NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

BING CROSBY
AND HIS FIRST FAMILY

CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE ©

BOOK TWENTY-TWO CHAPTER SIX OCTOBER -- NOVEMBER, 1996

Hello, Out There in Radioland!

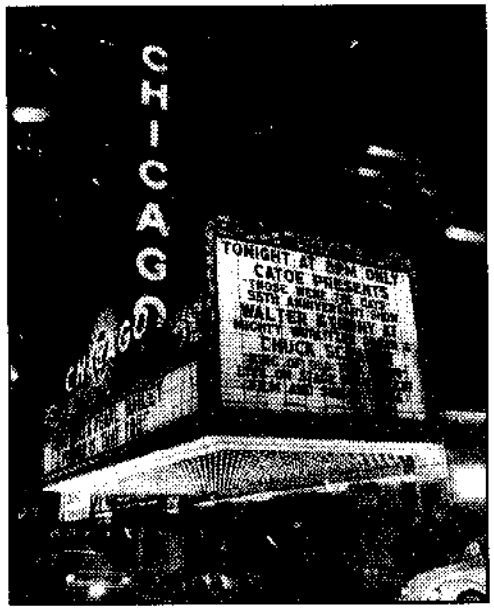
As a youngster growing up in the 1940s, one of my favorite places was the great Chicago Theatre in the heart of the Loop.

I would often find myself with 3,500 others in the audience of that Balaban and Katz "Wonder Theatre" enjoying a good movie on the giant silver screen. And, after the movie, a wonderful stage show with big time stars, ready to give their all to that appreciative audience.

And no one was more appreciative than yours truly. I loved going to the Chicago.

I saw the Ink Spots. I saw the Ritz Brothers, Victor Borge, Hildegard, Liberace, and Tip, Tap and Toe, all on the stage of the Chicago Theatre. I saw Connee Boswell, Billy DeWolfe, Jo Stafford, Perry Como, and the Harmonicats.

The Chicago was where I got to see the Mills Brothers, the Andrews Sisters, Milton Berle, and Danny Kaye! And I collected many autographs by waiting for the stars outside the stage door on the south side of the theatre building.



So you can imagine how thrilled I was, many years later in 1976, when the Chicago Area Theatre Organ Enthusiasts invited me to be a part of a special evening commemorating the 55th Anniversary of the Chicago Theatre. My job was to talk about my favorite subject -- old time radio. And I got to actually "perform" on the stage of that great theatre. I even used the dressing room that had been used by so many stars during the theatre's heyday. *And my name was up in lights on the Chicago Theatre marquee!* Wow!

Now it's 1996 and the Chicago Theatre, which opened October 26, 1921 (restored in 1986 to its original greatness), is celebrating its 75th anniversary.

We'll join in the celebration on our October 19 *Those Were The Days* program as we offer an *audio re-creation* of some of the Theatre's past great stage and screen presentations. Check the listings on page 21. Hope you can join us.

Don't forget to bring some of *your* Chicago Theatre memories. **--Chuck Schaden**

The Voice Belongs to Jackson Beck

BY STEVE DARNALL

First and foremost, there is the voice. If you've ever listened to old radio, you've probably heard it. It's a powerful, commanding voice that presents itself as an ultimate authority. On radio, it was the voice that first told us "Up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! It's Superman!" Later, it was the voice that took us "To the age of the conquest of space — with [heavy echo here] Tom Corbett, Space Cadet!" It's a voice you've heard in recent years on commercials for Thompson's Water Scaler, Kellogg's Sugar Frosted Flakes and most of all, Little Caesar's Pizza. Even in a casual mode — say, over the telephone early on a Saturday morning — the voice is still a little imposing.

The voice belongs to Jackson Beck, and it's tones have kept him working steadily in radio for over sixty years. In the medium's heyday, he could be heard as a narrator (and performer) on classic kids' shows like Superman, Mark Trail and Tom Corbett, Space Cadet. In 1948, he landed the title role on Ziv Productions' syndicated Adventures of Philo Vance. When radio drama dried up, Beck found himself working not only for commercial pitchmen but also for a new generation of comedians who wanted his solid, no-nonsense authoritarian voice.

Given a resume that lengthy, it's ironic that his father — a New York actor in his own right — was "dead set against" his son entering the business. It's even more ironic that Beck got his start in radio of all times, during the Depression — and to top it all off, that was the result of answering a bogus advertisement.

"I know this sounds like malarkey, but I answered an ad in the paper: 'You too can be a radio actor!'" he recalls. "It was romantic, and of course it was a con, but I didn't know it. Well, maybe I did know it, but I thought, 'What the hell, I've got nothing better to do.'" The men for whom Beck "auditioned," weren't really agents, but they did suggest Beck take some radio acting lessons — which, coincidentally, were being taught around the corner at $15 a pop. "Well, at that point I had a dime in my pocket: a nickel for a candy bar for lunch and a nickel to get home on the subway. So I went in and spoke to this guy and said, 'I don't have a dime, but if you can open a door here or there, maybe we can do business.' He said, 'How would you like to teach here?'"

Beck laughs at the notion of a young man with no radio experience being asked to teach people to act for the radio; apart from an audition with his father (the director of which complained that the two men sounded exactly alike), he'd never even been before a microphone. "[The teacher] said, 'You'll catch on. It's really easy. Just talk to people like you're talking to me. It's as simple as that. It's not like the theatre, where you really project and go into this artificial stage English. You just talk like a human being.'"

Prospects being what they were during the Depression, Beck took the job. "I had a studio set up," he recalls, "and all these people who were enchanted with the glamour of radio came in and out: housemaids, cooks, bottlewashers, ad guys. I though, 'My God, I can't teach these people. I can't take their money. They won't have anything at all." Beck left the job after a week.

What he did instead was to go through the phone book — "and I mean, I went through it line by line" taking note of any business where the words "radio" or "broadcasting" popped up in the name. When the list was done, the young actor mapped out a route and visited every single spot on the list, starting at 57th Street and winding up in the Battery.

"I'd walk this thing conscientiously," he says, "and I made up a card with fake resume on it. I'd have my phone number, address and so forth — and then I'd invent things. I said I came from California so they couldn't check up, and I made up a couple of shows. I knew they'd never check it."

Well, never isn't quite the word. One time Beck went into an agency after a disastrous tour production of "The Drunkard" - which had ended with the cast literally abandoned in Philadelphia - and was eager to pour it on. "I went in there and handed in my card — I had a bunch of California shows down — and I didn't know this guy from Adam. He asked me about two or three California shows in particular. I said, 'Oh, I did this and I did that,' he asked 'Did you ever know so-and-so and I said 'Sure.'"

"He said, 'Well I directed those shows, and you've got the best pitch I've ever heard in my life. You must be a good actor, so I'm gonna use you. If you can con me this way, you can con anybody.'"

Stretching the truth slightly wasn't the only way Beck managed to make an impression on agents. When Beck discovered "it was pretty clever to not go around alone,' he began to visit agencies accompanied by two actress/chorus girls. Beck stresses the relationship the three had was "only professional," but it certainly didn't hurt if people remembered the young actor who came in with a girl on each arm.

"Once in a while, these girls would get a job, but I started reaping the benefits of it," he says candidly. "I often wonder what happened to them."

If Beck was gaining recognition in the agencies for the company he kept, he was also getting some on-mike experience on New York stations. "I went around from minor station to minor station, doing it for the fun of it — and also learning, because we didn't know what we were doing."

One regular show was written by "a descendent of one of the first families in the country. This guy was a real kook." The show centered around tales of heartbreak and romance, and Beck admits the writer "was very prolific. I thought, 'God, how

Steve Darnall is a free-lance writer from Chicago.

can this guy sit down there and pound this stuff out?' When I went up to his house, he had a wall solid with magazines. There was one on the desk, and a typewriter next to it, and I put two and two together. The guy's plagiarizing. So what the hell's the difference? He's not making any money out of it."

Beck also put together a "pseudo-comedy" show on a Bronx station and tried to sell it to CBS as a regular feature. CBS passed on the show, but what Beck remembers more vividly was the fellow who passed on it: a young salesman by the name of Ed Murrow. "The thing about it was, he didn't impress me, because to me he was just another guy in a suit. I didn't know that he was going on to become the Ed Murrow that he became."

Beck found something a little more dignified (and lucrative) when he performed in a series of radio trailers for Columbia Pictures. Whenever the studio prepared to release a major film, they would alert the public by producing and syndicating a lengthy radio advertisement, often hiring unknown (and therefore, much less expensive) radio actors to stand-in for the stars. "I was pretty flexible, and I had a good ear, so I played a lot of leads: Frederic March, John Payne, God knows who." So, now he had experience, and thanks to a day job in the packing department of a button shop, he had some money. Then, when he was cast on an episode of Death Valley Days, he had national experience.

"We did those in formal dress in those days, I want you know,"he remarks. "I had to borrow my old man's tux. Radio was the glamour industry. I mean, my God, if you were on radio, talking to millions of people...which is something that deterred most actors, because they'd think they had an audience of millions and get scared to death. I didn't give a damn. So I did Death Valley Days, and the first time, there's an audience at NBC in one of the big studios — which means about 200 people — all dressed to the nines. You'd have thought they were going to the opera.

"And dead silent," he adds, sounding a little impressed to this day. "When they were told to be quiet and not make any noise, these people didn't make a sound."

Now Beck had his first network credit, and his continual visits to agencies and casting directors were paying off dividends. "They got so used to me coming in once or twice a week, that I worked my way into the crowd. So I started to do shows here and there. It's like pulling on a thread, and suddenly you've got the whole spool." He became friendly with George Lothar, a producer/director/writer, and Bob Maxwell, who ran the production firm.

For a couple of years, Lothar and Maxwell had produced a syndicated series featuring the nation's newest comic-book sensation; now, under the sponsorship of Kellogg's Pep, they were preparing to launch The Adventures of Superman as a daily show on the Mutual network, and Lothar — who had been narrating the show, in addition to directing and writing it — needed help.

"George said to me, 'Listen, I can't do all this at one time anymore. I gotta have somebody in there to narrate it.' We were doing it at WOR, and he had to run in and out of [the control booth]. He said, 'It's getting to me and I still have to go home and write this stuff every night.' So I went in and cut loose and he said, 'You've got it. Start working. Tomorrow you're in here, and you're in here every day of the week, so don't do anything else. This is a job."

It was a long term job at that: for the next ten years Beck breathlessly told listeners of the Man of Steel's escapades and predicaments (and, in the tradition of legendary radio actors, would also double as assorted characters on both sides of the law). It's interesting to note that although Superman was not unknown in the early 1940s, the producers and cast of the radio show take some credit for turning him into one of the most famous characters in American fiction — even beyond granting him daily, national exposure.

The radio show was responsible for the invention of Kryptonite (Superman's greatest weakness was invented by the show's writers when actor Clayton "Bud" Collyer had to take a vacation), and a phrase that Beck shouted at the beginning of every episode that has since become legendary: *Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! It's Superman!*

Adding to the character's mythology was the producers' desire, in Beck's words, to "create the feeling that there was a real Superman."As a result, it was years before most Americans knew that veteran announcer Collyer was the voice of Clark Kent and his Super-alter ego. "I'm sure that I gave him name credit at the end of the show – maybe once a week," Beck insists, "but they were very, very protective of him. They wouldn't let him make personal appearances or anything else.

"This is where P.R. came in," he adds. "They kept him out of the paper, not in it."

Beck remembers Collyer as "strong, personally." In the 1950s, Collyer suffered a stroke and was subsequently diagnosed with aphasia. "[Collyer] was the kind of guy that was going to get back and do what he had always been doing," Beck remembers, "and he finally beat aphasia, to the point where he could come back, and you would never know this man had ever had an illness." The two worked together again in the 1960s for Filmation Studios' Superman cartoon series.

As important as the Superman show was for DC Comics' big star, it was even more important for Beck: by 1950 he was busy with another Kellogg's-sponsored kids' show, Mark Trail (when Superman wrapped up its' run in the 1950s, Kellogg's put Beck to work announcing another show, the intergalactic Tom Corbett, Space Cadet). "I did Superman, and then I'd go next door and do Mark Trail, but I'd narrate it with a different voice and a different approach, and then I'd play Mark Trail's right-hand man, who was a French Canuck. I went out and learned a little more French than I learned in high school, and I learned some slang, so I'd throw this stuff in. Those people in Canada who heard this Canuck slang would go crazy. They loved it." Of

course, regional pride was only one reason for the Canadians' enthusiasm; another was the slang itself. "There were dirty words in there!"Beck laughs. "The Americans didn't understand what I was saying — I didn't understand half of it myself — but I worked it into the script, and the people in Canada and northern New York went nuts, because 'Here's this guy doing our stuff!'"

Beck was one of those performers who pursued radio acting right up to the end of the Golden Age, appearing on such 1960s offerings as Suspense, Theatre Five and Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar (he played a dying gangster on that show's last episode).

When radio drama closed its doors, another, very different door opened up — comedy. In the 60's, 70s and 80s, Beck found his services in demand by such clients as Saturday Night Live, The National Lampoon Radio Hour and Woody Allen, who hired Beck to narrate his 1967 spoof of "true crime" documentaries, *Take The Money and Run.*

Twenty years later, when Allen made his nostalgic *Radio Days,* Beck returned to the microphone and was heard (but not seen) as a newscaster detailing the dramatic rescue attempt of a trapped child. (Unbeknownst to Allen, the Long Island neighborhood featured in the film's opening shot was an area where Beck had spent many a childhood summer.)

Ironically, for all of Allen's skill as a comedian, Beck reports the director's knowledge of radio production was a little lacking. Beck was scheduled to appear in one scene where Allen "had the actors doing a pseudo-mystery, but he has them standing with their backs to the control room. I didn't have the gall to say, 'Hey, listen. You got it wrong. Nobody was ever in a position with his back to the control room. They had me turn sideways, but then he can't see my face. I'm now facing the camera, but the mike's in my face and you can't see me." The scene was eventually cut. "Thank God."

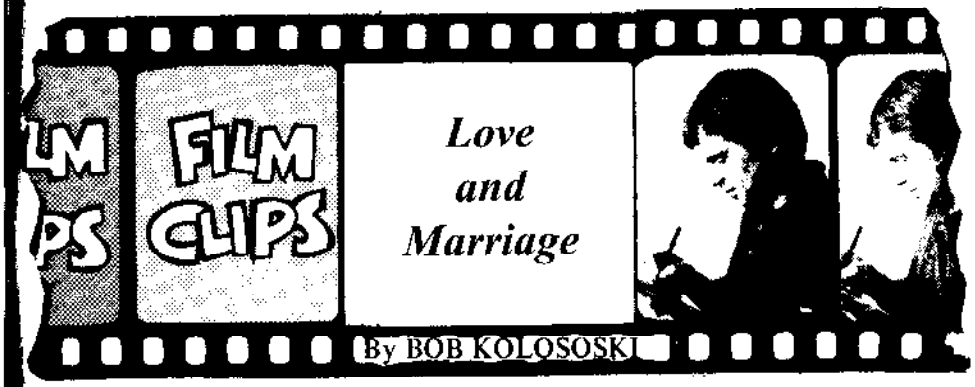
These days, of course, Beck's voice still sounds great, and he's as sought-after as ever — and those clients who find him are usually more than anxious to keep him.

"I've gotten calls on New Year's Eve and Christmas Eve," he says. "I work for Little Caesar's every week or ten days, and yesterday they called me at 3:30, 4 o'clock and said, 'We need you at 5:00.' If they suddenly decide that they have to do something, they've got to do it and it has to be now!"

Like most survivors of the radio era, Beck misses the days of radio drama, but he also understands that in an era where businesses are obsessed with the bottom line, something like radio drama is an obvious casualty. That doesn't mean he's happy about it.

"It's easy to make money out of radio, it really is. I'd love to own a radio station right now. Drama, you can't do because economically, you're losing money when you put a drama on. When you put a drama on some of these stations late at night, the audience is tremendous, but it doesn't catch [on] anymore, because now it's no longer a habit. It's not the only source of entertainment or information. You have to fight television and cable, but what can you do [when you've] got 75 channels on the set? Not having been exposed to radio as we were as children, [a listener today]'s not in that groove. You can't go into a store that doesn't have a radio blaring somewhere. The trouble is, it's not an integral part of your life anymore as far as entertainment or information is concerned.

These days, Beck says, "I watch a lot of news and, when I can, documentaries. I think we did it better in the old days." ■



Could you work side by side with your spouse?

For thousands of married couples the answer to that question is a firm... absolutely not!

In Hollywood, the combination of a husband and wife in the same film often succeeded in destroying any marital bliss that might have existed.


LAUREN BACALL

Tinsel Town's longest-lasting unions have often been between an actor or actress and a spouse not connected with movie-making. Jimmy Stewart's forty-year marriage to a non-actress was a shining example.

Many Hollywood marriages were the result of a couple working together in the same film. Joan Blondell and Dick Powell were Warner Brothers contract players in the 1930s and were cast in *Dames* (1934) and *Broadway Gondolier* (1935). They began to date and were married in 1936. They left Warners in 1939 and free-lanced at other studios, working together in *I Want A Divorce* (1940) and *Model Wife* (1941). Apparently the happy ending of *I Want A Divorce* was ignored by both because they *did* divorce in 1945.

One of Tinsel Town's strongest marriages began when Humphrey Bogart showed up for the first shooting for the filming of *To Have and Have Not.* His co-star was twenty-six years his junior, had never been in a film, and in fact had never done any acting. She was a Manhattan model discovered by director Howard Hawks. Her name was Lauren Bacall and the chemistry between her and Bogart was as hot as a volcano. The film was released in 1944 and so was Bogart from his wife Mayo Methot. He married Bacall in 1945 and co-starred with his new wife in three more films between 1945-1948. *The Big Sleep* and *Key Largo* are classic favorites of movie buffs. Bogart's professionalism and patience with his new bride turned her into a fine actress and their marriage remained strong until his death in 1957.


HUMPHREY BOGART

A lesser-known, but similarly strong marriage that survived fifty years was between Alexis Smith and Craig Stevens. She was a rising young actress under contract to Warner Brothers and was going through

a big buildup by the studio. Stevens was a contract player waiting for his big break when he was assigned a small part in *Dive Bomber* starring Errol Flynn. Smith was given a featured part and their scenes together were limited, but someone spotted a glimmer of smoke when they looked at each other. Their next assignment was a programmer called *Steel Against the Sky* which was bad enough to slow their careers and romance. They kept working and seeing each other occasionally with little results. In 1941 they appeared together in *The Doughgirls* and a spark ignited their romance. They were married later that year and were able to combine their better-than-average careers with a strong, long marriage.

LUCILLE BALL & DESI ARNAZ

It's not a secret that the only incentive the studios had to put a husband and wife in the same film was the box office potential.

Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz met while appearing in the RKO film *You Can't Fool Your Wife* (1941) and were married later that year. During the next decade Lucy made approximately twenty films and Desi about six. No one thought of casting them in the same film because neither was "big box office," and the co-starring of the duo wouldn't guarantee any profit. In 1950 Lucy and Desi starred in their own television show and within a year they were the hottest married couple in America.

MGM dusted off a script and cast the now dynamic duo in *The Long, Long Trailer* (1954). The public loved Lucy and really liked Desi, so the film hit box office gold. Meanwhile, Lucy and Desi were the biggest stars on TV. Encouraged by the profits of *Trailer,* MGM decided to roll the dice again with a bigger, better movie starring America's favorite married couple. *Forever Darling* opened and closed within a couple of weeks; apparently the novelty of seeing them on the big screen wasn't worth the price of a movie ticket while they were on TV every week for free. Lucy and Desi retreated to the tube, never again to appear together in a film.

In the 1940s, RKO had paired Fibber McGee and Molly (in real life they were Jim and Marian Jordan) in several films that did well at first, but eventually the public opted to hear the married couple for free on the radio.

The public wanted something more than the novelty of seeing television or radio stars on the big screen; they wanted a nuclear blast!

Fortunately for the public and movie producers, Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton fell in love. Unfortunately, they were married to other people at the time. They met during the filming of *Cleopatra* (1963), and even though the film was an expensive exercise in futility, the well-publicized affair of the two stars brought out the more curious filmgoers. Producers offered the couple a cool million dollars to co-star in a film. Any film. They each shed their spouses and married, hoping to do 15 or 20 movies before the public shed them. They managed to make one great film, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* before they tired of each other. They divorced in 1976. Burton continued to make films; Taylor continued to make marriage vows.

Of all the married couples in Hollywood, the biggest was Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. In the 1920s they were the closest thing to royalty in America. They were business partners with D. W. Griffith and Charlie Chaplin in United Artists studios. Their films made millions and in 1929 they were as popular as ever. But they wanted to try something new; they wanted to make a film together. Their version of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* was turned into a cheerful film experience for the public, but the two stars found that movie-making and marriage was not made in heaven. The two bickered with gusto during and after the filming and, in general, the whole experience of working together was the beginning of the end of their marriage. *The Taming of the Shrew* had audiences heading for the box office as Mary and Doug headed for divorce court.

JIM & MARIAN JORDAN

The rate of divorce seems higher in Hollywood than the rest of the country, but there are some happy endings in Tinsel Town. Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward have been married and have worked together for nearly forty years. They met in 1953, when they were both unknowns, and married in 1958 when they were both established movie stars. Their first film together was *Rally Round the Flag Boys* in 1959 and, over the years have collaborated in eleven films. In 1968 Newman directed his first film, *Rachel, Rachel,* and his wife was chosen as the star. In 1972 he directed her in *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-In-The-Moon Marigolds.* In 1992 they co-starred in *Mr. and Mrs. Bridge.*

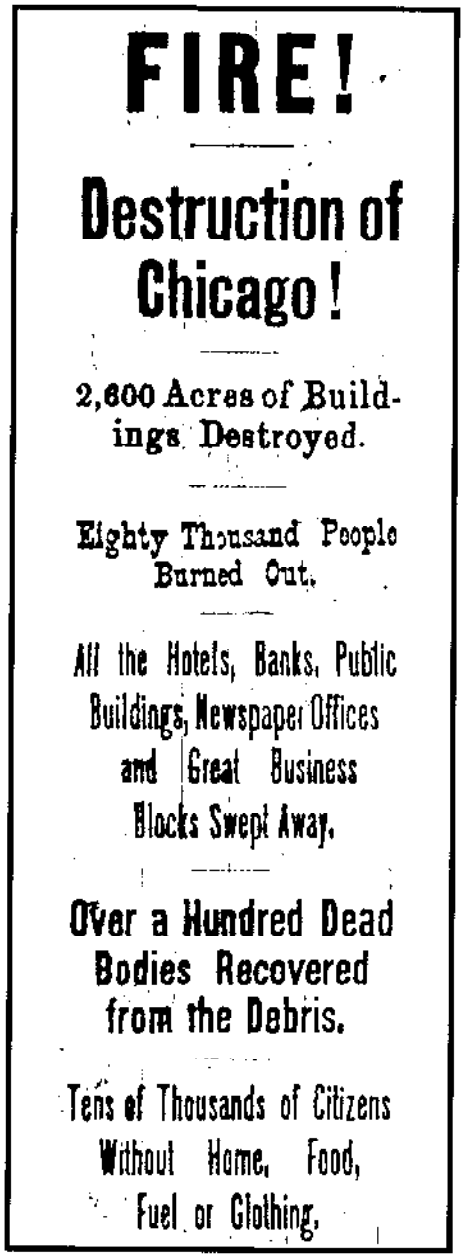
Not many Hollywood directors would tackle the assignment of directing their wives and be as fortunate as the Newmans. Vincent Minnelli took the plunge in 1945 when he married Judy Garland. They met while he was directing her in *Meet Me In St. Louis,* and before they could start their next film, they were happily married. Their studio assigned the couple to do a few more films together, including *The Pirate,* but Louis B. Mayer couldn't assign them to leave their marital problems at home. They were given different films to work on, hoping the couple could overcome their strained relationship. The stress of filmmaking had taken its toll on Judy and she was on the road to self-destruction. Minnelli couldn't help her and they divorced in 1951.

If the Minnelli's had paid attention to the relationship of Josef Von Sternberg and Marlene Dietrich they could have saved themselves a huge amount of grief. Von Sternberg brought Dietrich to America and directed her in six films. He was the master and she was the student. He told her what to do and she did it because she had complete faith in his judgement. She left her husband and child in Europe while she made American movies. There was a romantic bond between Von Sternberg and Dietrich, but they never married. Their relationship was driven by his passion to direct her in films and she was faithful to him until the studio separated them. She went on to become an international star and he settled into obscurity. In the end he wasn't ruined by Dietrich, but rather by the studio that denied him his love-directing.

Marital success is difficult everywhere, but in Hollywood it's a perpetual battle of egos. ■

The Great Chicago Fire

and stories about it


FIRE!

Destruction of Chicago!

2,600 Acres of Buildings Destroyed.

Eighty Thousand People Burned Out.

All the Hotels, Banks, Public Buildings, Newspaper Offices and Great Business Blocks Swept Away.

Over a Hundred Dead Bodies Recovered from the Debris.

Tens of Thousands of Citizens Without Home, Food, Fuel or Clothing.

Chicago Tribune headlines, October 11, 1871

BY K. H. BYRNES

The Chicago Fire is long gone. It burned 125 years ago, from October 8 to 10, 1871.

The oral tradition of the conflagration, however, has not disappeared. There are still those among us who in our childhood spoke to survivors, a great-grandmother, an elderly neighbor, who told us, "I remember the Chicago Fire." Most of us have heard third or fourth hand stories or read them in newspaper or magazine articles.

Just as the fire itself was the totality of all the burning that took place that Sunday, Monday and Tuesday in Chicago, so the story of it is an accumulation of all the telling by the 300,000 people who lived in Chicago at the time as well as by those who have repeated their tales.

A few of the survivors wrote books. They stated causes, interviewed officials, drew maps, traced the route of the fire, repeated incidents and gave statistics. A good number of books contained simple family recollections and experiences and were penned for descendants rather than general consumption.

The fire destroyed the area that is now the Loop and the Near North Side. It probably started in the barn of Kate O'Leary on West Dekoven Street (1050 south) between the Chicago River and what is now the Dan Ryan Expressway. The weather had been very dry. The fire department's equipment and men were exhausted from fighting another fire the night before. The flames spread quickly, fanned by unusually strong winds. Many hoped the fire would be stopped by the river, but lumber yards along its banks created a holocaust that would not have been denied had the river been several miles wide.

By the time it was over, the Chicago Fire had burned 15,768 buildings and killed an estimated 200 to 300 people. The cost has been given as between $175 and $300 million, less than half of which was recouped from insurance.

A few buildings in the burnt-out area were left standing. The most famous of these was the Water Tower, which remains a monument to the fire.

Another was a home at 2121 Hudson that still stands. It was saved by the resourcefulness of the owner, who thoroughly doused it with water.

The fire's boundary on the South Side in the Loop was Van Buren Street and on the North Side, Fullerton Avenue. It destroyed the heart of the fastest-growing city in the world. The population of Chicago had been 30 in 1830 and 300 when the town was incorporated in 1833.

The fire was so intense, fueled by the dry wooden structures in its path and the strong winds, that it melted metal and incinerated animals and people to the point that sometimes it left what seemed like only a shadow.

The business district of the city was gone.

The Chicago Fire upstaged a fire which destroyed on the same days in 1871 Peshtigo, Wisconsin, and the forests around. That conflagration claimed an estimated 1,000 lives.

Such are the facts of the Chicago Fire.

And then there are the stories.

Before the embers cooled off, wild stories about the fire were spreading in a manor reminiscent of the flames from the conflagration itself.

Many of them centered around Kate O'Leary and her cow. The *Chicago Times*, in its first issue after the fire, reprinted the street gossip. It accused Mrs. O'Leary of having threatened the city after learning that she was being cut off the dole for having cheated on it. The tales were total fabrications. She had not been cut off welfare (more like charitable handouts in those days). She was self-supporting and proud of it. The fire apparently did start in her barn, but the cow kicking over a lamp, well, that was simply another story.

You may have heard a few of the tales about the Chicago Fire in the form of handed down and embroidered stories.

Some of these have become legends, if not myths, not in the sense that they are necessarily untrue as in never having happened. But the facts have often been appropriated from the experiences of others, exaggerated or repeated so often that they changed.

One of the favorites is about a family having buried its silverware in the backyard. Excuse any skepticism, but we can suspect that if it ever did happen, it was to the relatives of someone other than the teller of the story. A venerable (or not so venerable) ancestor might have thought about doing it and later said he or she had. And, in some instances, a child might subsequently have wished his family had silverware worth going to such trouble over and then started telling the story as though they had.

The burying-of-silverware myth is a good one not only because it is a great yarn, memorable and something with which we can identify but also because it encapsulates the fire. The fire, this story tells us, was a great leveler. Those that had, lost, unless they were resourceful. And people want to tell us their families had been resourceful, that they preserved the past in the face of great calamity. It is a coded message, hidden inside a not-necessarily true boast, about survival and holding onto one's possessions.

Another story, quite similar, is even more exciting. It is about people escaping the fire by jumping into the newly-dug grave

holes in Lincoln Park.

The park, prior to the time of the fire, had been the City Cemetery. During the 1860s and early 1870s, city workers had been digging up and transferring bodies from there to other cemeteries such as Graceland and Rosehill. Much of the work had already been done. A similar but delayed program was happening in the Catholic Cemetery immediately south of Lincoln Park.

There were indeed some graves open in October, 1871. More than likely they were in the Catholic rather than the City cemetery and there couldn't have been very many, certainly not enough to accommodate all those who later claimed they had used them. The number grew and the stories of a relative who had increased geometrically as time passed.

It is not this writer's intention to rob any family of such legends for they may indeed have happened in certain families. Incident are woven into stories, which then become legends and myths and if the facts change in the meantime, history is still served by the themes that are brought forward and the interest that is generated.

The Chicago Fire, as a historical event, remains truly fascinating 125 years later. It does not rank —in terms of loss of human life— with the worst disasters of all times. It was not even the most tragic fire in the Midwest on October 8, 1871, but people around the country, who know little about the city's history, have heard of the "great fire." And Chicagoans who are aware of little of the area's history can often recite the date of 1871.

One of the reasons for this is that fire tends to mesmerize people and they want to see pictures and hear stories. There were no actual photos of the city burning (even though the city had many photographers) but there is no limit to the photos taken afterwards or the illustrations drawn for newspapers, magazines and books.

Fire is drama, one never too far from us. Survival from it is one of the great on-going tales of mankind. ■

WHERE TO READ MORE ABOUT THE GREAT CHICAGO FIRE OF 1871

There are a number of very good books on the Chicago Fire that winnow the myth from the facts and still tell the story with suspense and excitement.

Among the very early good books on the fire (and there were many) is *Chicago and the Great Conflagration* by Elias Colbert and Everett Chamberlin. It was published in 1871, just weeks after the fire. It has illustrations and a map. First edition copies are still around in used bookstores.

Perhaps the most precise of all accounts was an article, "The Great Chicago Fire" that appeared in *Papers in Illinois History* in 1940. It is what researchers writing about the fire tend to use as their basic guide. It can still be found in a hardbound copy.

As good a writer as any on the fire, a man who knew how to tell a good story, is former *Chicago Tribune* columnist, Robert Cromie. He wrote *The Great Chicago Fire,* published in 1958 and later reissued in softcover. He also coauthored with Herman Kogan, *The Great Fire: Chicago in 1871* in 1971, an excellent book in both narration and illustration.

David Lowe, also a superb writer about the city, edited *The Great Chicago Fire,* an 8 1/2 x 11 soft cover that includes "Eyewitness Accounts and 70 Contemporary Photographs and Illustrations."

The Chicago Historical Society published in 1971 a picture book on the fire, *The Great Chicago Fire,* edited by Paul Angle. Angle also edited and the Chicago Historical Society published the 1946 book, *The Great Chicago Fire,* which uses seven letters that contain personal accounts of the fire.

Through these books and the accounts in such standard histories of the city as *A History of Chicago* by A. T. Andreas published in the mid-1880s and Bessie Louise Pierce's history of the city published between the 1930s and 1950s, one can garner many versions of the conflagration and come up with a fascinating mosaic of the Chicago Fire. —**KHB**

Ken Alexander Remembers . . .

Eating Downtown

When I was a young fellow in the early 1950s working in an office in downtown Chicago, my lunch usually consisted of a couple of sandwiches brought from home. Sometimes, though, the man at the next desk and I would go out for lunch. We had only an hour, but because our office building was close to the Loop — immediately west of the river on Madison Street — and because we walked fast, we could go as far as State Street, have lunch, and make it back to the office on time. Well, nearly on time.

For these lunches we chose restaurants where the service was quick and the prices were low.

If I had to stay downtown after work for a class or some other such activity, I would go for supper to a restaurant where the pace was a bit more relaxed and the prices, again, were low.

On those occasions when I had a dinner date with a young woman, I would select still another kind of restaurant: one with subdued lighting, soft background music and, of necessity, higher prices.

Thus I became familiar with a number of downtown restaurants, either through having eaten in them or through having learned about them by other means: reading their advertisements, peering in through their windows, or hearing reports from acquaintances who had eaten there.

For lunch we often went to a cafeteria at 64 W. Madison called the Forum, a bright, vast room where everything from salads to desserts was attractively displayed in a long row of glass-enclosed cases.

The chain of Pixley & Ehlers had several downtown locations. These were cafeteria-style restaurants but they were much smaller than the Forum. My co-worker and I sometimes had lunch at the Pixley's on Madison near Franklin.

The niceties of etiquette were not observed at Pixley's - not by the customers and not by the staff. There was no "Enjoy your meal, Gentlemen," no "Have a nice day." The object was to get in, get your chow, wolf it down and get out. We knew it and the staff knew it. We would go there on days when we had errands to run and didn't have much time for eating.

A counterman who took our orders stood behind a chest-high counter. In front of the counter the customers formed not a line but a knot. It was a case of dog eat dog; the most aggressive customer, the one who had the loudest voice, got the counterman's attention and he would shout, "Gimme a pork tenderloin on rye with a slice of raw onion."

The counterman would then sing out to the short-order cook working a few feet

away, "Pawk tennaloin, pawk tennaloin, pawk tennaloin! On rye! Slice o' raw!"

A few moments later, the counterman would shove across the counter a plate holding the sandwich. The customer would take it to a table and eat.

Several chains operated restaurants downtown. One of them, called B/G, had a half-dozen locations, as did Harding's. There were a couple of Peter Pan Snack Shops in the Loop. Then there were a number of Toffenetti's Triangle Restaurants — why they were called "Triangle" I have no idea — which specialized in ham and sweets. I often ate supper at a Toffenetti's on Madison near LaSalle. Stouffer's had three Loop restaurants.

A chain of hamburger grills took its name from the character Wimpy in the "Popeye" comic strip. (Wimpy was inordinately fond of hamburgers.) There was a Wimpy's on the northeast corner of Clark and Madison, a virtual landmark for years.

I have fond memories of another place where we had lunch. I don't recall where in the Loop it was situated, but I recall the name: E. W. Rieck's. We called the place the beanery.

We didn't use the term "beanery" as a pejorative. Rieck's was a nice little place with a lunch counter, and the specialty of the house was baked beans. The beans, with a chunk of salt pork if you wanted it, were served in a ceramic bean pot. On the side: a plate of Boston brown bread with butter. It was a simple meal but a good meal. The place was always crowded.

In the venerable Fine Arts Building, at 410 S. Michigan, was a restaurant called the Piccadilly. It was off the beaten path — up on the fourth floor — and I don't believe that it did any advertising. For those reasons, I don't imagine that many people knew that the restaurant existed, except for the tenants of the building and the students of music and dance who took lessons there.

Once at the Piccadilly I had lunch consisting of a bowl of mashed potatoes — which were very good, by the way. The restaurant was not fancy, but it didn't need to be, for its meals came with a bonus that few restaurants could offer: If you had a table near the windows, you could eat your meal while your eyes feasted on a sensational view of Buckingham Fountain right across the way.

Hungarian beef goulash was the specialty of the Epicurean, on Wabash just south of Jackson, where the tables were covered with red-and-white-checkered tablecloths. If you had dessert at the Epicurean, it would most likely be apple strudel.

Several Cantonese restaurants dotted a small area in the very heart of the Loop. Best-known, probably, was the Hoe Sai Gai, at 85 W. Randolph. The Orchid was on Dearborn north of Madison. Ong Lok Yun was across the street. At 11 N. Clark, in the building that housed the Clark Theatre, was the Bamboo Inn. In 1954, the South Pacific opened; it was in the basement of a building on the north side of Randolph near Dearborn.

The Cafe Bohemia was situated on Clinton across from Union Station. The bill of fare here featured game meats: venison, bear, even elephant. You might see the carcass of a bear hanging upside down from a tripod on the sidewalk in front.

On occasion as I ate supper at Cafe Bohemia, a man would startle some of us diners by emerging from a back room preceded by two huge dogs — I think they were a Great Dane and a St. Bernard. The man and dogs would wend their way among the tables to the exit. I assumed that the man was the proprietor going home for the night and taking his pets with him.

"One of my favorite places for a dinner date was Otto K. Eitel's Old Heidelberg. In the dining room, live dinner music was provided by a trio comprising violin, cello, and electric organ."

The *Chicago Daily News* was published in the Daily News Building, at Madison and Canal. A block east was the Hearst Building, where the *Chicago American* was put together. Right across the street was a restaurant called Press Row, where a lot of newspaper people ate. A couple of friends and I also ate there on evenings when we had to stay downtown.

Remember Henrici's? It was a well-known restaurant on Randolph near Clark. Henrici's motto was

Superb Food Perfectly Cooked Correctly Served With No Musical Din

On the northeast corner of Randolph and Dearborn stood the Kopper Kettle, always busy.

The Mayflower, on Dearborn just north of Washington, was a doughnut shop with a counter which was not straight but curved, almost circular. The Mayflower was a pleasant place to spend a few minutes with coffee and a doughnut and your morning paper.

Around the corner from Orchestra Hall, on Adams, was Manson's restaurant. (I believe it was later renamed Munson's.) On a Saturday night, after a "pops" concert by the Chicago Symphony, Manson's was a bustling place.

A couple of Loop restaurants reputed to be gathering places for celebrities were Mike Fritzel's, at State and Lake, and Gibby's, at Clark and Lake.

For decades a Chicago institution was the Blackhawk, on Wabash near Randolph, home of the spinning salad bowl.

One of my favorite places for a dinner date was Otto K. Eitel's Old Heidelberg. The Old Heidelberg had an elegant dining room on the street level and a rathskeller in the basement. In the dining room, live dinner music was provided by a trio comprising violin, cello, and electronic organ. The leader was the violinist, a young, tall, slim, handsome, blond man whose name was Franz.

In 1976 I had occasion to meet the famous Chicago maestro Franz Benteler. During the course of our conversation I asked Mr. Benteler if, by chance, he had been the young violinist whose trio had played at the Old Heidelberg some 25 years before. Yes, he told me, very early in his career he had played there with a trio.

Next time you find yourself on Randolph just west of State, look on the north side of the street. You'll see a building with a facade resembling an old German inn. That building was the home of the Old Heidelberg.

Breakfasts, lunches, snacks, dinners, midnight suppers — I had many meals downtown in the '50s; whether they were eaten amid the clamor and clatter of Pixley & Ehlers or the Continental ambiance of the Old Heidelberg, all of them were pleasurable.

If you haven't been downtown for some time, why not have lunch there soon? There are many good places to choose from, ranging from inexpensive fast-food cateries to elegant (and pricey) dining rooms, some trendy, some traditional. Select one that's been recommended to you and go downtown with a friend some sunny weekday and enjoy yourselves. But don't look for any of the places I've mentioned. They are, sad to say, every one of them, gone. ■

Anne Francis' Radio and TV Days

BY CARY O'DELL

Anne Francis, today, remembers herself at age six and her trip to the John Robert Powers Agency, the kingpin of the modeling industry. "A friend suggested to my mom that I might make a good model. And so she took me over there, to the Powers Agency," she recalls. "We sat in the outer office waiting with other young people and Powers looked around the corner from his office and said, pointing at me, 'I'll take that one.' That's how it started. He started the whole thing."

The "whole thing," as she called it, is a media-jumping, gravity defying career that has taken her from the golden days of radio to the heyday of Hollywood, from the early days of television to her present position as a cult icon for her signature role as TV's original gumshoe *Honey West*.

The daughter of a sales manager, Anne was born in Ossining, New York in the Depression days of the 1930s.

After her father lost his job due to the Depression, her family moved into the city so he could find work. The meeting with Powers and her transformation into a child model followed soon after.

Blond and fresh-faced — and with a beauty mark that predates Cindy Crawford — Anne was soon on billboards and in magazines. "A friend of my folks was a radio actor and he suggested I audition for Madge Tucker, whom he knew, for *Coast to Coast on a Bus*.

Coast-to-Coast on a Bus was a children's show that began in 1924 on WJZ and went network in 1927. It was enjoying great popularity when Anne joined as one of the ensemble of kids who "sang, did little fun stories each week," and rehearsed and performed the show every Sunday. For the rest of the week cast members went to school and took singing and dancing lessons. "I didn't immediately get other work" she remembers, "but as time went along I began to appear on *When A Girl Marries* and *Let's Pretend*.

Let's Pretend, created by Nila Mack, was known as "radio's outstanding children's theatre" and ran on CBS from 1939 until 1954. For the program Mack adapted well-known stories and fables: *Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty* and works by Hans Christian Anderson. According to Anne, "We did all the classic tales."

During, and after, *Let's Pretend* Anne also had parts in radio's *Big Town*, and on the daytime serials *Rosemary* and *Aunt Jenny's True Life Stories*. "Though for kids they weren't that complicated roles [to play]," she says. "They all sort of varied, which was fun to do." Her longest-running role was for three years on the classic soap *When A Girl Marries*, written by Elaine Carrington.

"Radio was a small community and you got jobs by referrals." She estimates that she took part in over three thousand radio broadcasts during her career. When not on the air, she attended New York City's Professional Children's School, which she remembers as being very strict. "If you didn't keep your grades high, the child welfare board pulled you out of working."

Anne was such an active young presence in radio that she was soon tagged "The Little Queen of Soaps." "I don't know who

ANNE FRANCIS

came up with that — a reporter, press agent, who knows?" Nevertheless, it stuck and she enjoyed some perks that the label brought her, including on-air audiences with New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and Eleanor Roosevelt. Of the latter, Anne remembers, "She really loved kids. And I was one of a small group who performed on a radio show that was built around her, where she was being interviewed. I did a scene with her talking about charity programs."

While radio was still her bread and butter, Anne soon found herself in something brand new and experimental: television. "I was part of a group of kids of Madge Tucker's who performed in a television bit around Christmas, 1939. It was another little fairy story with princes and princesses. We sang and danced. I remember I wore a red satin off-the-shoulder dress though I had nothing to hold it up with!"

Anne Francis' first regular television appearances began in 1941. "It was," she remembers, "a daily children's program, with an actress who played my mom and a cartoonist who did cartoons of the books we were reading. We aired daily on CBS — which was in Grand Central Station — from 2 to 2:15 p.m. After we were done with our show, a man in a buffalo plaid shirt, with moccasins with his toes sticking out, would come over. He came on after us, singing songs. And that's how Burl Ives got his start."

Unlike many of her peers, she remembers television as "not bad or hard work but with huge, clunky cameras, with long heavy cables, teams of guys pushing dollies and very, very hot lights."

Anne Francis' participation in those early TV productions places her in a small group, along with only Hugh Downs and Eddie Albert, among performers who started in TV so early and have stayed actively employed by it up to today.

In 1943, she headed west for one year where she made her screen debut for MGM in a Mickey Rooney film. But after that, it was back to New York, to radio and more TV.

"I hosted a television show called *Versatile Varieties*. I did that weekly and did commercials for the floor covering company that sponsored the show. It really was a variety show. We had hypnotists, jugglers, dancers and singers. In between I did the commercials for Bonnie Maid Linoleum. I was Bonnie Maid. I wore the Scot plaid outfit and the tam and I was pursued by two evil characters named Wear and Tear and every week I outwitted them with my skid-resistant tile linoleum," she says. "We did these little skits and, at the end of the show, I and two other Bonnie Maids sang. One of the Maids was Eva Marie Saint."

Soon Anne was a regular player on live TV anthology productions, including *Kraft Television Theatre* and *Lights Out*. "I did an episode of *U. S. Steel Hour* with Johnny Carson; it was his one and only acting role,

Cary O'Dell is the Archives Director and Television Archivist for the Museum of Broadcast Communications.

comic or dramatic." Live television presented its own unique experiences, including an installment of *Studio One* where the actor playing opposite her mistook the live broadcast for the rehearsal. "He was walking through his performance and not handling the props. Finally they got the message to him that this was IT, this was the show NOW!"

All of Anne's television exposure led back to films — and, eventually, to MGM where she starred in such classic fare as *Forbidden Planet* and *Bad Day at Black Rock*.

After those and other features, she came back to television, making guest appearances on *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* among other shows. One of her most notable performances was in Rod Serling's original *Twilight Zone*. The 1960 episode, "The After Hours" is usually considered among the very best of the series. In it she plays a little lady lost, stuck in a department store and not knowing how she got there. Only at the close of the story does the character realize she's really a store mannequin granted a brief sojourn in the human world.

By far Anne Francis' most famous television role was as original sexy detective *Honey West*. A spooky coincidence highlighted her getting the role. Recalling the event, "I was having lunch with my agent one day at the Brown Derby. He knew I wasn't really interested in being a lead in a series, but asked me if I were to do one, what would it be? I told him I would love it to be action and glamourous and lots of excitement with fun characters. Like a female Amos Burke [of the series *Burke's Law*].

"The next day he called me. 'What's this game you and Aaron Spelling are playing?' he asked. I don't even know Aaron Spelling. But he thought Aaron and I were playing some trick because Aaron had called and wanted me for the spin-off role of Honey West on a *Burke's Law*."

Based on the pulp fiction of Skip and Gloria Fickling, *Honey West* was a female detective with James Bond-worthy gadgets, a wardrobe of black leotards and mink stoles, and a pet ocelot named Bruce. ("I had to have my tetanus shots every six weeks," she remembers.

Though the series lasted only the 1965-66 season (ABC could import episodes on *The Avengers* from Great Britain far cheaper than they could continue to produce *Honey*), it has become a cult favorite for its stylish performances and its sexy feminist action heroine. (What goes around comes around: Anne is set to record six of the *Honey West* novels for RKO Unique, a books-on-tape company.)

Anne admits she's still more recognized for it than anything she's ever done. "Young women, now in their thirties, come up to me on sets and tell me how much the series meant to them. 'You gave me the ability to think I could lead an exciting life. I wanted to BE Honey West'." Even a mechanic who came to fix her car not long ago greeted her with, "Well, I'll be damned. Honey West!"

Says Anne of her alter-ego, "I just played her tongue-in-cheek and had fun with her. I could never do the real heavy sex stuff 'cause I would get the giggles." Sometimes she had to fight with the producers over their suggestions regarding her on-screen image. "One of them came to me one day and said, 'Anne, you know the way you walk... you walk more like a man. You don't wiggle enough.' I mean, come on!"

Regardless of her walk, Anne Francis was Emmy-nominated for her performance. "I was nominated with my friend Barbara Stanwyck, and we cheered each other on. She won it that year." But Anne did win the Golden Globe for the series.

ANNE FRANCIS as "HONEY WEST"

The cancellation of *Honey West* was a mixed blessing. "I don't know how another year was going to work with my daughter because I hardly ever saw her. I was in every scene and we shot long, long days. And then we worked over the weekends on scripts for the next week."

But even after *Honey West*, Anne was never far from view. Too dependable not to bounce back, she was soon appearing with clockwork regularity in episodic television. So numerous are her guest appearances that most reference books end up concluding her list of credits with "many more."

In 1971 she was on *My Three Sons* as a waitress who falls in love with Steve Douglas' cousin Fergus (Fred MacMurray in a second role). By this time in the show's history, MacMurray had truncated his work schedule to only a few days a month. To accommodate him, the producers bulk-taped his scenes, changing his sweaters to fool audiences. This was the case when Anne joined the series and she often found herself playing to a stand-in.

She joined the cast of *Dallas* — just after the "Who Shot J. R.?" phenomenon — in 1981 playing Mitch's mom. She had a semi-recurring role on *Riptide* as a crusty boat woman, Mama Jo.

Comedy became a forte as well. She had funny roles in *Murder, She Wrote*, on the program's premiere in 1984 and a few seasons later where her portrayal of a very strident food inspector was a crowd pleaser. On *Golden Girls* she guested as Bea Arthur's old rival.

Lately, she says, "I've been playing a lot of toughies" including a recent role opposite Lisa Hartman-Black in the TV movie *Have You Seen My Son?* where *People* magazine feted her performance. And she recently did a very funny spot on *Wings*, playing "a *film noir*-like character."

But Anne Francis has not always been only about acting. In 1982 she wrote *Voices from Home: An Inner Journey*. Frequently referred to as her "autobiography, its author thinks it isn't quite that. "It really is an 'inner journey' even though my life in the business weaves in and out of it. I think it's more of a spiritual biography." Frank, but not confessional, she explores many new age topics and relates her own experiences with the metaphysical.

Today, after a lifetime spent in front of a microphone or camera, the actress says she's purposefully cut back on her workload. "If a script doesn't interest me," she says "I'd rather stay home and read or garden or write."

She might have earned the right, but her fans who have been watching and listening for decades, who have grown accustomed to her presence and grown dependent on her, aren't ready to let her go. ■

Chuck Schaden's

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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

OCTOBER 1996

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5th
HOT TIME IN THE OLD TOWN
Observing the 125th Anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871

PHIL HARRIS-ALICE FAYE SHOW (1-30-49) The Town Council is looking for a new Fire Chief and Phil is asked to do the job. Cast includes Elliot Lewis, Walter Tetley, Robert North. Rexall, NBC. (28:51)

LUX RADIO THEATRE (10-9-44) "In Old Chicago" starring Dorothy Lamour, Robert Young, and John Hodiak in a radio version of the 1938 film, a story of Chicago, leading up to the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Cecil B. DeMille hosts. Lux Soap, CBS. (17:25; 19:33; 21:40)

REFLECTIONS (7-14-71) Bill Griskey tells the story of another fire in Chicago, July 14, 1874. WCLR, Chicago. (3:50)

BILL STERN'S SPORTS NEWSREEL (10-25-46) The famed sportscaster with fantastic stories, including the story of a fire in Peshtigo, Wisconsin on the same day as the Great Chicago Fire. Guest is Gene Autry. Colgate, NBC. (14:50)

AMERICAN FAMILY NEWS (6-4-46) John Harrington reports on the LaSalle Hotel fire, "Chicago's worst hotel fire." Many stories of fire victims. Bob Cunningham gets an eyewitness account from a woman who was able to escape from the hotel. American Family Flakes, WBBM, Chicago. (14:33)

MAL BELLAIRS (1963) A collage of announcements regarding the $20 million fire at McCormick Place. WBBM, Chicago. (5:00)

FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (10-14-41) The Mayor asks McGee to become —on a temporary basis— Fire Commissioner of Wistful Vista. Cast features Jim and Marian Jordan as the McGees, Isabel Randolph as Mrs. Uppington, Bill Thompson as Nick Depopolous and Wallace Wimple, and Gale Gordon in his ***first appearance*** as Mayor LaTrivia. Also: Harlow Wilcox, Martha Tilton, King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (30:14)

See article about the Chicago Fire, Page 10.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12th
THIS DAY — THAT YEAR

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (10-12-41, *exactly 55 years ago today*) From New York City. Jack and the gang talk about the reviews of last week's season opener season and the Broadway shows they have seen. Jack distributes train tickets for the trip back to Hollywood. Jell-O, NBC. (30:37)

GREAT GILDERSLEEVE (10-12-49, *exactly 47 years ago today*) Harold Peary stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve, with Walter Tetley as Leroy, Mary Lee Robb as Marjorie. Summerfield's most eligible bachelor has a date with a pretty nurse. Kraft Foods, NBC. (29:18)

DRAGNET (10-12-50, *exactly 46 years ago today*) Jack Webb as Sgt. Joe Friday with Barton Yarborough as Det. Ben Romero. A man, posing as a doctor, burglarizes the homes of his patients. Fatima Cigarettes, NBC. (26:15)

FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (10-12-53, *exactly 43 years ago today*) Fibber impatiently awaits an important phone call. Sustaining, NBC. (14:57)

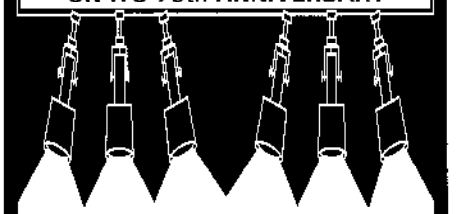
SUSPENSE (10-12-53, *exactly 43 years ago today*) "The Shot" starring Van Heflin in "the story of an incomplete duel... with one of the adversaries choosing to wait to fire the shot." Cast includes Harry Bartell, Jack Edwards, Barney Phillips, Joseph Kearns. AutoLite, CBS. (29:07)

FRONT PAGE EXCLUSIVE (10-12-55, *exactly 41 years ago today*) "...your transcribed newspaper of the air which covers the world as its beat." Sustaining, MBS. (13:20)

FRONTIER GENTLEMAN (10-12-58, *exactly 38 years ago today*) "Aces and Eights." John Dehner stars as J. B. Kendall, reporter for the London Times, writing colorful accounts of life and death in the West. Researching a story on Wild Bill Hickok, Kendall interviews Calamity Jane. Cast includes Lawrence Dobkin, Virginia Gregg, Jack Moyles, Jack Krushen, Stacy Harris, Vic Perrin. Sustaining, CBS. (22:55)

SATURDAY OCTOBER 19th

SALUTING
THE CHICAGO THEATRE
ON ITS 75th ANNIVERSARY



Recreating the stage and screen presentation at the Chicago Theatre, October 11-24, 1940:
—ON SCREEN—
Leading The Thrill Parade!
KNUTE ROCKNE. ALL-AMERICAN
starring
Pat O'Brien and Ronald Reagan.
—ON STAGE—
Leading The Laugh Parade
In Person— First Time in Chicago!
STAN LAUREL and OLIVER HARDY
with their own company
in their own Huge Stage Revels!

★

Saluting the stage presentation at the Chicago Theatre, May 9-15, 1947:
—ON STAGE—
The Greatest Show Value
The World Has Ever Known
—Regular Adult Prices For All Seats—
All In Person — One Week Only!
JACK BENNY
Phil Harris — Rochester
Sportsmen Quartet

★

Recreating the stage and screen presentation at the Chicago Theatre, October 7-13, 1949:
—ON SCREEN—
The All-American Picture
That's Winning All America's Heart!
FATHER WAS A FULLBACK
Fred MacMurray and Maureen O'Hara
—ON STAGE—
The World's Most Famous Comedian
In Person!
DANNY KAYE
And His Own Stage Revue

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26th
ANNUAL HALLOWEEN SHOW

INNER SANCTUM (1940s) "Make Ready My Grave" starring Joan Banks and Richard Widmark with Jackson Beck. Story about a "boy and girl who have just been married; a piece of colored string; an open grave; and a hangman's noose." AFRS rebroadcast. (24:37)

CRIME PHOTOGRAPHER (9-11-47) "Graveyard Gertie" stars Staats Cotsworth as Casey, Jan Miner as Ann Williams and John Gibson as Ethelbert. Casey and his girlfriend discover an old woman in a cemetery at midnight. Anchor-Hocking Glass, CBS. (28:14)

LIFE OF RILEY (1950s) William Bendix stars as Chester A. Riley, with Paula Winslowe. Bobby Ellis, Jim Backus, and John Brown as Digby O'Dell, the friendly undertaker. Intent upon moving to a new home, Riley finds a beautiful Beverly Hills dream house — with a low rent — overlooking a cemetery. AFRTS rebroadcast. (27:53)

THE SHADOW (9-14-47) "When The Grave is Open." Bret Morrison appears as Lamont Cranston with Grace Matthews as the lovely Margo Lane. Two grave robbers deliver the wrong body to their client. Blue Coal, MBS. (28:18)

DEVIL AND MR. O (1970) "Gravestone" introduced by Arch Oboler. Three women on a winter holiday in the country find themselves in a snow covered cemetery. This is a syndicated version of the **Lights Out** drama "Poltergeist" originally broadcast 10-20-42. (25:48)

Note: Ken Alexander will join Chuck for today's entire broadcast which will originate from a cemetery somewhere in the Chicago area and will be heard on a special ghost-to-ghost network. Don't miss it if you can!

Chuck Schaden's

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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

NOVEMBER 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, NOVEMBER 2nd

IMAGINATION THEATRE (3-24-96) "A double feature movie for your mind" is how this new-time radio series of mystery, adventure and science fiction is billed. Created and produced before live studio audiences at the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle, this syndicated series is currently being heard in more than 100 cities from coast-to-coast. *Those Were The Days* is the Chicago outlet for Imagination Theatre and, while we are not able to present the program every week, we will carry episodes as our schedule permits. This week's double feature: 1. "Blind Flight" — a desperate struggle to help a blind girl land a plane after her father collapses at the controls. (24:35) 2. "Coots" — a conniving con artist targets an old man who still has a few unexpected tricks up his own sleeve. (20:45)

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

ABBOTT AND COSTELLO SHOW (1944) Bud and Lou with guest Peter Lorre and regulars Elvia Allman, Mel Blanc, Ken Niles, Connie Haines, Freddy Rich and the orchestra. A health cure for Costello finds him admitted to Peter Lorre's sanitarium. AFRS rebroadcast. (27:45)

SUSPENSE (8-30-45) "Nobody Loves Me" starring Peter Lorre in an outstanding performance as a man who confesses to a kidnapping — and more. Roma Wines, CBS. (29:50)

See the article about Peter Lorre on page 31.

ROY ROGERS SHOW (9-19-48) The King of the Cowboys stars with Dale Evans, Gabby Hayes, Foy Willing and the Riders of the Purple Sage. Gabby tells the story of "Ghost Town Men." Quaker Oats, MBS. (29:23)

Note: Roy Rogers' 85th birthday is November 5th.

PLEASE STAND BY — A History of Radio (1986) Lesson 14: **Entertainment Tonight** tracing the growth of the variety show, whose beginnings paralleled that of radio comedy. Through its golden years in the 1940s, the variety show was the magnet which drew to radio headliners from other fields of entertainment. (30:00)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11th
BING CROSBY
AND HIS FIRST FAMILY

Note: This program will feature excerpts from selected radio broadcasts between 1945 and 1954 featuring Bing Crosby, Bob Crosby, Bing's sons Gary, Phillip, Dennis and Lindsay, and his wife Dixie Lee Crosby.

COMMAND PERFORMANCE #165. (4-26-45) Frank Sinatra is visited by Bing's kids — Gary, age 11; twins Phillip and Dennis, 9; and Lindsay, 6 — all members of the Sinatra Fan Club! (4:20)

BING CROSBY SHOW (11-16-49) Bing is visited by his brother Bob and Bob's daughter Cathy, age 10. Bob wants Bing to change his name. Cathy sings "Dreamer's Holiday" with her dad and uncle. Bing and Bob sing "Whispering Hope." (18:23)

BING CROSBY SHOW (1 18 50) Bing's son Gary, age 16, in his debut as a radio soloist. Gary wants an advance on his allowance and permission to go on a date with Barbara Whiting. Gary sings "Dear Hearts and Gentle People." (15:08)

BING CROSBY SHOW (3-1-50) Bob Crosby is unhappy being known as "Gary's Uncle." Bing and Bob reminisce about the "good old days" and sing "Enjoy Yourself." (17:09)

BING CROSBY SHOW (3-8-50) Guests are actor Gary Cooper and Gary Crosby (who was named after Cooper). Bing and Coop recall the day Gary Crosby was born. (18:43)

BING CROSBY SHOW (3-15-50) Twins Dennis and Phillip Crosby, age 14, are organizing a Gary Crosby Fan Club. Phil sings an old song and Dennis sings a new one. (15:14)

BING CROSBY SHOW (4-19-50) Eleven year old Lindsay Crosby needs a box to reach the microphone. Lindsay sings "Rag Mop." (16:25)

BING CROSBY SHOW (11-15-50) Bing's brother Bob wants to be a movie star and asks Bing for help. Later they reminisce about their younger days in Spokane. Bing and Bob sing "Let's Do It Again." (18:46)

BING CROSBY SHOW (12-20-50) It's Christmas Eve at the Crosby Home in Beverly Hills; Bing insists upon playing Santa for his sons. Bing's wife Dixie Lee tolerates the bunch! (16:25)

BING CROSBY SHOW (4-11-51) A confident 12-year-old Lindsay Crosby says he's "familiar" with the record Bing and Gary made. Bing and Lindsay sing "On Moonlight Bay." (5:45)

BING CROSBY SHOW (4-18-51) A confident 17-year-old Gary joins his dad to sing "When You and I Were Young Maggie Blues." (8:18)

BING CROSBY SHOW (4-4-54) Gary, now 20, and Lindsay, now 15, harmonize in a medley of old tunes. (11:49)

BING CROSBY SHOW (4-11-54) Gary and Lindsay pay another visit to their Dad's show and sing more old tunes. (10:43)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16th

HALLMARK HALL OF FAME (11-15-54) "Rebecca Dorsey" starring Helen Hayes in the true story of a student doctor who performed important medical work with Professor Louis Pasteur. Host of the program is Lionel Barrymore ***who died the night this transcribed broadcast was aired (42 years ago).*** Hallmark Cards, CBS. (28:19)

HALLMARK HALL OF FAME (11-22-54) "A Tribute to Lionel Barrymore" hosted by Edward Arnold and featuring Bing Crosby, Helen Hayes, James Stewart, Gene Fowler, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, Louis Calhern, Dore Schary. Program includes audio clips from Barrymore's radio series, The Mayor of the Town and Story of Dr. Kildare. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (28:07)

(FITCH) BANDWAGON (12-20-42) Chico Marx and his orchestra with 17-year-old Mel Torme in a program of music and humor. Guest is bandleader Ben Pollak who inspired Chico to form his own band. Torme sings "Abraham" and Chico performs "Beer Barrell Polka" on the piano. AFRS rebroadcast. (29:00)

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (3-28-46) The final episode in the Dragon's Teeth series. Kidnapped by Nazi agents, Lois Lane, caught in a teriffic dust storm, is rescued by Superman. Clayton "Bud" Collier as the man of Steel. Dan McCullough and Jackson Beck announce. Kellogg's Pep, MBS. (14:25)

IMAGINATION THEATRE (3-31-96) "A double feature movie for your mind." 1. "Dreamstate" — a psychiatrist discovers his patient is living two lives: a priest by day and a killer at night. (20:35) 2. Adventures of Harry Nile: "Dead Ringer" — the detective saves a woman from drowning and gets tangled in a vicious murder himself. (25:05) Syndicated.

PLEASE STAND BY— A History of Radio (1986) Lesson 15: **Tune In Tomorrow** traces the history of the soap opera. Ridiculed and ignored by some listeners, the "soaps" became a way of life to millions of others in every stratum of American life. (30:00)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23rd
ANNUAL THANKSGIVING SHOW

ALDRICH FAMILY (11-25-48) Ezra Stone stars as Henry Aldrich with Jackie Kelk as Homer Brown. While Central High students are planning activities for the annual Thanksgiving dance, Henry suggests a "Turkey Run." Jell-O, NBC. (28:44)

MARK TRAIL (11-20-50) "...thrilling adventure in the great outdoors!" Matt Crowley stars as Mark Trail with Joyce Gordon as Cherry. Jackson Beck narrates. Just before Thanksgiving, turkey ranch owner Jim Pilgrim discovers that his flock has been poisoned. Kellogg's Corn Flakes, MBS. (30:27)

LET GEORGE DO IT (11-20-50) "Cause for Thanksgiving" starring Bob Bailey as private eye George Valentine, with Virginia Gregg as Brooksie. On Thanksgiving Day a ten-year-old boy is so scared that he can't —or won't— talk. Standard Oil of California, MBS. (30:01)

GREAT GILDERSLEEVE (11-16-41) Gildy and his family decide to invite some servicemen to share Thanksgiving dinner. Hal Peary as Gildy, with Walter Tetley, Lillian Randolph, Earle Ross, and Shirley Mitchell as Mrs. Shapiro. Kraft Foods, NBC. (29:47)

WE THE PEOPLE (11-23-48) Host for this Thanksgiving week broadcast is Dale Carnegie, lecturer, philosopher and author ("How to Stop Worrying and Start Living"). Featured are actress Lili Palmer; author Betty MacDonald ("The

Chuck Schaden's

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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

NOVEMBER 1996

Egg and I"), balladeer Burl Ives (singing "Blue Tail Fly"), the St. Thomas Church Choir, Oscar Bradley and the orchestra. Announcers are Dwight Weist and Dan Seymour. Gulf Oil, CBS. (28:20)

PLEASE STAND BY — A History of Radio (1986) Lesson 16: **A Dramatic Production** discusses radio drama which brought pleasure and escape to America at a time when it was desperately needed: during the Great Depression. The dramas were reflections of life in various strata throughout the world, and were educational as well as entertaining. (30:00)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30th RADIO TO GET INTO THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT BY

HALLMARK HALL OF FAME (12-20-54) "A Christmas Carol." As a tribute to actor Lionel Barrymore, who died this year, the Hall of Fame presents a transcription of his last broadcast (from 1953) in the role of Ebeneezer Scrooge in the Charles Dickens classic. Host is Edward Arnold and the cast includes Virginia Gregg, Joe Kearns, Byron Kane, Anne Whitfield, Lemont Johnson, Herb Butterfield, Parley Baer, Ted DeCorsia, and Lawrence Dobkin. Hallmark cards, CBS. (29:16)

CHRISTMAS SEAL CAMPAIGN SHOW (1948) Jimmy Durante and Garry Moore try to convince Garry's cousin that there is a Santa Claus. Christmas Seals, syndicated. (14:15)

GRAND OLE OPRY (1960) It's the Opry's 21st annual network Christmas Show with George Morgan, Chet Atkins, Minnie Pearl, Archie Campbell, Grandpa Jones and the Jordanaires, broadcasting holiday cheer from the stage of the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville. AFRTS rebroadcast. (30:06)

DAMON RUNYON THEATRE (1949) "Palm Beach Santa Claus" starring John Brown as "Broadway" who tells the story of how a fat friend was recruited to play Santa for a Palm Beach socialite. Syndicated. (25:45)

ARCHIE ANDREWS (12-13-47) Bob Hastings as Archie with Harlan Stone as Jughead Jones. A Christmas shopping mix-up doesn't get any better at Stacy's Department Store when the floorwalker accuses Archie and his father of shoplifting. Swift's Meats, NBC. (28:36)

PLEASE STAND BY — A History of Radio (1986) Lesson 17: **Panic!** reviews Orson Welles' infamous "War of the Worlds" broadcast and its aftermath. (30:00)

...and for more good listening...

ART HELLYER SHOW-- Music of the big bands and the big singers with lots of knowledgable commentary and fun from one of radio's ledgendary personalities, **now in his 50th year on the air!** *WJOL, 1340 AM, Saturday, 9 am-1 pm; Sunday, 2-6 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.*

JAZZ FORUM-- Chicago's foremost jazz authority, Dick Buckley, presents an entertaining and enlightening program of great music by noted jazz musicians. *WBEZ, 91.5 FM, Monday thru Thursday, 8:30-9:30 pm; Sunday 1-4 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 weekend edition of the popular series which features old time radio broadcasts and interviews. *WMAQ, 670 AM, Saturday and Sunday, 10pm-midnight.*

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REMEMBER WENN-- a sitcom made to order for old time radio fans, based on the glory days of radio. *American Movie Classics. Check your cable guide for time and channel.*

"When Radio Was" -- WMAQ-AM 670

Monday thru Friday Midnight to 1 a.m. Host Stan Freberg

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
October, 1996 Schedule				
	1 Duffy's Tavern Pt 2 Green Hornet	2 Dragnet Aldrich Family Pt 1	3 Aldrich Family Pt 2 Life of Riley	4 Damon Runyon Theatre The Unexpected
7 Gangbusters Burns & Allen Pt 1	8 Burns & Allen Pt 2 Dimension X	9 Lone Ranger Jack Benny Pt 1	10 Jack Benny Pt 2 Box Thirteen	11 The Shadow Vic and Sade
14 Philip Marlowe Abbott & Costello Pt 1	15 Abbott & Costello Pt 2 Tales of Texas Rangers	16 Suspense Charlie McCarthy Pt 1	17 Charlie McCarthy Pt 2 Sgt. Preston of Yukon	18 Six Shooter Unsolved Mysteries
21 Hopalong Cassidy Fibber McGee Pt 1	22 Fibber McGee Pt 2 Mercury Theatre	23 Lone Ranger Great Gildersleeve Pt 1	24 Great Gildeersleeve Pt 2 Murder By Experts	25 The Shadow Strange Dr. Weird
28 Mysterious Traveler The Unexpected	29 Mystery in the Air Lights Out	30 Lights Out Strange Dr. Weird	31 Suspense Unsolved Mysteries	
November, 1996 Schedule				
				1 Our Miss Brooks Bill Stern
4 Lux Radio Theatre Part 1	5 Lux Radio Theatre Pt 2 Gunsmoke	6 The Shadow Charlie McCarthy Pt 1	7 Charlie McCarthy Pt 2 The Whistler	8 Philip Marlowe Vic and Sade
11 Suspense Abbott & Costello Pt 1	12 Abbott & Costello Pt 2 Green Hornet	13 Lone Hanger Fibber McGee Pt 1	14 Fibber McGee Pt 2 Gangbusters	15 Tales of Texas Rangers Bob and Ray
18 Box Thirteen Johnny Dollar Pt 1/5	19 Six Shooter Johnny Dollar Pt 2/5	20 Dragnet Johnny Dollar Pt 3/5	21 Jack Benny Johnny Dollar Pt 4/5	22 Suspense Johnny Dollar Pt 5/5
25 Have Gun, Will Travel Burns & Allen Pt 1	26 Burns & Allen Pt 2 Sgt Preston of Yukon	27 The Shadow Great Gildersleeve Pt 1	28 Great Gildersleeve Pt 2 Life of Riley	29 Lone Ranger The Unexpected

"ARE YOU READY, HEZZIE?"

And Other Harmonious High Jinks Of Those Hilarious Hoosier Hot Shots

BY WAYNE W. DANIEL

For some three decades "Are you ready, Hezzie?" was, in terms of current jargon, a way cool question. It was a widely used informal query among Americans who were in touch with the then most modern entertainment media. But like "I dood it," "Well, I'll be a dirty bird," and "In like Flynn," the once familiar "Are you ready, Hezzie?" has fallen by the vernacular wayside. Members of pre-baby boomer generations will recall that the question originated with the Hoosier Hot Shots, a quartet of merry minstrels who regularly committed musical mayhem on stage, screen, radio, and records from the mid-thirties into the seventies.

The story of the Hoosier Hot Shots begins on a farm near Arcadia, Indiana, about 20 miles north of Indianapolis. It was here on September 13, 1903, that Kenneth Trietsch first saw the light of day. He was to be one of a family of four girls and five boys, children of parents with musical inclinations that included a banjo-playing father.

About 18 months after Kenneth's birth, Mrs. Trietsch, on April 11, 1905, gave birth to another son who was given the name Paul. It was these two brothers, Ken and Paul, who, because of their love of music and entertaining, eventually formed the nucleus of the Hoosier Hot Shots.

Except for a brief period when the family lived in Georgia and Alabama, the Trietsch brothers spent their formative years in rural Indiana, not far from where they had been born. By the time he was five years old Ken was coaxing melodies from a tuba which, since it was almost as large as he was, had to be placed in a chair before he could play it. In high school he won prizes for his corn crops and played in a 65-piece concert band. While still a young man he went off to New York where he played in the Paul Whiteman and Vincent Lopez orchestras.

Meanwhile, younger brother Paul was developing his taste for music which, due to household circumstances, took somewhat of an unorthodox turn. While growing up Paul found himself to be the one selected by Mrs. Trietsch to help with the Monday morning family laundry duties. His initial distaste for this chore soon gave way to fascination as he discovered the musical potential of the washboard. Between overalls and chambray shirts he amused himself and his mother by whistling and strumming an accompanying rhythm on what he would later call his "Monday morning piana."

One of Paul's other duties on the farm was bringing home the cows for their evening milking. Every cow had her bell, and their simultaneous ringing that would have been a vexatious clamor to others, sounded to Paul's sensitive ear like a pleasant pastoral melody. To his inventive mind it seemed only natural that he should attach a cowbell or two to the washboard for musical variety. He later augmented this bane of the housewife's existence with such other noisemakers as pie tins, wood blocks, bicycle horns, whistles, and garbage can lids. Over the years he wore out more than a dozen washboards before having one specially made of an enduring alloy which he allegedly insured for $10,000. Paul's Wabash Washboard became the centerpiece of the Hoozier Hot Shots sound and visual image and was widely imitated by many other entertainers who aspired to mix a little merriment with their musical ministrations.

Ken and Paul were not the only musically inclined of the Trietsch children. Early on the other brothers also got in on the act. When a minstrel show featuring local talent was staged in a nearby town the five brothers made their own instruments, dressed up in outlandish costumes, and presented the audience with a performance that was great to its liking. Inspired by the enthusiastic reception, the elder Trietsch joined his sons to form an ensemble that played the American and Canadian vaudeville circuit for several years.

After the family act broke up, Ken and Paul went to work with another vaudeville group called Ezra Buzzington's Rube Band. Billed as Hezekiah (Paul) and Rudy Vaselino (Ken) they played drums and guitar, respectively. The Trietsches no doubt felt quite at home in the Buzzington band which was known for its novelty songs and unusual instruments.

While working for Buzzington, Ken and Paul made the acquaintance of another member of the band, Charles Otto Ward, known to his audiences as Gabriel Hawkins. Like the Treitsches, he was a Hoosier, having been born at Knightstown, Indiana, on November 26, 1904. At an early age he began studying clarinet and saxophone and over the years added fife, harmonica, and several reed instruments to his entertainment arsenal. Otto began his musical career as a solo clarinetist with a theater orchestra before joining the Buzzington aggregation with which he worked for eight years.

By the end of the 20's, movies and radio

HOOSIER HOT SHOTS about 1935. From left, Paul (Hezzie) Trietsch, Ken Trietsch, Frank Kettering, Gabe (Otto) Ward.

Wayne W. Daniel of Chamblee, Georgia, is a retired college professor and a country music historian. He has written more than 130 articles on the subject and is the author of Pickin' on Peachtree, A History of Country Music in Atlanta, Georgia, *published by the University of Illinois Press.*

'ARE YOU READY, HEZZIE?'

were taking their toll on vaudeville, but it was the crash of '29 that ended that source of income for the Trietsche brothers and Otto Ward who had found among themselves a kindred musical spirit. Like many a refugee from vaudeville, they set their sights on a career in radio and, pooling their talents, landed a job at WOWO in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. It was here that they unintentionally became known as the Hoosier Hot Shots. One day, when they barely made it to the studio in time for their program, a clock-conscious announcer, flustered by the prospect of their being late or not showing up at all, greeted them with the admonition, "Hey, you Hoosier hot shots, get in here!"

In 1933 while searching for greener pastures, the Hoozier Hot Shots took their act to Chicago where they had a successful audition at WLS, the *Prairie Farmer* station. Here Paul (now known as Hezzie), Otto (answering to the name Gabe), and Ken were given free rein to develop zany routines that made them one of the station's most popular acts. "What we had to sell was a product called stupid," Gabe once told a newspaper columnist. "That's what it was — stupid -- but it was what was needed at the time." Others have referred to the Hoozier Hot Shots' music as "fractured Dixieland" and a "cornball blend of bad jokes, ragtime sounds, [and] a little jazz." Their music was characterized by novel arrangements, comic songs, red hot rhythm, and when they wished, delightfully pleasant harmony. Though best known for songs with titles such as "I Like Bananas (Because They Have No Bones)" and "From the Indies to the Andes in His Undies," the Hoosier Hot Shots mostly played currently popular fare and such standards as "Ida," "Take Me Out To The Ball Game," and "Bye Bye Blues." Each

HOOSIER HOT SHOTS, about 1945. Clockwise, from top: Paul (Hezzie) Trietsch, Ken Trietsch, Gil Taylor, Otto (Gabe) Ward.

rendition bore the unmistakable mark of the Hot Shots' distinctive touch, including Ken's opening question — directed at his brother Paul — "Are you ready, Hezzie?"

In August of 1934, the Hoosier Hot Shots added a fourth man to their act. He was Frank Delaney Kettering, born January 1, 1909, in Monmouth, Illinois. His mother was a violin and piano instructor at the local conservatory. His grandfather taught him to play the fife, and at the age of five he was using the instrument to entertain civic groups in the area. By the time he was eleven he had graduated to the municipal band in which he played the piccolo. While attending Monmouth College, where he majored in engineering and English, Frank had his own band.

In the summer of 1927 Frank joined Ezra Buzzington's troupe and as a result of this turn of events made the acquaintance of the Trietsch brothers and Otto Ward who were already working for Buzzington. Seven years later when this trio of Buzzington alumni, now known as the Hoozier Hot Shots, decided to expand, they sent for Frank. As a member of the Hot Shots, he assumed responsibility for many of the group's musical arrangements and collaborated in the writing of many of their songs and tunes. On stage and radio appearances he played the bass fiddle.

At WLS the Hoosier Hot Shots had their own daytime programs, appeared on shows with the station's other artists, and were a regular feature of the Saturday night National Barn Dance which was heard on WLS and the NBC network. Through the week the Hot Shots toured the Midwest, making personal appearances in theaters and school auditoriums and at state and county fairs. At WLS, the Hot Shots shared the stage and radio studio with such other National Barn Dance regulars as the Arkansas Woodchopper, Patsy Montana, Lulu Belle and Scotty, the Maple City Four, the Prairie Ramblers, Pat Buttram, and Red Foley.

Record companies took notice of the Hoosier Hot Shots' popularity, and the foursome soon became frequent visitors to the studios where their sound was captured on 78 rpm discs. Over the years, for such labels as Banner, Conqueror, Decca, Melotone, Oriole, Perfect, Romeo, and Vocalion, they made hundreds of records that were played in homes and on juke boxes across the country. In recent years many of these old recordings have been reissued on long-play albums, cassettes, and compact discs.

The March 13, 1937, issue of *Prairie Farmer* announced that the Hoosier Hot Shots were Hollywood bound to appear in a Paramount motion picture called "Mountain Music" featuring Bob Burns and Martha Raye. Two years later the Hot Shots made another trip to the West Coast where they were cast in the Republic Studios' western "In Old Monterrey" that starred former National Barn Dance artist Gene Autry. Also appearing in the film were Smiley Burnette and the Ranch Boys, two other acts that had once worked on the Barn Dance. During the next ten years the Hot Shots appeared in more than 20 movies, including "National Barn Dance," the 1944 film based on the WLS-NBC radio show of the same name. Most of their movies, which included westerns, musicals, comedies, and all combinations thereof, were made for Columbia. In many of them the leading actor was western star Ken Curtis. In the movies in which they appeared, the Hot Shots shared billing with such country and western stars as Dale

HOOSIER HOT SHOTS AND UNCLE EZRA, about 1937. From left: Uncle Ezra, Paul (Hezzie) Trietsch, Ken Trietsch, Frank Kettering, Otto (Gabe) Ward. Uncle Ezra, whose real name was Pat Barrett, was a popular WLS and National Barn dance performer during the 1930s.

Evans, Carolina Cotton, Bob Wills, the DeZurik Sisters, Johnny Bond, Merle Travis, Foy Willing, Jimmy Wakely, and Red River Dave.

During World War II, the Hoosier Hot Shots were at the peak of their career, and like other entertainers of that era they made their contribution to the country's effort on behalf of the conflict. In 1944, Frank Kettering, the youngest member of the group, left for service in the armed forces. The Hot Shots were chosen for a USO Camp Shows tour to entertain American troops stationed in North Africa and Italy. While performinging for a Red Cross blood drive at the Douglas Aircraft plant in Long Beach, California, the boys realized the strength of their popularity when the Douglas folks christened one of their new bombers "The Hoosier Hot Shot."

When Frank Kettering left the Hot Shots, he was replaced by Gil Taylor who hailed from Alabama. In 1946 Taylor joined the others as the Hoosier Hot Shots bid farewell to Chicago and departed for the West Coast where they continued to make movies, records, and stage appearances.

They were also heard on radio, and during the 1950-51 season had their own program, "The Hoosier Hot Shot Show," on the Mutual network.

When television came along they took advantage of the new medium and were seen on such TV shows as the Tex Ritter Ranch Party. The Hot Shots did well in California. A 1947 magazine article reported that they all owned homes in the San Fernando Valley, a few miles from the Columbia movie studios. They were members of the San Fernando Country Club and found time to pursue their hobbies of golfing and water sports, including excursions off the California and Mexican coasts for deep-sea fishing.

By the end of the 1950's the Hoosier Hot Shots' career had begun to wind down, but they did not disband until the death of Paul "Hezzie" Trietsch on April 29, 1980. Frank Kettering had died in 1973, and Ken Trietsch passed away on September 17, 1987. The last survivor of the original Hoosier Hot Shots was Otto "Gabe" Ward who continued to perform solo after the others had died or retired. Billing himself as the Hoosier Hot Shot he sought bookings as a clarinetist, master of ceremonies, and comedian. In the years immediately preceding his death he regularly entertained at a senior citizens center near his home. Otto Ward died on January 14, 1992.

The Hoosier Hot Shots were not just a comical music act, they were the inspiration for a musical genre that thrived during the '30's and '40's.

Among the acts that were influenced by the Hot Shots were the Schnickelfritzers, the Korn Kobblers, and Bob Skyles and His Skyrockets. Skyles' group acknowledged the Hot Shots' influence in its 1937 recording titled "We're Not The Hoosier Hot Shots."

The most famous of the Hoosier Hot Shots-inspired acts was Spike Jones and His City Slickers. Jones, called "The Man Who Murdered Music," fronted a band that featured a washboard and played havoc with songs bearing such titles as "Drip, Drip, Drip (Sloppy Lagoon)," "I Dream of Brownie With the Light Blue Jeans," and the one that energized his cacophonous career, "Der Fuehrer's Face." Jones' biographer, Jordan R. Young, writes that the Hot Shots were of "particular inspiration" to Jones and Paul "Hezzie" Trietsch "made perhaps the biggest contribution to the Slicker sound."

If Spike Jones was the man who murdered music, the Hoosier Hot Shots first beat the victim to a pulp, making it easier for Jones to deliver the lethal blow. ■

A Little Terror

PETER LORRE

BY CLAIR SCHULZ

All together now: pinch your nostrils and put a guttural tone in the emphasized words: "I have this *anger* that comes from somewhere *way down* inside of me that drives me *on and on...*" Congratulations. You have just done a perfect Peter Lorre.

Professional impressionists will confess that Lorre is one of the easiest voices to copy, but the fact that mimics still include him in their repertoire is a tribute to the staying power of an actor who, though small in stature, stands tall among the best-remembered stars of cinema.

Most celebrities can produce 8x10 glossies of themselves in beaming poses for fans and the press; photographs of Lorre smiling in or out of character are uncommon, a fact which suggests that his life was not a joyful one.

There certainly was not much happiness during his early years. His mother died not long after his birth in Rosenberg, Hungary on June 26, 1904 and he was soon uprooted in a move to Vienna. He did not get along with his father and ran away at the age of seventeen to join a German theatrical troupe. He definitely was not an overnight success; in fact, he barely scratched out a living during the 1920s, but he was so convinced that acting was his calling that he abandoned his given name, Lazlo Lowenstein, for one that was simple for audiences to remember.

That name became famous in 1931 when Fritz Lang, who had seen Peter at work in a Berlin theatre, chose him to star in *M.* Lorre's portrayal of a child murderer who has no place to hide because he is sought by both police and the underworld is so effective that viewers are torn between feel-

Clair Schulz, a Nostalgia Digest *subscriber from Stevens Point, Wisconsin, is a regular contributor to our magazine.*

ings of pity and disgust. The role was a definitive one in his career for it was the paranoiac, the man who is both haunted and hunted, the possessed one who cannot help himself that Lorre did better than anyone else. The part of Dostoevsky's guilt-ridden Raskolnikov was a natural for him and in 1935 he assumed it in Columbia's version of *Crime and Punishment.*

Lorre delivered one of his best performances in another 1935 film, *Mad Love.* For this atmospheric horror picture, Lorre had his head shaved to become Dr. Gogol, a surgeon who becomes obsessed with an actress named Yvonne who is married to pianist Stephan Orlac. When Orlac's hands become useless after an accident, Gogol agrees for Yvonne's sake to graft the hands of an executed knife-thrower onto his arms, then tries to make Orlac and the police think the musician has committed a murder so he can have Yvonne for himself. Just after he tells his beloved that "every man kills the thing he loves" he is about to put his words into action when Orlac kills him with a dagger.

Perhaps the best word to describe Lorre's first characterizations is *creepy.* With the bulging eyes of the egghead Gogol he best exemplified the wild psychopath that all women dreaded. His hands just had to be cold and clammy, his panting breaths like those of a mad dog. In the early thirties Boris was sometimes billed as Karloff the Uncanny; at the same time Peter very easily could have been called Lorre the Loathsome.

Alfred Hitchcock, who had admired Lorre's work in *M* and had hired him for *The Man Who Knew Too Much* even before the actor knew any English, cast him as the General in *The Secret Agent.* Although John Gielgud and Madeleine Carroll were the stars, Lorre stole the movie playing what a reviewer for *The New York Times* called "one of the most amusing and somehow wistfully appealing trigger men since Victor Moore, a homicidal virtuoso."

His work for Hitchcock earned Lorre a contract with 20th Century-Fox. Out of this union came the Mr. Moto movies which proved beneficial for both parties: the series gave Peter a chance to play one of his most memorable characters and also provided the studio with a string of eight pictures that turned a nice profit filling the bottom half of double bills. As the laconic Japanese detective Lorre did a capable job

of underplaying a part, something that was against his natural tendencies.

In 1940 he again put on the villain's mantle as a sadistic warden in *Island of Doomed Men* and also joined Karloff and Bela Lugosi in throwing a few scares into Kay Kyser and crew in *You'll Find Out.* In 1941 he appeared in his first film for Warner Brothers, a mystery that is the stuff screen legends are made of.

The Maltese Falcon is most assuredly not Peter Lorre's picture, but it isn't Humphrey Bogart's or Mary Astor's or Sydney Greenstreet's either. It was the sum of all their parts under John Huston's skillful direction that created movie magic. Lorre's curly-haired, sleepy-eyed, effeminate Cairo was as far from his role as Gogol as Boise is from Bermuda, yet he was quite convincing as a mincing menace.

Peter's part as a doomed black marketeer in *Casablanca* the following year was small, but it probably is not just a coincidence that within thirteen months he appeared in two of the greatest motion pictures of all time. Certainly Bogart deserves some credit for this fame, but there was something about the contributions of Lorre and Greenstreet, tiny yet integral like bushes on a landscape painting, that would detract from the work of art if they were not there. Greenstreet and Lorre complemented each other so well that they were teamed in other films like *The Verdict, Three Strangers* and *The Mask of Dimitrios.* Whenever those two got together there was sure to be intrigue, double crosses, and suspenseful entertainment.

During the war years Lorre also appeared in two farces, *Arsenic and Old Lace* and *The Boogie Man Will Get You.* In *Lace* he got to ham it up as a tipsy and forgetful Dr. Einstein. In the latter film he played a mad scientist who, along with henchman Karloff, tried to profit off their experiments with dupe Maxie Rosenbloom. It was Lorre more than Karloff who was known thereafter as the Boogie Man.

A 1944 *Abbott and Costello* radio show took full advantage of his scary reputation as Bud took Lou to Peter's rest home which turned out to be as restful as a spook house on Halloween.

Lorre's appearances on radio's *Suspense* from 1942 to 1945 gave him six opportunities to split personalities. No other actor could go from sniveling whiner to raving psychotic as quickly as he could. His characters, like Joe Reese in "Nobody Loves

A LITTLE TERROR

Me" broadcast August 30, 1945, could develop persecution complexes that would hound them all their lives. Reese could be calmly chatting about books and then suddenly he would be ranting that "I had to get her to look at me in that beautiful, *naked* way from way back *deep* in her head." When Peter would go off the deep end on radio, it was hard to call it overacting because going overboard every few minutes was just his style like Al Jolson when he would belt out certain lyrics with gusto. The Peter Lorre sound-alike who assumed the role of pyromaniac on the Spike Jones parody of "My Old Flame" captured the "now he's crazy, now he's not" flavor of his delivery wonderfully.

When Abbott and Costello took their summer break in 1947, Peter starred in an NBC series entitled *Mystery in the Air.* In dramatizations of works by famous authors like Poe, Pushkin, and Maupassant Lorre was given free rein to play a variety of demented criminals. He had excellent support from notable performers such as Joe Kearns and Agnes Moorehead, who played a suspicious landlady in "The Lodger," the tale of a Jack the Ripper character tailored precisely for the actor who was at his best when he was on the spot. Near the end of the series in September Peter reprised his role as Raskolnikov in a sanitized adaptation of the Russian classic.

Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" would have been a superlative choice for *Mystery on the Air* for if ever there was an actor born to speak the ravings of a murderer tortured by conscience Peter Lorre was that man. He toured the United States giving readings of the story during 1947 while *The Beast With Five Fingers* was playing in many theatres around the country.

Beast is one of those oddities in which the title is better than the picture. Even the poster art showing a huge clutching hand promised more terror than was present in the story of a pianist's disembodied hand that appeared to be the source of the malevolence stalking those gathered in a lonely villa for the reading of a will. Although Lorre was billed beneath Robert Alda and Andrea King, audiences almost certainly came to see him chew the scenery and create some tension as he chased the hand around a room.

Lorre appeared on the screen infrequently during the late forties and early fifties and even when his film work increased in 1954 his parts were usually little more than cameos. He played a servant in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea,* a slave trader in *Five Weeks in a Balloon,* a raving Nero in *The Story of Mankind.* and a drunken clown in *The Big Circus.* At that time he told one interviewer, "I'll do anything they want me to be — ghoul, goon, or clown — as long as it's necessary." Necessary for the motion picture or necessary to make a living, he didn't say.

In the early sixties American International Pictures, riding the wave of renewed interest in Edgar Allan Poe brought about by the Roger Corman-Vincent Price collaborations, gave Lorre his final chance to strut and fret in front of the cameras. In "The Black Cat" segment of *Tales of Terror* he played a besotted cuckold who, after walling up wife and lover, was tormented by the image of a cat. He got an opportunity to stretch his wings in *The Raven* as Dr. Bedloe, yet another inebriated character who was a pawn or, more appropriately, a rook in a game of spells cast between sorcerers Karloff and Price. The three actors were featured as undertakers in *The Comedy of Terrors,* a spoof that gave all the major players including iron-lunged Joyce Jamison and indestructible Basil Rathbone some great moments.

Both Price and author Richard Matheson admitted that the lines coming out of Lorre's mouth were only an approximation of what had been written. This improvisation did not bother the scenarist and Vincent claimed that some of the ad libs were better than the original dialogue, but Karloff and other players were not amused when the cues were lost in Peter's translation. However, the people who signed the checks at AIP had no regrets that Lorre was just in the middle of a four-year contract which called for him to make five more pictures by the end of 1966. But all plans for future projects ended abruptly when Lorre died after suffering a stroke on March 23, 1964.

It was appropriate that Vincent Price delivered the eulogy for Lorre at the Hollywood Memorial Cemetery. Price really had developed an affection for his little buddy, who at 5' 5" stood nearly a foot beneath him. In those last three movies together Price got to know Lorre well and what he saw was an unhappy actor who had been hopelessly typecast.

But part of the web that ensnared Peter he had spun himself. He did not extend his boundaries as Price and Karloff had. We cannot picture him playing an insurance salesman or a rancher or an aristocrat. Instead he portrayed the villain, drunk, or madman over and over again.

Peter Lorre the actor may have been effective playing persecuted miscreants simply because he was capable of assuming exaggerated versions of Peter Lorre the man who believed that his size kept him from getting better parts. Of his 82 features only in the very early films and the Moto series was he given top billing. He appeared in only a handful of pictures that can truly be called horror films, yet he was cursed with the label of Boogie Man. Even his voice did not belong to him; he had to share it with copycats appearing in Vegas and on television and also with hoods who threatened radio detectives like Sam Spade and Richard Diamond. Long before Lorre died he had been eclipsed by his sinister image which Hollywood created and the public expected.

But he was wrong if he thought, like killer Joe Reese, that "nobody loves me." We love you, Peter. It's a love that comes from *way down* deep inside that keeps driving us *on and on...* ■

NOTE: *Hear Peter Lorre on the Abbott and Costello Show and on Suspense starring in "Nobody Loves Me" on* TWTD *Nov. 2nd.* *See listing on page 22.*

The Songbird of the South

BY ED KNAPP

Only recently did a touching story come to light about the late great Kate Smith. The event was recalled for me by an elderly gentleman who had seen the marvelous songstress in performance on stage while he was in his teens.

The story begins shortly after the chaotic 1929 market crash. City movie theatres were presenting live stage entertainment as an extra draw between runs of the newest film innovation, the "talkies." On this particular day the posh Oriental Theatre in Chicago was headlining a stage presentation starring Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra.

The flashing marquee spelled out his name in big letters as the main attraction, "In Person." Far beneath his billing, a name in small letters appeared at the bottom; a relative unknown, Kate Smith. The limiting space gave no clue to her performing talent.

The stage show had been in progress for ten minutes. One of Paul Whiteman's particularly jazzy instruments had hyped the audience into thunderous applause.

Their noisy response was continuing as an overweight young girl stepped from the theatre wings and moved to center stage. As the full-faced performer stood before the microphone and gazed out upon the sea of faces, they fell to a hush.

A big smile lighted her cheeky features. The appearance of her ample-size figure swaying nervously before them, prompted the crowd to burst into waves of infectious laughter.

It was quite normal for comedy acts to follow the musical interludes. The image of this sizable girl on stage did nothing to belie their belief.

The patrons tittered and bellowed with laughs of deafening proportion and the contagious humor abated only slightly when her trembling lips gave them reason to believe she was about to speak.

They were prepared to hear an outpouring of witty "fat" jokes and catchy one-liners.

Hardly audible above the raucous belly-laughter was her introduction by "Pops" Whiteman: "Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present Kate Smith, Songbird of the South." The laughs only intensified. Standing alone she tilted her head dejectedly to one side and broke down into a tearful outburst of emotion. Turning with head down, away from the chuckling audience, she faced the orchestra. Her rounded shoulders rent with uncontrollable sobs and mortified pain.

"Pops," fully realizing the shock to her humility, laid aside his baton and stepped close by her side. Placing a large comforting arm around her trembling shoulders, he offered the dress handkerchief from his suit pocket. Leaning forward he whispered in her ear amid the background confusion. She nodded to him in understanding.

Paul Whiteman once again turned to the restless crowd and announced, "It is a personal pleasure to introduce Miss Kate Smith." With that, "Pops" returned to the musicians and picked up his baton.

The much-distraught Miss Smith turned her tear-stained face back to the guffawing patrons beyond the footlights. Growing quiet as the conductor raised his baton, the audience sat in anticipation of another pleasant blend of stylish Whiteman music. The melodious strains of the orchestra drifted to a popular sentimental ballad. Miss Smith, with head held high and shoulders back, stepped forward to the microphone. Soon her full, rich voice joined in perfect compliment with the orchestra. The walls of the Oriental Theatre rang with the power, depth and classic feeling for the song in her pleasant self-trained voice.

A bewildered and much surprised crowd remained unusually quiet as her lilting delivery echoed off the furthest corner of the theatre's ornate walls. At this point, the audience seemed enthralled as her voice rose in a mesmerizing rendition of the lovely ballad. At the song's conclusion, Miss Smith's lyrical words faded on the orchestra's last note, as the large auditorium filled with a deafening surge of shouts, whistles and applause.

The exalted crowd jumped to their feet in approval and openly demanded: "More. More. Another song. More!"

Kate Smith stepped back to the mike, filled with confidence, as "Pops" raised his baton for an encore number. A small tear rand down Miss Smith's cheek, but this time it was a tear of happiness. She bowed before her newly captivated public in grateful appreciation and her face beamed with a smile of assurance as she broke into song.

That day a star was born. Her like has seen no equal.

Kate Smith, Songbird of the South as she was so aptly billed for many years, climbed the ladder of success; a popular headliner forever more.

"When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain" became her signature tune during an illustrious career on stage, screen, radio and, later, television.

Kate Smith's popularity spanned over forty triumphant years.

America's audiences were blessed with the reverent beauty of her powerful, sincere and marvelous voice. She had a special way with a song.

The memory of her as a great performer will live forever.

"God Bless America" for Kate Smith.■

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

OUR READERS WRITE

WE GET LETTERS

NORTHBROOK, IL— It was great fun reading your June-July *Digest* because of the several stories on 1936, the year of my birth. I've read and kept every issue since August, 1982, which featured my childhood idol Roy Rogers. Here's my two-year renewal. I hope you'll do something special to recognize Roy's 85th birthday on November 5th. —**WENDELL JOHNSON**
(ED. NOTE— Check the *TWTD* listing for November 2 for a Roy Rogers Show. And check with Metro Golden Memories for a new two-pack tape set featuring four broadcasts from 1948 starring the King of the Cowboys. If you'd like to send a birthday card to Roy, write him at the Roy Rogers Museum, 15650 Seneca Road, Victorville, California 92392. Happy trails!)

NAPERVILLE, IL— My husband and I were both born in 1936 so have especially enjoyed the June programs. It's fun to think that perhaps our parents listened to one of the same programs the year we were born! That was an extremely hot summer in Chicago and I'm sure there were lots of radios played on the front porch. It might be interesting to others to know what the weather was like 60 years ago! Our favorite feature in *Nostalgia Digest* is "Ken Alexander Remembers..." Brings back so many memories. —**GRACE ANSBURG**

DANFORTH, IL— I'm renewing my *Nostalgia Digest*. I was born in 1930, so you know I enjoyed radio; it brings back lots of happy days gone bye. My best programs are Lone Ranger and Gunsmoke. Don't ever stop the programs. A happy friend, — **DONALD MANSSEN**

HIGHLAND PARK, IL— What a great issue (August-September) of *Nostalgia Digest!* I have been hoping for a long time that you would feature Verna Felton on *TWTD* because of the great range of roles she played over so many years. Thus, I was pleased to see her featured on the cover of the magazine. The article by Bill Oates told so much about her, and about Bea Benadaret, that I was prompted to write, "What a great article." But then I continued and found so much that was right on target for me. Gene Tierney was the most beautiful of all of the stars I have seen. And Ed Knapp's article brought back memories of sitting in the closet waiting for that glow-in-the-dark belt to light up. It was in the mail when I got home from school and I couldn't wait until nightfall. Even liked the advertising this month. I'm now one tape into Gracie's 1940 campaign for the presidency. —**MARVIN DICKMAN**

VILLA PARK, IL— As a child I listened to the original broadcasts. I never caught Jack Benny's artistry and wondered why my parents listened each week to him. Thanks not only for the memories, but also for your enjoyable instruction. It has added for me a better understanding and appreciation for Jack Benny and the other old time radio personalities! —**MARY PANOSH**

LANSING, MICHIGAN— I enjoy the *Digest* very much, and while I miss the *Radio Classics* program on WBBM, I appreciate the "When Radio Was" schedule on WMAQ. As several listeners have already stated, it is very unselfish of you to include this schedule in the *Nostalgia Digest*. I enjoy all of the articles and stories and hope you will continue it for a long time. I am just sorry I am unable to get your Saturday afternoon broadcasts, but I enjoy reading the schedule anyway. Since I am blind, I have a machine that reads and speaks the printed material. This machine reads the *Nostalgia Digest* very well, so please keep up the good work, and thank you for helping to keep old time radio alive. —**MARY PHILLIPS**

LORETTO, PENNSYLVANIA— Enjoyed the article entitled "Those Lovable Rascals" by Gino Lucchetti in the April-May issue of *Nostalgia Digest*. While I whole-heartedly agree that Phil Silvers, aka Sgt. Bilko, was the "nonpareil of Lovable Rascals," I think the author judged the character too harshly when he wrote, "Bilko stopped at nothing to achieve an immediate, personally gratifying goal." True, he was a larcenous fellow with a talent and insatiable desire for easy money. It would only take the slightest glimmer of hope, the slimmest shred of evidence, and off he'd go on another "get rich quick" scheme.

But lest we forget, the original subtitle of the series was "You'll Never Get Rich." One must ask why. Time and time again, when presented with an opportunity to secure his own fortune at another's personal expense, he would always choose to do the noble thing. Bilko was a good study in the duality of Man — of human ability torn between the desire to do good, or to do evil. He eloquently sums up the dilemma in one episode: Having just thrown away another chance at the big money by being "Mr. Nice Guy," he spreads his arms, looks up to Heaven and says, "Lord, you gave me a quick wit. A nimble tongue. *Why* did you give me a conscience?"

We loved Bilko best -- not for what he got away with — but for what more he could have — what we all could — except for that tiny voice of conscience. I can't think of one contemporary character, so gifted to do evil, who always ended up doing so much good. We could do more with such "rascals."

I've just moved and was delighted to be able to pick up WMAQ on my first try here in Central Pennsylvania. It may have been a fluke, but I'm renewing my subscription for another year. It's a chance Bilko would have taken. —**PHILIP H. FOSTER**

CHICAGO-- On your June 1 show you said that the 2 March 1936 episode of Fibber McGee and Molly was heard in Chicago on NBC Blue Network outlet WLS. Chicago's Blue Network affiliate was WENR, which shared time with WLS at 890 kHz. I believe that WLS was a daylight independent ("The Prairie Farmer Station") located at 1230 W. Washington Blvd., and that it yielded to WENR (in the Merchandise Mart) at 6 p.m.
--H. BRIAN EYERLY
(ED. NOTE-- WLS was never a daytime only station; it shared the frequency with WENR and the general sharing arrangement in the mid-1930s had WLS using the frequency weekdays from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. and again from 7 to 8:30 p.m. WENR broadcast from 3 to 7 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. On Saturday, WLS took the entire evening, from 7 p.m. to midnight for the popular WLS National Barn Dance program. WENR took over for a hour, midnight to 1 a.m. On Sunday, WLS held forth from 7 a.m. to noon and 6:30 to 8 p.m.; WENR broadcast from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Occasionally, to accommodate the Blue Network, WLS would relinquish the time for a network program, probably compensating the Blue in some way or another. Incidentally, Red Network programs were carried on WMAQ and both the Red and Blue Networks were owned by the National Broadcasting Company. After an early 1940s Supreme Court decision breaking up the two networks, the Blue Network ultimately became the American Broadcasting Company.)

TEMPE, ARIZONA— I am researching the work of Philo T. Farnsworth and hope shortly to publish a documented biography. I am interested in interviewing any individuals who knew or may have worked with Dr. Farnsworth [an early pioneer in the development of television]. Anyone interested could write to me at the address below or call (602) 965-8661 and leave a message. I will return your call and we can talk on my nickle. I look forward to hearing from anyone who may have been associated with Dr. Farnsworth. —**DONALD G. GODFREY, Professor, Walter Cronkite School of Journalism, P.O. Box 871305, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-1305. Fax: (602) 965-7041.**

NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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 send by bulk mail.

Museum of Broadcast Communications

museum pieces

Reported by Margaret Warren

"The Indians are in there." That's what the hotel told Dorsey Connors one day years ago when she complained about a locked closet door in her tiny Cleveland hotel room.

Dorsey was in Cleveland to appear on Mike Douglas' enormously popular TV talk program and, by all standards, had been assigned the world's smallest room. She had taken along appropriate wardrobe and now there wasn't even a nail to hang it on.

"Why is the closet locked?" she asked. They told her that the Cleveland baseball team's uniforms were stored there. The uniforms remained. They gave her a hall tree. And we thought show biz was glamorous!

Dorsey Connors related that story and many others as she participated in a wonderful discussion one evening last summer at the Museum. It was "An Evening with Chicago Television Pioneers" with Bruce DuMont hosting the discussion which evoked memories going back to the dawn of Chicago TV. Executives Sterling "Red" Quinlan who ran Channel 7 and Channel 9's Sheldon Cooper took us back as did veteran producer-director Rachel Stevenson.

They talked of the glory days of easygoing Dave Garroway and rambunctious Tom Duggan. Sheldon Cooper told how he brought Phil Donohue to Chicago from Dayton for eight smash years.

Rachel Stevenson told us that early on as a director at Channel 11, calling the shots with an all-male crew wasn't a problem. She said they were all so busy that the guys didn't have time to resent being bossed around by a woman.

Red Quinlan recalled his days as Tom Duggan's boss. The ratings were tops, but keeping Tom under control was another matter. When Duggan took on the Mob, viewers loved him for his strong stand against the bad guys, but both he and Red ended up carrying guns, just to be on the safe side!

Dorsey Connors confessed that it was her producer and not herself who really had the creative talent with coat hangers.

It was a terrific evening of recollections and confessions. If you weren't there, be sure to stop by the Archives anytime and take a look at the tape.

TV PIONEERS-- Rachel Stevenson (right) makes a point during a discussion at the Museum in July. Other panelists were (from left) Dorsey Connors; Sheldon Cooper; Bruce DuMont, moderator; and Sterling "Red" Quinlan.

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← **THE HOOSIER HOT SHOTS**
entertained us on stage, screen and radio for over 30 years. Wayne Daniel's informative article begins on page 26.