aided by a carefully selected style of clothing.

In the beginning the studios merely coped with untrained designers, but as the

films became more competitive the competition for original fashions became an obsession. M G M's Louis B. Mayer was so determined to have the French designer Erté design for his films that he had the designer's studio recreated down to the last detail so he wouldn't become homesick. Erté stayed in Hollywood for only a



MAE WEST

year (1924), but his influence was felt throughout the film community.

By the mid-twenties movie stars were the

## SLAVES TO FASHION

equivalent to European royalty and they needed — and demanded — the proper clothing to display their stately station.

Gloria Swanson became the protegee of couturier Lucille Glyn and was tutored in all matters of style and grace. Miss Swanson became obsessed with her wardrobe, both on and off the screen, and insisted on the best designers to cater to her fashion desires. As fortunes grew in Hollywood, so did the social graces of the *nouveau riche*. Formal dinner parties became the normal routine throughout the film community and formal dress codes were strictly adhered to by all guests.

By the mid-thirties Basil Rathbone and his wife Ouida became the center of Hollywood's elite circle because of the fabulous dinner parties they gave. An invitation to a Rathbone party was the key to social success. The Ronald Colmans, the Irving Thalbergs, and a popular columnist or two were frequent guests of the Rathbones. The studio's best designers



VIVIEN LEIGH in *Gone With The Wind*

would work overtime to create a suitable gown for a movie star or mogul's wife so she would be the belle of a Rathbone dinner ball.

The rise of the fashion designer in Hollywood coincided with the rise in movie profits. As the films made more profits the creed "spare no expense" ruled at the major studios. Each studio had a series of departments staffed with the best professionals money could buy. The wardrobe departments became valuable assets to the studios as designers were given generous budgets to costume major productions.

When a film was put into pre-production, the designers began to produce sketches for the movie's characters. If a star was assigned a picture, the designer would create designs with that star in mind. Each star had his or her own dress dummy with the star's exact proportions, and the wardrobe department would use the dummy for fittings until the costume was ready. Often more than one gown or dress would be made in case something happened to the costume during filming. Some gowns took weeks to make and cost thousands of dollars and appear on the screen for only a few minutes.

Warner Bros. designer Orry-Kelly designed several very expensive gowns for a scene in *Goldiggers of 1935* and each gown was only on the screen for a few seconds. Mae West's gowns were always made in pairs. She had one made so form fitting that she couldn't sit with it on and another made with a tad more room for her reclining scenes.

Frequently a designer would have to create special undergarments to hold the star's form in place while wearing a tight gown. The tight gowns tended to wrinkle if the star sat during breaks in filming so someone invented the reclining board. This was simply two or three large boards held together at a 60 degree angle with extended



DOROTHY LAMOUR in her sarong

armrests at the sides. A lady or gentleman could lean back onto the boards and be in a semi-reclining position without putting any wrinkle-causing stress on their costumes.

Most designers began working in Hollywood when all pictures were in glorious black and white. They became masters at interpreting how a color would photograph in gray tones. Many of the fabrics used for the films were strange colors because when photographed they produced a consistent gray palette.

The infamous red gown worn by Bette Davis in *Jezebel*, a black and white film, was in reality a rusty-brown and was developed after much experimentation by designer Orry-Kelly. When Technicolor became widely used, color consultants were hired to help the designers tackle the problems of color co-ordination. Some designers were considered experts at period design while others only worked on

the projects that required contemporary designs.

Adrian, the head of design at MGM in the thirties was given the task of re-creating period costumes for the film *Marie Antoinette*, produced in 1938. He began research in 1935 and went to Europe to find actual garments worn by members of King Louis XVI's court. Jewelry, shoes, accessories and rare drawings of the day were all carefully catalogued and shipped back to Hollywood. Special silks were commissioned to be woven in Lyons, France. Lacc trimmings were made in Italy, and eight Hungarian embroiderers were hired and sent to Adrian's workshop at the studio. Adrian designed thirty gowns for Norma Shearer to wear; eighteen wigs were assembled by Sidney Guillardoff, the famous hairdresser. Shoes were handmade at the studio and real pieces of jewelry, worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, were set aside for the film.

At the center of all this planning and coordination was Adrian. He had a new warehouse built on the studio lot where he stored all the costumes and artifacts for the film. It was a massive undertaking and he met the challenge with brilliant designs and execution of the designs. The film was a financial disaster for the studio but it was a triumph for the designers and craftsmen who worked on the project.

That kind of research and attention to detail would be undertaken again, for *Gone With The Wind*. Designer Walter Plunkett and his boss David O. Selznik spared no expense in re-creating the Civil War. Plunkett's designs were masterpieces of studio costuming and were the envy of many studio designers.

World War II changed everything for the studios. The war effort required massive amounts of materials, including fabrics, and budgets were regulated by the government. Gone were the days of expensive

## SLAVES TO FASHION

silks and laces; designs had to be kept simple and cheap to produce. Women's fashions and materials became more basic and informal.

After the war, costs of productions, due to increases in labor costs, began to rise dramatically, affecting quality and quantity of films. By the 1950s the size of most wardrobe departments had been reduced and many staff designers left the studios for other endeavors.

Adrian, who studied in Paris in the mid-20s, had become the head designer at MGM in 1929. He costumed all the MGM stars in the thirties, but by 1942 he felt that the glamor was being drained from films and he left to open his own exclusive salon on Wilshire Boulevard where he prospered for ten years before closing his shop and retiring with his wife Janet Gaynor to Brazil. He was lured out of retirement in 1959 to design costumes for the Broadway musical *Camelot*, but died of a massive heart attack before completing the designs for the Lerner and Lowe show.

Travis Benton was Paramount's head designer in the 1930s. He was born in Texas, but raised in Manhattan where he enjoyed frequent trips to the theatre with his mother. He was impressed with the costumes he saw on the Broadway stage and began taking art classes at the Art Student's League. His flair for costume design brought him to the attention of Norma Talmadge who commissioned him to design her wardrobe for the 1917 film *Poppy*. He was later selected by Mary Pickford to design her wedding gown when she married Douglas Fairbanks. In 1925 he joined Paramount, became head designer in 1927 where he remained until 1938. Marlene Dietrich loved his designs so much she often commissioned him to design clothes for her personal wardrobe.



MARLENE DIETRICH

Other stars began to do the same and, tired of the pressure of studio work, he opened a salon with Howard Greer who had preceded him as head designer at Paramount. He designed the costumes for *Auntie Mame* on Broadway before he died in 1956. In the late 1960s Dietrich was still wearing costumes in her stage show that were designed by Benton in the '30s.

Edith Head was head designer at Paramount from 1938 to 1966 and her career in Hollywood spanned more than fifty years. Her first Oscar was in 1949, only the second year that costume design was a category. Since then she has taken home eight Academy Award trophies for her designs. She created the sarong that made Dorothy Lamour a pin-up girl and has worked with almost every major star in films of the '40s thru the '80s.

Most all of the Hollywood costume designers were hard-working, dedicated professionals. Their role in the making of movies has always been — and always will be — an essential part of the magic of the silver screen. ■



## OUR READERS WRITE

# WE GET LETTERS

**NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA**— I have just finished listening to the 25th Anniversary broadcast of *Those Were The Days*. I must admit I have listened to the program many times since I bought a copy of the show during my visit to Chicago in November. Each time I hear the program I feel that I am part of the studio audience, both at the Museum of Broadcast Communications and the Swiss Hotel. I enjoy listening to *TWTD* when I am in Chicago. I enjoyed (with sparse frequency) listening to you on WBBM. For some reason, I can receive WMAQ much easier, but the "When Radio Was" program is carried locally. I am an old time radio collector and have over 100 hours of programming. As an aside, radio was responsible for teaching me to tell time. The Lone Ranger was carried locally at 5:30 p.m., and I associated the time with certain radio programs. —**HARRY S. KAUFMAN, III**

**MUSCATINE, IOWA**— In the December-January issue, in answer to a letter, you commented that "nowhere in the pages of history" did you find a reference to Linda Reid, sister-in-law to the Lone Ranger. I have a set of Lone Ranger transcripts on a record set produced by Murray Hill Records, 1976. One episode is titled "The Story of Dan Reid." Dan is found in the "high country" with a dying woman named Grandma Frisbie. She has a locket that was on Dan when he was a baby. The Lone Ranger finds pictures of Dan's father and mother in the locket. He refers to the mother as "Linda, a fine lady from Virginia." —**JOHN M. MC CORMICK**

**DOWNERS GROVE, IL**— You may recall me as the lady who called this holiday time inquiring as to any written scripts to radio shows, and you kindly steered me to SPERDVAC in California (Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy, Box 7177, Van Nuys, California 91409). I am the deaf person with an undying passion to know about OTR. I have numerous books about OTR and the golden age of TV, but since these are bygone years before "closed caption," I've never had the

fortune to "listen" to any of the programs. If at some time in the future, I could have one day of hearing, I'd definitely spend that day in front of a radio with my "buddies" Jack Benny, The McGees, Gildy, Burns and Allen, the Shadow, Suspense and my all-time faves, The Bickersons. Plus I'm dying to hear the famous "War of the Worlds" broadcast. Alas, since I have no way to hear these programs, the books and the *Nostalgia Digest* are my "ears" to the past. Perhaps someday someone will caption old TV shows (hopefully, Jack Benny). Thanks for the memories and keep up the good work. The Metro Golden Memories store in Chicago is also a fantastic place— spent quite a bit there— well worth it. —**MRS. TERESA BRAND**

**CHICAGO**— Enclosed is our check for a two-year renewal of our subscription. As we are both blind, we scan the magazine on our HP-2 scanner which is then sent to our computer which reads the magazine with a clear voice. Of course, the machine ignores all pictures but does read the picture captions. We regret the discontinuance of *Radio Classics* on WBBM. We would set a timer for the comedy programs and also for The Shadow or Dragnet. On Saturdays, as we bowl in the Chicago South Blind Bowling League at Lawn Lanes, we record the program at slow speed on a video cassette. We can then transcribe any programs we want to keep onto audio cassettes. —**ANGIE and WALTER BURMEISTER**

**GLEN ELLYN, IL**— Here is my renewal for another year. Enjoyed your latest issue, especially the informative article by Karl Pearson on Charlie Barnet and his bands. Karl has done a tremendous job on the Big Band remote broadcast tapes. I plug that every chance I get because it is such a treat to anyone who used to listen to those nitely broadcasts from all over the country. Please keep up the good work because you make a lot of people happy. —**ED MICHALS**

**SCHAUMBURG, IL**— In the middle of the 1960s, my friend and I got tickets for the



## MORE LETTERS

Breakfast Club at the Allerton Hotel. It was broadcast on Columbus Day and Burt Lancaster was the guest. It was a day I'll never forget. We took the El downtown and were first in line for our favorite show. Being early we were seated in the first row. We knew you had to fill out a card and I had thought about what to write. Sam Cowling was a favorite character, and I wrote "What can I do to get out of dancing with Sam? I work on my feet all day and don't want anyone else walking on them." I submitted my card and enjoyed watching what I had listened to for years. When the program was half over, Don called out, "Linda Larson, come up here!" We talked about me being an O.R. nurse and a real cut-up(!). Then Sam came to me and danced all over with me... dipping and all! Then he pulled me into a room where he disarranged his clothes, spread lipstick all over his face, grabbed my hand and pulled me back into the main room. The audience went crazy! I can remember going home on the El, laughing all the way and having such a joyful experience at the Breakfast Club. I wanted to share this with you since I was raised on radio and loved radio, and you bring all the good old days of radio back. —LINDA M. MALITZ

**KENILWORTH, IL**— My wife and I honestly do plan our Saturday activities around your broadcast schedule. I could not locate my album of Cinnamon Bear tapes this last season and it really became a problem; it simply would not be Christmas without them.. I was almost ready to buy yet another set when I discovered them as I was putting away wrapping paper. The season was saved as I was able to hear the whole series between Christmas and New Years. —DAVID HUSAK

**CHICAGO**— To say (or should I say "write") the least, your efforts and program are tops. One of your major efforts was the four years of recapturing the essence of World War II. Although I was only three years old when Pearl Harbor was bombed, your program had me in tears —even with the funny broad-

casts. I would be in my bedroom alone, listen to your program, and drift back to another "dimension." I can't thank you enough. —KEN LESAK

**MIDLOTHIAN, IL** — Thank you for a wonderful ten years of listening pleasure. I will miss the old radio programs I used to listen to on my parents' Philco. I am 80 years old so those old programs were a joy to me who was there years ago when they happened. —MRS. CECILIA BROWN

**MICHIGAN CITY, INDIANA**— Sorry to hear you have closed out the 12 midnight series on WBBM, but can understand your desire for more freedom in your "middle years." I'm 75, so am long past that! I do enjoy good ol' radio and your Saturday afternoon programs; seldom miss them. —PASTOR LUTHER A. MEYER. Retired

**PALM BEACH, FLORIDA**— I have been listening to you since you started broadcasting from Evanston and have enjoyed every hour. Recently when my wife and I retired to Florida, I felt far away because I couldn't hear you on WNIB. In fact, my 1991 car still has WNIB's 35th anniversary bumper sticker on it. A few months ago I found a local station that is broadcasting "When Radio Was" with Stan Freberg. Between that and the *Nostalgia Digest* (which I still subscribe to), it's a little bit like being with an old friend. If you ever expand your audience to include the West Palm Beach area, please let me know. —SIMEON KOSBERG

**NILES, MICHIGAN**— I am deeply saddened at your leaving the WBBM radio show, as you have helped me return to my love of old time radio. I do understand because at 57 years of age I retired from construction (sheet metal trade) and began a second career. I have over two hundred tapes which, along with great memories, contain your voice and obvious enjoyment of my hobby. —THOMAS MEADOR

**WAUKESHA, WISCONSIN**— I am sad that *Old Time Radio Classics* ended on December 1. I really enjoyed listening for about five years. I would tape the night before and listen to them at work. I'm sad to see you go. Or should I say "hear" you go. I think a lot of the old time radio holds up well even

today. There's nothing good on radio or TV nowadays anyway. I first got hooked on radio drama when I was nine or ten, listening to WBBM "CBS Radio Mystery Theatre" with E. G. Marshall. I always was trying to get my friends together to record ourselves doing a radio skit. I'm glad you still have the Saturday afternoon show. —DAVID RICKETT

**NILES, IL**— Enclosed is my renewal of your excellent *Digest* for two years. I look forward to receiving it and read it from cover to cover! I appreciate the listings of the old time radio shows on WMAQ. Your Saturday WNIB programs are so interesting that I can easily plan what to tape and what not to miss! Special thanks for the many years of radio "treasures" you've aired. —MARY ANN KLANCNIK

**RIVERSIDE, IL**— I've enjoyed your programs for several years, especially the weekly paralleling the war years. I do miss your nightly program, but I hope you continue for a very long time on Saturday afternoons. I've taken out-of-town visitors to the Museum of Broadcast Communications who enjoyed it as much as I did. —NATALIE ANDERSON

**OAK LAWN, IL**— Your *Digest* plus listening to *Those Were The Days* is absolutely refreshing. Thank you for all your efforts. They make my day! --THERESE KALEMBA

**DOWNERS GROVE, IL**— After more than 20 years as a faithful listener, I am writing my first letter of appreciation to you. About time! Thank you so much for your dedication to old time radio and your foresight and leadership in preserving so much of it. A great deal of our American heritage has been lost because no one cared enough to work hard to save it until it was almost all gone. That was not for you. I am always amazed and grateful at the incredible depth and breadth of programming you have at your fingertips. I also enjoy how willing and joyful you are to share your vast treasure and knowledge with us. What a tireless researcher and teacher you are!

I, too, am a history teacher, having taught eighth grade American history for 30 years now. In fact, one of my reasons for writing is to tell you the programming you choose and play has helped me be a better teacher,

because it enables me to feel what it must have been like to live through those eras before I remember. That, in turn, helps me transfer to my students not only the concepts and facts of American history, but the *feelings* which were a good part of why things happened the way they did.

World War II is a particular source of fascination for me. I am an avid reader, talker, thinker and collector on just about any topic regarding that awesome era. Your WWII programming was one of the most enjoyable experiences I have had. I was sad to have it end. Incidentally, you might be interested to know that many of my eighth graders, when referring to "the war," still mean World War II.

Listening to your program isn't as easy for me as it is for some. You see, I have a second job in which I work all day every Saturday. Fortunately, my boss, Bob Wannemaker, at Wannemakers' Home Center in Downers Grove knows of your work and allows me to record *Those Were The Days*. Then I can listen to it later. Actually, I spend more time listening to old time radio every week than watching what passes for entertainment on television.

Thanks again, Chuck, for everything. *Those Were The Days*, *Nostalgia Digest*, the Museum of Broadcast Communications, and even Metro Golden Memories. I have enjoyed them all. Keep up the good work. Even though you might not want to work *quite* that long, I'd like to have you live as long and healthy a life and contribute as much to our entertainment for as many years as George Burns has. —JAMES DOHREN

---

### NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

COPYRIGHT ©1996 Chuck Schaden  
All rights reserved

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

Annual subscription rate is \$15 for six issues. A two-year subscription (12 issues) is \$25. Your subscription expires with the issue date noted on the mailing label. A renewal reminder is sent with the last issue of your subscription.

**ADDRESS CHANGES** should be sent to *Nostalgia Digest*, Box 421, Morton Grove, IL 60053 **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**. The Post Office **DOES NOT** automatically forward the *Digest* which is sent by bulk mail.

---



Museum of Broadcast Communications

# museum pieces

Reported by Margaret Warren

Spring is here! Come to the Museum, stop by the Archives section, pick up a tape, sit back, and enjoy.

I asked archivists Cary O'Dell and Mike Cervone to suggest a few programs to recommend.

Check out radio first with one terrific 1978 conversation between veteran sportscasters Vin Scully and Red Barber. How about the 25 *Vic and Sade* programs that should more than satisfy even the most ardent fan. Listen to Jack Egan back in 1971. Cincinnati station WYXU gave the Museum 12 hours of clips and complete programming from D-Day. Go back to 1955 for a complete 15-minute jazz and classical Benny Goodman special benefiting the American Heart Fund.

Turn to TV and watch the *Picket Fences* pilot. Recall *Peter Gunn* and that great Henry Mancini theme. That's on the shelf, too. You want wild west? There's a *Maverick* from September, 1957; a *Bonanza* from February, 1961; and a *Rifleman* from February, 1959. A timely selection right now would be Perry Como's Easter Show from April, 1962. Or go to Miami Beach in 1960 and the *Miss Universe Pageant* with hosts Arthur Godfrey, Jayne Meadows and Charles Colingwood. Chicago's own Lee Phillip does a commercial!

And speaking of commercials, what

would broadcasting be without a few words from the sponsor? The Archives contain thousands of prize-winning commercials. Cary suggests our complete collection of the *Taster's Choice* series. You know, that romantic couple cooing over coffee. Their agency, McCann-Erickson, gave us the spots.

More shows. Monty Hall gave us a *Let's Make A Deal* episode. Stay along those ditzy lines and take a look at our episode of *My Mother the Car*. Move to the serious stuff and the classic television drama *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, the Rod Serling masterpiece with Jack Palance, Ed Wynn and Keenan Wynn. Turn to the *Nightline* collection for recent history.

Pick a few random TV subjects: The Challenger disaster; the Reagan assassination attempt; the nomination of Geraldine Ferraro; Los Angeles' earthquake and riots.

And did you know that since January 1, 1987, the Museum has recorded the 10 p.m. television news every evening alternating between Channels 2, 5 and 7? That's nearly a decade of day-to-day events -- local, national and international -- on the Archives shelves.

Stop in to learn about or simply enjoy these and thousands of other radio and television hours.

Museum of Broadcast Communications

Chicago Cultural Center

Michigan Avenue at Washington Street

Chicago, 60602

Phone (312) 629-6000



# Come In and Browse!

## OUR 20th ANNIVERSARY

YOUR ONE-STOP SHOW BIZ NOSTALGIA SHOP

We have the largest selection of old time radio shows under one roof.

Choose single cassette tapes or two- three- four- and six-pack sets.

PLUS Old Time Radio on CD, in Books and Magazines

COME IN  
AND  
CELEBRATE  
WITH US!



YOU CAN SPEND A COUPLE OF DECADES GOING THROUGH ALL THE GOODIES YOU'LL FIND AT OUR STORE. LOTS OF GREAT GIFT IDEAS. LOTS OF COLLECTORS' ITEMS.

WE ACCEPT VISA, DISCOVER and MASTERCARD



5425 W. ADDISON STREET, CHICAGO, IL 60641  
TWO MILES WEST OF KENNEDY EXPRESSWAY (312)736-4133  
TWO BLOCKS EAST OF CENTRAL AVENUE

WE'RE OPEN SEVEN DAYS A WEEK  
MONDAY thru SATURDAY -- 10 AM to 6 PM  
SUNDAY -- NOON to 5 PM

We buy and sell old time radio premiums and magazines, movie magazines and stills.

BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Morton Grove, Illinois  
Permit No. 21



← **CHARLIE MC CARTHY**

is one of those Lovable Rascals whose personality flaws tend to endear them to us all. Gino Lucchetti tells why. Page 26.

**ARCH OBOLER'S  
LIGHTS OUT**

By Erik J. Martin  
Page 2

**THE WAY IT USED TO BE**

By Ken Alexander  
Page 6

**PRANKSTER STAN FREBERG**

By Clair Schulz  
Page 9

**ANOTHER WORD ON  
STAN FREBERG**

By Steve Darnall  
Page 13

**I WAS A CHILD RADIO STAR**

By Neil Elliott  
Page 15

**BUFFALO BILL**

By Russ Rennaker  
Page 19

**LUX PRESENTS  
HOLLYWOOD**

By Ed Knapp  
Page 31

**SLAVES TO FASHION**

By Bob Kolososki  
Page 33

**MUSEUM PIECES**

By Margaret Warren  
Page 40

**PLUS** WNIB *THOSE WERE THE DAYS* LISTINGS. . . . . Pages 20-24  
WMAQ *WHEN RADIO WAS* CALENDAR. . . . . Page 25