

# NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

Amos 'n' Andy Charlie McCarthy Cinnamon Bear Escape  
Fibber McGee and Molly Great Gildersleeve Gunsmoke I Love  
A Mystery Jack Benny Lights Out The Lone Ranger Lux  
Radio Theatre Mercury Theatre On the Air One Man's Family  
Our Miss Brooks The Shadow Suspense Vic and Sade X Min-  
us One Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar Amos 'n' Andy Charlie  
McCarthy Cinnamon Bear Escape Fibber McGee and Molly  
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Suspense Vic and Sade X Minus One Yours Truly, Johnny  
Dollar Amos 'n' Andy Charlie McCarthy Cinnamon Bear Es-

## 20 Best Old Time Radio Shows of the 20th Century

THOSE WERE THE DAYS  
LISTENERS' CHOICES

# The Best of The Bickersons on Sale!

*Don Ameche and Frances Langford star as John and Blanche Bickerson in a dozen classic comedy sketches originally broadcast on NBC's Old Gold Show and Drene Time.*

**FEBRUARY 9, 1947** Blanche dreams that John was kissing another woman.

**MARCH 16, 1947** John's snoring keeps Blanche from sleeping so she asks him to say something poetic to her.

**MARCH 30, 1947** John plans to go fishing with his boss, but Amos has taken his fishing pole.

**APRIL 13, 1947** Blanche blames John for spending their money on bourbon; besides, she's sick and can't sleep.

**MAY 18, 1947** Blanche wants John to make out his will because he failed an insurance exam.

**NOVEMBER 15, 1947** Blanche doesn't like the present John gave her for her birthday.

**NOVEMBER 26, 1947** John is in the hospital about to have an operation to cure his snoring.

**MARCH 26, 1948** Blanche wants John to get rid of a tattoo.

**APRIL 30, 1948** John has taken another job so they can move to a new home.

**JUNE 4, 1948** It's the Bickerson's eighth wedding anniversary, but John



couldn't attend the party because he had to work late.

**JUNE 11, 1948** Blanche calls the doctor about John's snoring.

**JUNE 18, 1948** Blanche has found a new home and it's moving day for the Bickersons.

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# CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

BOOK TWENTY-FIVE

CHAPTER FIVE

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1999



## Listeners Choose 20 Best Old Time Radio Shows Of the 20th Century

As we approach the year 2000, it seems that everyone is compiling lists of "the best," "the most," "the outstanding" everything, and so we thought we, too, should jump on the Millennium Bandwagon.

Last May we asked listeners of our *Those Were The Days* program to select the twenty best old time radio shows of the Twentieth Century.

This was, of course, not to be a scientific poll, just a more or less spontaneous, but thoughtful, expression of the listening choices of the fans of old time radio. We asked listeners to choose not an individual episode from a series, but rather just one program --their all-time favorite radio show-- and then let us know.

It was an exciting month as listeners called our broadcast to "vote" or sent their choice by mail or e-mail.

Many said that it was very difficult to single out just one show; they had so many old time radio favorites that they enjoyed. In fact, a number of listeners sent in their own list of twenty shows, their personal choices for the twenty best. But since we wanted only *one* choice from each respondent, we took their first choice and added it to our list.

And when the "voting" was over on June 1, we had actually received nominations for 73 different old time radio shows.

So we tabulated the "ballots" to find the top twenty vote-getters and come up with the *20 Best Old Time Radio Shows of the 20th Century* as determined by our *Those Were The Days* listeners. Here are the results:

### 1. THE JACK BENNY PROGRAM

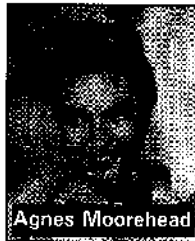
Always among the top-rated shows during radio's Golden Age, Jack Benny along with his super-talented cast of performers entertained listeners for 26 years (1932-1958 including network reruns). Noted for his sense of timing, Jack was most often the *victim* of the comedy. His character was so fully defined that audiences *knew* how he would react to a situation, then sat close to the radio, *waiting* for that reaction. Benny's cast always got the better of him and, in so doing, got most of the laughs. When Jack went to the vault, Ed, the guard got the comedy lines. When he took violin lessons, it was Professor LeBlanc who got all the laughs. When Jack was at home or in his Maxwell it was Rochester who not only was funnier, but *smarter*. At the railroad station, the doctor's office, the department store, Jack didn't have a chance. *Everyone* had great, funny lines. Masters of the "running gag," Jack and his writers worked hard each week to come up with an entertaining show. They always did.



Jack Benny

## 2. SUSPENSE

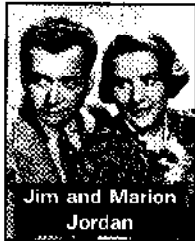
Radio's "outstanding theatre of thrills" brought quality drama with a suspenseful ending to listeners for 20 years (1942-1962). Using some of the medium's top writers, producers and directors, this series maintained an unusually high level of story telling. Producers recruited many of radio's most celebrated artists and mixed them generously with stars of stage and screen who, more often than not, were asked to perform in roles that were unusual for them. Many a screen or radio comedian would be cast in the role of a killer on *Suspense* while other actors and actresses, known for their lovable personalities, would be called on to perform as evil or deranged characters. Many *Suspense* programs became radio classics, including "Sorry, Wrong Number" by Lucille Fletcher, starring Agnes Moorehead (performed seven times). As radio was changing in the mid-to-late 1950s and early '60s, and as its' airtime evaporated, sometimes, to as little as 20 minutes, *Suspense* rose to the challenge, continuing to provide quality entertainment right to the end.



Agnes Moorehead

## 3. FIBBER MCGEE AND MOLLY

Jim and Marian Jordan along with writer Don Quinn, fashioned one of the most beloved radio shows of the era, bringing home-spun laughter to listeners for 24 years (1936-1959). The McGees started out in a broken down automobile, driving around the country, getting into one funny situation after another until one day they rolled into a little town called Wistful Vista. Fibber bought a raffle ticket on a house and won first prize: the nice little home at 79 Wistful Vista. That's where they stayed, greeting with guffaws and gags such local visitors as next door neighbor Gildersleeve, Mayor LaTrivia, Doc Gamble, Wallace Wimple, Mr. Old Timer, Teeney (the little girl who lived across the street) and, of course, announcer Harlow Wilcox who annoyed the Squire of Wistful Vista as he extolled the virtues of the sponsor's products. Fibber, who never had a job -- or finished any job he started-- thrived as a teller of tall tales, an opportunist, a schemer, but also a devoted husband who loved Molly dearly ("Ahh, there goes a good kid!"). This show was responsible for one of radio's most anticipated sound gags: the crash that resulted whenever someone opened their hall closet. "Gotta straighten out that closet one of these days."



Jim and Marion Jordan

## 4. THE SHADOW

The show had one of the best-known openings on the air: "Who knows... what evil... lurks... in the hearts of men?... The Shadow knows! Heh, heh, heh, heh." From the pages of a Street and Smith pulp magazine to the radio in our living room, *The Shadow* thrilled young and old alike for 24 years (1930-1954). A character called "The Shadow" served as a narrator of a mystery drama for the first several years, then in 1937 he became Lamont Cranston, "wealthy young man about town," who had learned in the Orient the hypnotic power "to cloud men's minds" so that they could not see him as he tried, successfully each week, to apprehend an evildoer and prove that "crime does NOT pay." Over the years such stalwart radio actors as Orson Welles, Bill Johnstone and Bret Morrison were among those who provided the voice of *The Shadow*, whose "constant friend and companion" was "the lovely" Margo Lane, played variously by Agnes Moorehead, Marjorie Anderson, Grace Matthews and Gertrude Warner.



Bret Morrison

## 5. THE LONE RANGER

With his faithful Indian companion, the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains led the fight for law and order on radio for 23 years (1933-1956 including network reruns). The show, a favorite of young listeners as well as adults, was the story of a Texas Ranger who, as the only survivor of an outlaw ambush that killed his brother and his other fellow Rangers, went on to avenge their deaths by becoming a champion of justice. With his friend Tonto, the Lone Ranger traveled throughout the early western United States, never killing an outlaw, just shooting the



Brace Beemer

guns out of their hands or slightly wounding them with his silver bullets, forged at his secret hideout, an abandoned silver mine. The character was played in most of the early shows by Earle Graser, who died in an automobile accident in 1941. The role was taken over by Brace Beemer, who had been the announcer on the show, and who carried the part to its conclusion. Tonto was played throughout the run by John Todd, a theatrically-trained stage actor. The show's theme, Rossini's "William Tell Overture" became the most famous theme music on radio. "Hi-Yo Silver! Awaaaaaay!"

## 6. AMOS 'N' ANDY

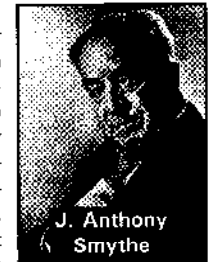
They were known as "radio's all-time favorites" during the 32 years (1928-1960) Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll appeared on the air as two white men using black dialects. In the earliest days, the program was listened to six nights a week by some forty million people who dropped everything to tune in. Movie theatres advertised that the picture would be stopped and a radio turned on so the theatre audience could listen in; a person walking down the street on a summer evening could hear the show coming from every house they passed; telephone usage dropped by nearly fifty per cent while the program was on the air. Amos and Andy were the co-owners of the "Fresh Air Taxi Company" (named because the car they bought had no windshield). Their at first daily then, later, weekly adventures captured the hearts and funny bones of Americans who loved not only the two leads, but also George Stevens, the "Kingfish" of the Mystic Knights of the Sea lodge, a character who became so popular that the show could have become known as "Kingfish and Andy." Holy mackerel! Ain't dat sumpin'!



Freeman Gosden  
Charles Correll

## 7. ONE MAN'S FAMILY

In 3,256 episodes writer Carlton E. Morse told the story of the Barbour family of the Sea Cliff section of San Francisco in a program "dedicated to the mothers and fathers of the younger generation and to their bewildering offspring." Audiences listened attentively for 27 years (1932-1959) as Henry and Fanny Barbour raised and participated in the lives of their five children, their spouses and numerous grandchildren. It was a sweeping saga that moved along in almost real time as the children --Paul, Hazel, Claudia, Clifford, Jack-- grew up and the family grew older and larger. Listeners grew up and grew older, too, as they seemed to become a part of the Barbour family, sad that Paul failed to find true romantic happiness and frustrated that grandson Pinky had a hard time shaping up at college. J. Anthony Smythe portrayed Henry Barbour on the first broadcast and he was there for the final show. "Yes, yes."



J. Anthony  
Smythe

## 8. LUX RADIO THEATRE

The glamour and excitement of Hollywood was brought into living rooms from coast-to-coast each week for 21 years (1934-1955) by a soap company whose name not only adorned the title of the program, but dominated the intermission between-acts and the actors' curtain calls. For the first two years the series was broadcast in New York, but when the program moved to the West Coast in 1936 with movie producer Cecil B. DeMille as host, the series became an outstanding showcase for the elite of America's celluloid acting community. Year after year stars and supporting stars from virtually every Hollywood studio appeared in radio versions of current and not-so-current films, often in their original screen roles, frequently in parts they didn't have the chance to play on the screen. Its hour-long format provided sufficient time to produce respectable versions of most of the movies offered and the subject matter spanned every type of motion picture: comedy, drama, adventure, mystery, musical, western. When DeMille left in 1945, producers William Keighley and Irving Cummings stepped into the role. Lux presents Hollywood!



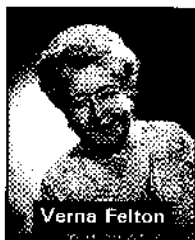
Cecil B. DeMille

## 9. VIC AND SADE

Writer Paul Rhymer created "radio's homefolks" in Chicago and for 14 years (1932-1946) the

## 16. THE CINNAMON BEAR

The most beloved children's story to emerge from the Golden Age of Radio, *The Cinnamon Bear* was given life by writer-creator Glanville Heisch in 1937. Fashioned as a recorded 26-episode "cliffhanger" serial, it was syndicated to radio stations across the country during the Christmas season. Twins Judy and Jimmy Barton are in their attic, searching for the silver star for the top of their Christmas tree when they meet a tiny, four-inch high teddy bear who comes to life and tells them the Crazy Quilt Dragon has taken the star. The twins "de-grow" and travel with Paddy O'Cinnamon to Maybe Land where they meet such characters as Snapper Snick the crocodile, Penelope the pelican, Mr. Presto the magician, Captain Tin Top, Weary Willie the stork, the Wintergreen Witch, Queen Melissa, and even Santa Claus. All these new Maybe Land friends either help or hinder in the search for the star, so it's touch and go as to whether or not Judy and Jimmy will be able to retrieve it in time for Christmas. Among the better known radio performers who appear in the series are Verna Felton, Frank Nelson, Hanley Stafford, Joseph Kearns, Elvia Allman, Howard McNear, Gale Gordon, and Lou Merrill. "Bless my stuffin's!"



Verna Felton

## 17. GUNSMOKE

The story of the "violence that moved west with young America" came to radio near the very end of the Golden Age, but *Gunsmoke* added originality, creativity and gave added life to the medium over a period of nine years (1952-1961). It was radio's first "adult western" offering fully developed characters and stories aided and abetted by a fine musical score and creative sound effects, called "sound patterns" that gave the listener credit for having an imagination. Veteran actor William Conrad was perfect in the role of United States Marshal Matt Dillon of Dodge City, Kansas... "the first man they look for, and the last they want to meet." The first-rate supporting cast of veteran radio performers added to the joy of listening: Parley Baer as deputy Chester Proudfoot; Georgia Ellis as saloon keeper Kitty Russell; and Howard McNear as Doc Adams. The scripts, too, were of the highest caliber, written mostly by John Meston.



William Conrad  
Georgia Ellis

## 18. OUR MISS BROOKS

Walter Denton (Richard Crenna) and Harriet Conklin (Gloria McMillan) were teenagers who attended Madison High School on radio for nine years (1948-1957). They were taught by English teacher Connie Brooks and biology teacher Mr. Boynton (Jeff Chandler), with principal Osgood Conklin (Gale Gordon) looking over everyone's shoulders the whole time. The program centered on the activities of Miss Brooks, played by Eve Arden whose portrayal of a school teacher was filled with lighthearted warmth and good humor, providing great fun for listeners. She was usually short of money, often frustrated by the demands of her boss, and always thwarted in her attempts to have some sort of a social life through her personal attraction to Boynton, who was embarrassed at any hint of romance. The scene shifted each week from the classroom to Miss Brooks' apartment where she received some degree of aid and comfort from her landlady, Mrs. Davis (Jane Morgan). Frequently the victim of someone else's scheme, Miss Brooks never hesitated to come to the rescue when there was trouble, but she often bumped into trouble of her own.



Gale Gordon  
Eve Arden

## 19. X MINUS ONE

From the "far horizons of the unknown" came this short-lived, three year (1955-1958) series of outstanding science fiction dramas. Based mostly on stories from *Galaxy* magazine, the program brought an adult approach to the weekly tales of the future, an approach that had not been apparent on such juvenile sci fi adventures as *Flash Gordon*, *Buck Rogers*, or *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet*. Ernest Kinoy and George Lefferts wrote and adapted stories by authors Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov and others who gave radio's declining listeners a thrill ride into the future for "adventures in which you'll live in a million could-be years on a thousand may-be worlds." Added to the mix was a



Joan Alexander

top notch cast of East Coast performers who had cut their teeth on radio and were still there to provide state-of-the-art performances: Mason Adams, Joan Alexander, Larry Haines, Bob Hastings, Mandel Kramer, Charlotte Manson, Lawson Zerbe, and a score of others. "Count-down for blast-off... X minus five... four... three... two... X minus one... Fire!"

## 20. YOURS TRULY, JOHNNY DOLLAR

"America's fabulous free-lance insurance investigator" was portrayed by no less than six different actors during its 13 year run (1949-1962). Charles Russell (1949-50) was the first to play the "man with the action-packed expense account," followed by Edmund O'Brien (1950-52), John Lund (1952-54), Bob Bailey (1955-60), Bob Readick (1960-61), and Mandel Kramer (1961-61). In an unusual twist in dramatic programming, the series, usually in a half-hour format, switched to a five-times-a-week, quarter-hour format for the 1955-56 season. Each story was complete in five chapters, giving the writers a chance to expand the stories and enrich character development. In either format, it was a private eye show with a difference. Dollar was hired by insurance companies who wanted him to check out claims they felt were fraudulent, but his investigations often lead him to murder or murderers as he traveled across the country. He kept careful track of all his expenses, itemizing them for his client as he went along, finally solving the case, totaling up his expenses and signing his report, "Yours truly, Johnny Dollar."



Charles Russell

So there you have it: the *20 Best Old Time Radio Shows of the 20th Century* as chosen by listeners to our *Those Were The Days* program. We want to thank everyone who participated in this effort.

It may be interesting to note that the listeners' number one choice, *The Jack Benny Program*, received 26 per cent of the total votes cast in this survey. In fact, the first five shows on our list received a total of 53 per cent of the total votes cast. Finally, of the 73 "nominated" shows, those that ended up in the top 20 received 79 per cent of all votes cast.

In addition to being honored by our listeners, many of the **20 Best** programs and their stars have already been inducted into the **Radio Hall of Fame**. *Amos 'n' Andy Show*, *Charlie McCarthy Show*, *Fibber McGee and Molly*, *Lone Ranger*, *Lux Radio Theatre*, *Mercury Theatre on the Air*, *One Man's Family*, and *The Shadow* have all been so-honored.

Individuals from our **20 Best** who have been inducted are Eve Arden, Jack Benny, Edgar Bergen, William Conrad, Charles Correll, Freeman Gosden, Jim and Marian Jordan, Fran Striker (writer of *The Lone Ranger*), and Orson Welles.

This year, in induction ceremonies to be broadcast nationally on November 20, the **Radio Hall of Fame** will induct Gale Gordon, who was heard regularly on four programs from our **20 Best** list: *Fibber McGee and Molly* (as Mayor LaTrivia), *Our Miss Brooks* (as Mr. Conklin), *Great Gildersleeve* (as Mr. Bullard), and *Cinnamon Bear* (as Weary Willie, the stork). Also to be inducted this year is Kate Smith, who did not make our listeners' **20 Best** list, but who nevertheless made important contributions to radio and certainly deserves her place in the **Radio Hall of Fame**.

And, speaking of *The Cinnamon Bear*, the popular holiday series will return to our *Those Were The Days* program this year after a ten year absence. The 26-episode serial will begin on November 6th and continue until the last chapter is played on December 18. Check the listings for more details.

--Chuck Schaden

# Buddy Clark Remembered

BY WALLY ANTUCK

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Buddy Clark, an outstanding American vocalist of popular music, and arguably the finest ballad singer of the Twentieth Century.



Returning from a Michigan-Stanford football game in a chartered two-engine Cessna airplane, Buddy Clark died shortly after the plane crashed into Beverly Boulevard near Benton Way in Los Angeles on October 1, 1949. Ray Noble, the English-American band leader who worked with Buddy, said "This was one of our greatest tragedies and an awful shame, because this man was going to be a big name. He had all the earmarks of it.

Buddy Clark was born Samuel Goldberg on July 26, 1912 in Boston, Massachusetts. Considered an excellent athlete in his youth, he remained an avid sports enthusiast throughout his life. Friends recall that he was a likeable young man with a pleasing personality who was willing to sing at the slightest urging.

In 1932, at age 20, he began singing professionally as "Buddy Clark" in a local night club and over local radio. ("Samuel Buddy Clark" became his legal name in 1938.) His first appearance on network radio occurred in 1934 as a vocalist with the Benny Goodman orchestra on NBC's *Let's Dance* program. From then until 1949, Buddy performed on many network radio shows as a featured vocalist or host-

*Wally Antuck of Lansing, Michigan is a retired art teacher who has an extensive collection of Buddy Clark recordings, broadcasts and memorabilia.*

vocalist.

He started his studio recording career as a free-lance vocalist during 1934. Because of his remarkable voice and his talent as a "quick study," he became much in demand by a number of orchestras and a variety of commercial and radio transcription recording companies.

In 1937 Clark's work expanded to Hollywood films in the role of "ghost singer," dubbing his singing voice for a movie's leading man. First it was for Jack Haley in *Wake Up and Live*, later it was for William Holden and Mark Stevens. His voice was used in the movies *Song of Surrender* and *Melody Time*. In a small acting role, he appeared in the 1942 film *Seven Days Leave*. Buddy also appeared and sang in two movie shorts and in at least two "soundies."

From 1943 to 1945 he served in the U.S. Army. His non-training time was devoted to entertaining wounded soldiers brought back to American hospitals. Backed up by the 344th Army Services Band, Buddy and Bob Eberle were the featured vocalists on two Army radio shows, *Notes from Your Soldier's Notebook* and *Just For You*.

1946 was a pivotal year in Clark's performing career.

On March 11 he appeared on the NBC *Carnation Contented Hour* radio program ostensibly as a guest vocalist. In reality, it was an audition. That night Buddy's singing, personality and humor captivated the studio audience and the sponsor. He was hired and made his first permanent appearance on the program of June 3: he soon became the host and featured vocalist. Buddy and Percy Faith, the conductor of the 36-member Carnation Orchestra, aided in transforming *The Contented Hour* from



Buddy Clark

its semi-classical music format to a quality program of modern popular music. Ted Dale succeeded Percy Faith in 1948, and Jimmy Wallington became the new announcer for *The Contented Hour*. The Girl Friends, a vocal group, joined the cast in February, 1949 backing up Buddy's vocals and occasionally performing solo.

During this period *The Contented Hour* was very popular and Buddy Clark's vocal talent was at or near its apex. Carnation was very pleased with Buddy and indicated to him that he could remain with the program for as long as he cared to. Carnation began working on plans to enter television in 1950. If *The Contented Hour* became televised, Buddy Clark would have been introduced to a larger national audience and would surely have rewarded him with a greater public acclaim, a level of acclaim that his fans and peers knew he richly deserved, but never reached.

A few days after joining *The Contented Hour* in 1946, Clark began a successful recording career with Columbia Records. His first recordings became popular with the public and included "South America, Take It Away," "All By Myself," "How Are Things in Glocca Morra," "If This Isn't Love" and "Peg O' My Heart." Buddy's recording of "Linda" with Ray Noble and

his orchestra and Anita Gordon, soon occupied a first place position on the Hit Parade. He teamed successfully with Doris Day and Dinah Shore on a number of duets. His duet with Dinah Shore of "Nobody's Home at My House" was his last recording. At the time of his death he had made 133 issued recordings for Columbia Records.

Buddy Clark has been described as a warm, bright, humorous, animated and appealing man. He could not be described as handsome and he was quite sensitive about his appearance. He said, "I'm getting old and bald and I'm not the type to make them squeal, and I have no ambition to become a movie hero. Just so they keep buying my records."

Clark has been described as a baritone with a straight forward style, possessing a wide vocal range with a clean, unaffected sound, "who sang every song as though his pleasure as singer was greater than ours as listener, whose warmth with a lyric has precluded anyone ever taking his place."

Bing Crosby said that "Buddy Clark has the greatest voice in America."

When Buddy heard what Crosby said, he called it "the greatest compliment ever paid me" and that such a compliment made him forget that he wasn't the handsomest guy around.

On the evening following Buddy Clark's death, Walter Winchell reported on his radio program that "Al Jolson once told me that he considered Buddy Clark's voice the best of them all!"

Some questions still remain concerning Buddy Clark. Why hasn't a complete biography been written about this musical gem? And when will Columbia Records issue a boxed set of compact discs containing all of his released and un-released recordings? After all, it's been fifty years! ■  
*NOTE --Hear Buddy Clark on The Contented Hour on TWTD Nov. 27.*

# MY MAGNIFICENT FRANK BUCK SUN-DIAL WATCH

BY ED KNAPP

"Hey kids, listen! Don't delay. Send for this genuine exciting EXPLORER'S SUN WATCH today," the highly excitable



words of the radio announcer exclaimed.

I listened with intent as a 1930s' pre-teen, still looking for more adventure than possible from the movie thrillers. Big Little Books, playing with neighborhood friends, or a fast,

breezy running board ride.

Arriving home from grade school late afternoons, I would tune in the radio for another episode of *Frank Buck's Bring 'em Back Alive* program. This occasion was made special with the excitement generated by a new giveaway premium offer, along with the fact the adventure show supplied those "extra" red-blooded stirrings I sought.

"Boys and girls," the announcer continued, "Frank Buck is ready to offer you an electrifying new prize, and it's yours for just sending in a box-top and a few cents for mailing." "Gosh," I said to myself in boundless anxiety, "this must really be something." Heretofore, Frank Buck's radio program sponsors had given away an Adventure Club Handbook, jungle games, genuine "ivory" knife, a keen black leopard ring, and a full color map of wild jungle locales where Buck's harrowing adventures were taking place.

Frank Buck was a real-life, fearless wild

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



Frank 'Bring 'em Back Alive' Buck

animal trainer who built a famous reputation on capturing wild animals on hunts in remote jungles of India, French Indo China, Sumatra, and Borneo. The courageous explorer/hunter had also appeared in several documentary movies (*Fang and Claw, Bring 'em Back Alive*, etc.) that brought vivid excitement of the hunt to the silver screen, coming face-to-face with man-eating creatures. Frank Buck was a strong figure of a man immediately recognizable with his richly sun-tanned face, thin black moustache, high black boots, tan safari gear, and a large white pith helmet.

Frank Buck's expeditionary exploits came to the radio in 1934 and were well received by young listeners. The daily weekday show was full of intrigue, danger and life-threatening stories of man against beasts and evil men. Radio jungle episodes literally "jumped" to life with realistic sounds reverberating from the loudspeaker: the menacing snarl of a Bengal tiger, savage trumpeting of a large bull-elephant on

the rampage, the hiss of a puff-headed Cobra, and the thunderous sound of a menacing, charging rhinoceros.

Of course, at the moment with the program's announcer's new premium offer, the excitement was reined-on-high. The radio spokesman further embellished his impassioned sales pitch, stating: "Boys and girls, not only can you tell time by the sun with Frank Buck's Explorer Sun-Dial Watch, but the gold pocket size piece has a built-in magnetic compass to tell directions. The numeral face of the dial glows in the dark, and it has the extra bonus of a bright signaling mirror built-in, so you can flash secret code messages to your friends of the Frank Buck Adventure Club. This magnificent Explorer's Sun Watch can be yours by sending for it today..." I did.

After a seemingly indeterminable wait, the postman delivered my much awaited trophy. "Wow!" I burst forth as I held the tiny hex-shaped golden treasure in the palm of my hand. "Just think, from now on I'll never get lost or wonder what time it is, and can send mirror signals to the neighbors." All at once I felt extremely important to own this handsome sun-dial watch, exactly like the one used by Frank Buck in his daily radio episodes.

Shortly after I received the Sun Watch, I was able to put its merits to invaluable use. Grade school had let out for the summer. My father enlisted me for a highly responsible mission. Dad owned a small gravel pit and lately large quantities of sand were missing, without being paid for. During that hot summer, Dad hired me as a look-out to monitor the comings and goings at the sand quarry. This was a job for

my Explorer's Sun Watch, as I was to remain there all day. The sun-dial would tell me when it was time to knock-off for lunch, and when it was time to return home from my important duty at afternoon's end. I was able to entrust my time to the sun's shadow position on the watch dial.

The classy radio premium proved invaluable in my daily task until one day, a cloudy day, when the sun failed to shine. I was at a virtual loss as to what time it was. So much for the unexpected. "Oh, well," I sighed to my self, with that little "gem" I never got lost, and I could still read the numeral dial in the dark, and though the watch part failed on overcast days, I remained thrilled with its exciting potential.

Thanks, Frank Buck. ■

NOTE-- Tune in TWTD October 23 for two 1934 episodes of the *Jungle Adventures of Frank Buck*.

TELLS TIME BY THE SUN

CASE AND BEER GOLDEN COLOR

METAL MIRROR FOR SIGNALING

PLASTIC DIAL GLOWS AT NIGHT

MAGNETIC COMPASS

ACTUAL SIZE ILLUSTRATED

EXCITING! DIFFERENT! YOURS! EXPLORER'S SUN-WATCH!

ONLY 15¢ WITH WHEATIES BOX-TOP

HERE'S YOUR CHANCE to own the exciting Explorer's Sun Watch. The time of the day, the direction! \$1.00 for signaling, night or day! 15¢ for the Wheaties box-top! Order from Wheaties, Box 1024F, Minneapolis, Minn. Offered so you'll try Wheaties with milk and fruit Wheaties. Breakfast of Champions!

TELLS DIRECTIONS! Compass set into dial shows North, South, East, West. Run to top when played by game battery, or battery and in dial. Send for your Explorer's Sun Watch today!

FLASHES SIGNALS! Send secret messages in watch dial by means of its automatic face. Or flash signals with bright mirror back.

TELLS TIME! Scientifically designed instrument. Tells time from position of sun. Comes complete with instructions and interesting information. Many exciting uses. Be sure to get yours!

ORDER YOURS TODAY!

WHEATIES, BOX 1024F, Minneapolis, Minn.

Please rush me my EXPLORER'S SUN WATCH, 1 in clear 1/4 and ONE Wheaties box-top.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Order must be accompanied by Box 1, 1934.

# Recollections at Forty

BY KEN ALEXANDER

It's now been forty years since I started working in radio, and I'm glad to have lasted this long doing what I love to do. While I don't consider my anniversary to be a big deal, I've allowed my good friend Chuck Schaden to persuade me to set down on paper my work history over these four decades.

Let's go back a bit further than that. As a boy, I was fascinated by radio. I would "play radio," using a make-believe microphone. I had a couple of discarded electrical switches and a doorbell button, and I would pretend to be in Master Control at one of the networks waiting for my cue to put Studio "A" on the air.

I memorized the station breaks of all the Chicago stations, and I dreamed of working one day at WAIT, WAAF, WMAQ or WGN. At times, I would even fantasize about being another Ken Carpenter or Ben Grauer or Don Wilson on the coast-to-coast network shows.

By the time I graduated from Austin High, I had decided that I wanted to become a radio announcer, although I knew that I would not achieve my goal for some time — if ever. There was no chance for a 17-year-old lad to be hired as an announcer at a Chicago radio station. Even for a mature man, radio was a field that was very hard to break into.

In those days, only a small minority of *Veteran Chicago broadcaster Ken Alexander this year celebrates his 40th Anniversary in radio. We asked him to recall "the way it was" during his four decades on the air.*

young people went to college; most of us, when we left high school, went to work, and lacking the training for a trade or profession, we would get a job in a store or a factory or an office.

I got a job as an order-picker at Sears Roebuck's mail-order warehouse at Homan and Arthington. During my stint there, I received word from the employment counselor at Austin High of an opening for a messenger boy at WGN.

This was wonderful news. If I could get that job, I thought (perhaps unrealistically), I might work my way up to the announcing staff.

I arranged for an interview with a Mr. David Taylor in WGN's offices in Tribune Tower. The interview went well. The job would involve delivering commercials and other continuity copy to the various studios in the building, and the copy would have to be in the right studio at the right time.

My experience at Sears was a factor in my favor, as all of the mail orders were time-stamped and needed to be filled on schedule.

It seemed that the job was mine; however, Mr. Taylor did need to check with another executive down the hall. Mr. Taylor went into the office while I waited in the corridor. After a short time, he rejoined me in the hall.

"Well," he said, "I thought we had that job all sewed up for you. But that fellow," gesturing toward the office from which he had just emerged, "that fellow has a nephew, and..."

Mr. Taylor, nice man that he was, apolo-



Ken Alexander: "I remember it well."

gized. He was obviously disappointed and embarrassed. As for myself, I was in deep despair. How, I thought, could I ever become a radio announcer? I couldn't even get a job in radio as a *messenger boy*.

I had heard it said that to get a job in radio, "It's not *what* you know, it's *who* you know." Now I believed it. And I didn't know *anybody*.

On that day I gave up all hope of ever having a career in radio. The year was 1948. I was 19 years old.

*Fast forward to 1959.*

I was now 29 and working in a store called MusiCraft on Oak Street a few doors west of the Esquire Theatre — a store that sold Hi-fi and stereo equipment and records and tapes.

One of our customers was a man named Dick who, I was to learn, was working a Sunday shift at an FM station in the Edgewater Beach Hotel: WEBH (93.9). I told Dick of my interest in radio, and he invited me to come to the Edgewater Beach one Sunday and watch him work. I readily

accepted his invitation.

Those were the early days of FM, and not many homes and few autos were equipped with FM receivers. Because of the small size of the listening audience, advertisers were reluctant to buy time in the medium, and the typical FM station was struggling to stay afloat.

WEBH was owned at the time by Buddy Black, who had been an announcer at WGN. He later managed WLTD in Evanston, and it was he who gave Chuck Schaden his first professional job in radio.

There really wasn't much to see at WEBH. A small studio with a tiny adjoining office with one desk on the first floor

and the transmitter on the top floor were all there was to the station's physical plant.

The station was a "combo" operation; that is, the announcer ran his own board. He was a combination announcer and engineer. In fact, the announcer on duty was often the only person on the premises. This was far different from the way I envisioned a radio station to be.

Even for a simple record show, I would have thought there would be a music host (disc jockey), a staff announcer to introduce him, an engineer to operate the mikes and watch volume levels, a turntable operator to spin the records, and a director to see that all ran smoothly. All this in addition to an engineer on duty at the transmitter, which might be miles away.

Here there was only one man doing everything.

The format at WEBH was easy listening music: Mantovani, Roger Williams, Frank Sinatra, Doris Day, Joe Bushkin, Jonah Jones, etc. There were few commercials. The music was not programmed in ad-

## Recollections at Forty

vance, but was chosen by the announcer, who made up the program as he went along. The source of the music was LPs and 45s.

WEBH signed on the air at ten o'clock Sunday mornings, and when Dick and I arrived, one of the first things he did was turn on the transmitter filament current to allow the unit to warm up. This he did by remote control from the studio. Then he assembled a newscast with copy from the noisy UPI teletype machine in the corner of Buddy Black's office and selected some music.

The day's programming at WEBH was called *Sunday at the Edgewater*, *Thursday at the Edgewater*, etc. On Sunday afternoons, there was a program of recorded classical music called *Edgewater Concert*.

Dick worked Sundays from ten to six, playing the easy listening music from ten to two, and the classical from two to six. I spent the entire eight-hour shift with him that Sunday and greatly enjoyed the experience.

A week or so later, during one of his visits to MusiCraft, Dick asked me to make a tape recording of myself reading some news and some ad copy from a newspaper. I did as he asked and forgot about it.

A few days later, Dick returned to the store. This time he asked me whether I would care to come to WEBH again on Sunday to watch him work. I told him I would like that very much. "You'd better pay close attention," Dick said, "because the following Sunday you'll be on your own."

Dick explained that he had grown tired of working the eight-hour shift; he preferred to do only the latter half. *Edgewater Concert*. He also told me that the tape I had made for him was, in fact, an audition tape, which he had played for Buddy Black



and which Buddy had approved. Buddy had agreed to let me work the first four hours of the Sunday shift.

Dick drove me to the Edgewater Beach on my lunch hour one day soon after that in order that I might meet Buddy Black.

Buddy explained that, like the other part-timers at the station, I would not be paid. I was more than agreeable to work without pay — the experience I would gain would be invaluable. Buddy offered me a bit of advice which I've always followed: "You're a nice fellow. When you're on the air, just be yourself and people will like you." He added, "If you have something to say that's clever, something that's original, something that people have never heard before, say it. If not, put on a record."

I've been putting on records ever since.

As far as I knew, that four-hour Sunday shift without pay might be the only radio job I would ever have. I didn't think about that. I was happy, working at MusiCraft five days a week and at WEBH on Sundays.

The WEBH studio was situated opposite the entrance to the hotel, and the an-

nouncer would sit behind the broadcast console facing a double-paned window which looked onto the corridor where people entering and leaving the hotel would pass. These folks would sometimes pause at the window to observe the announcer at work. Some would tap on the glass during the newscast to see if they could make the announcer look up from his script. In one corner of the window, Buddy had placed a placard reading:

**PLEASE DON'T FEED  
THE ANNOUNCERS**

Apart from that, I very much enjoyed my job.

The record library consisted of a couple of shelves of LPs on the back wall of the studio. I used to take my records from home to play on the air: they were in better condition than the station's albums, and I had some LPs that the station didn't have.

After a few months, Dick left the station and Buddy asked me to take over *Edgewater Concert* in addition to my own shift. He also began paying me, at the rate of two dollars an hour.

Then, as now, I loved classical music, and although my knowledge of it was far from comprehensive, I knew enough to squeak by.

One Sunday, at the end of my shift at six o'clock, I answered the phone to find Bill Florian, the founder and owner of WNIB, on the line. He asked me whether I would be interested in working for his station. I told him that I certainly would be. He told me that there was no opening but that there might be one in the future and that he would keep me in mind.

Nothing happened in that regard for awhile, but in the spring of 1960, I received a call from the station's program director, Sonia Atzeff. The station was in a bind. The announcer who had recorded the an-

nouncements for that evening's classical music program had furnished a tape that was technically defective and which could not be used on the air. The announcer was out of town, and Sonia asked me if I would come to the station and record the announcements.

The WNIB studio and office was in a suite on the sixth floor of the Chicago Federal Savings Building, 108 N. State — on what is now known as Block 37 — across from Marshall Field's. I went there on my supper hour from MusiCraft.

Sonia gave me the music list for that night's three-hour program — *Music Eternal* it was called — and asked me to introduce and back-announce each selection while an Ampex tape recorder took it all down.

One of the selections was listed as "Symphony No. 8 in F, Opus 92" by Beethoven. When I introduced the symphony, I called it Opus 93. Bill, who was standing behind me and reading over my shoulder, stopped the machine and interrupted: "It says Opus 92."

"It says Opus 92, but it *should* say Opus 93," I told him. "Beethoven's Symphony No. 8 in F is Opus 93. His Opus 92 is the Symphony No. 7 in A."

Bill and Sonia looked at each other and then Sonia said, "I'll check the record."

She stepped into the music library and returned a moment later. "He's right," she said. She had typed "Opus 92" on the music list by mistake.

And so it was a minor typographical error that may have been a factor in my getting a job.

When I had finished my recording, Bill and Sonia led me out of the studio and into an adjoining office, where Bill said to me, "We want you to replace [our current announcer]."

That moment was one of the most memorable highlights of my life. →



## Recollections at Forty

Bill told me something about the station. It had signed on the air a little less than five years earlier. The transmitter was situated on the top floor of the Midwest Hotel, at Madison and Hamlin. The format, as I knew, was essentially classical music. The station signed on each day at 5 p.m. and was on the air until midnight. (In those early days of FM, few FM stations could afford to be on the air more than a few hours a day.)

Most FM stations were operating on a shoestring, and WNIB was no exception. The station could not afford to pay an announcer to be on duty at all times that the station was on the air; therefore, it hired an announcer to work only a few hours a week recording the announcements. Either Bill or Sonia would then produce the program on the air, using the taped announcements and the music from LPs. To the listener, it sounded as though the announcer were live in the studio.

On my day off from MusiCraft I would go to WNIB and record the announcements (and the few commercials that the station had at the time). My pay was thirty dollars a week, which was not bad for a few hours' work.

I was now heard on two Chicago radio stations: WNIB every evening of the week (on tape) and WEBH on Sundays (live). I also continued to work full-time at MusiCraft.

After a year or so of this, I began to feel that I needed an occasional day off, and I left WEBH. I will always gratefully remember, though, that it was Buddy Black who gave me my first job in radio.

The staff at WNIB was small: Bill, the owner; Sonia, the program director; an advertising salesman; a part-time engineer; Dick Buckley, who did a jazz record show six evenings a week, and I.

I enjoyed my years at WNIB in the early '60s. My job at MusiCraft had become distasteful, but the time I spent working at WNIB seemed to compensate for the unpleasantness at the store.

But I would not be working at the store much longer. On November 26, 1963 I and a number of my fellow employees at MusiCraft were fired in an economy move. In just four days' time our president, John F. Kennedy, had been assassinated and I had lost my job. It was a bad week all round.

I still had my job at WNIB, which was now paying sixty-five dollars a week, but I needed to work full-time. I considered trying to get a full-time job in radio, but I lacked the self-confidence. I was without a full-time job for several months.

Two friends of mine — a young married couple — offered me some advice: Send an audition tape to WAIT (820 AM), the only AM station that was playing what we considered to be "good" music.

I dismissed the suggestion. WAIT was one of the highest-rated stations in Chicago, and I felt sure that the management would have not the slightest interest in a person of my limited experience — even if there were an opening, and there most likely was not.

My friends urged, practically forced me to record an audition tape. I made the tape one day at WNIB. I was familiar with WAIT's format, and I made an effort to sound like a WAIT announcer, emulating their style and using some of the phrases they used:

*We begin another quarter-hour of the World's Most Beautiful Music with Percy Faith and the orchestra — the Tara theme from "Gone With The Wind" — music composed by Max Steiner. Then, try a little tenderness with June Morgan, as she sings the waltz "Fascination," accompanied by the Troubadors.*



I read a couple of news items from the *Chicago Daily News* and a newspaper ad for British Overseas Airways Corporation in addition to the musical introductions. I typed a short note and placed it in the package and prepared the package for mailing.

A day or so later, I met my friends for dinner after work. I showed them the package addressed to Radio Station WAIT and, as they watched, I dropped it into the mailbox at the corner of Rush and Oak.

"Now I hope you're happy," I said.

My friends were pleased to see that I had taken their advice. As for myself, I was happy to have pleased them, although I considered the effort a waste of postage, tape, and time.

A few days later, I received a call from WAIT's program director: "We've received your tape and we like it very much. I wonder if you'd care to come and talk with us."

This was another of those never-to-be-forgotten moments. I could hardly believe that something so wonderful was happening to me.

Although WAIT's business offices were downtown, in the Randolph Tower at 188

W. Randolph, the studios and transmitter were in Elmhurst, not far from the suburb where I lived.

I met with the program director, who told me that one of the announcers was leaving for a job at WSB in Atlanta, creating an opening at WAIT. The job went to me on the condition that I would resign from WNIB. I agreed to do this, as I needed a full-time job and WNIB was not in a position to put me on a full-time basis.

Even though I left WNIB, I did not sever my relationship with Bill and Sonia.

On July 7, 1964, I went to work full-time on the announcing staff of WAIT. I don't believe I can convey to you the sense of how happy I was, but it may give you a hint when I tell you that I used to wake in the middle of the night and find myself wondering whether this was all a beautiful dream.

WAIT had a daytime license, authorizing the station to operate only between sunrise and sunset. But during the day, when the station as on the air, its 5,000-watt, non-directional signal was "in the air everywhere" in the Chicago area and beyond.

The station was remarkably successful. Its musical stock-in-trade comprised the best songs from the American musical theater, from motion pictures, and from Tin Pan Alley. We would not play a recording that had even a suggestion of a rock-and-roll beat. All of the music we played was tasteful, and in this regard WAIT was unique among Chicago's AM outlets.

While the music was the station's main attraction, there was more to the format than music. We had brief newsbreaks on the hour:

*Stay tuned for news flashes as they occur. Our next scheduled newsbreak at three o'clock — but when the news breaks out, WAIT breaks in.*

After the news, and just before we began our music for the hour, we would have

## Recollections at Forty

what we called a mood intro, a bit of purple prose with appropriate musical background designed to fit the season of the year, the time of day, or some aspect of the Chicago area. For example:

*Dawn breaks in Chicagoland. The summer sun seems to emerge from the calm blue surface of Lake Michigan. As it rises, its rays glance off the tops of the highrises on Lake Shore Drive. The sunbeams reach farther and farther to the west, soon bathing the entire metropolis in golden light. The city awakens — to the World's Most Beautiful Music... on WAIT.*

There were stock market reports on the half-hour, and rush-hour traffic reports. We had other features, such as the Kal-Kan Pet Patrol. *Help us locate these lost or missing pets.* And there were the daily salutes to the Businessman of the Day and the First Lady of the Day.

When we introduced, or back-announced, a quarter-hour of music, we always did so with a recorded harp playing in the background.

The beautiful music format was by far WAIT's most successful one, but as the public's taste in music changed to favor rock-and-roll and "adult contemporary" and as FM stations began to surpass the AM outlets in terms of audience size, the management felt that a format change was in order.

In fact, while I was employed at WAIT, I saw seven formats come and go, along with seven general managers and seven program directors. A couple of times, the entire air staff was fired — except for me. Somehow I survived for twenty-one and a-half years — not, it seems to me, because of the quality of my work, but because of my reliability and conscientiousness.

At the start of my employment at WAIT, the principal owner and managing direc-

tor was Maurice Rosenfield. In 1979 the station's ownership changed and I became unhappy. I remained until 1986, when I resigned.

A couple of years later WAIT went out of business. The 820 spot on the dial was subsequently taken over by another station, and still another station, at 850 on the dial, applied for, and was granted, the call letters WAIT.

It had been a long ride for me at WAIT, and, while the station was owned by Mr. Rosenfield, a wonderful ride.

Now, at fifty-six years of age, I had in effect retired, although I didn't like to be referred to as a retiree — it made me feel old.

I had met Chuck Schaden in 1975, when he began a series of five-minute old-time radio clips on WAIT. The feature, *When Radio Was Radio*, was sponsored by North West Federal Savings (*It's North West Federal Savings Time, Sixty-Three Hours a Week.*) Via recording, Chuck introduced the clip each day and I delivered the commercial. *When Radio Was Radio* was on WAIT for two and a-half years.

Beginning in the summer of '84, Chuck was on WAIT Monday through Friday evenings from 7:00 to 11:00 with *Radio Theatre*, devoted, of course, to old-time radio. This series ran for a year and a-half.

During this time, I began writing and recording commercials for Metro Golden Memories as the "Mighty Metro Art Players." Chuck had not asked me to do this; I did it on my own, for the fun of it. But Chuck began using the spots on the air and continues to use them more than a dozen years later.

Sometime in 1986, Chuck approached me about subbing for him one Saturday on *Those Were The Days* on WNIB. I was honored to sit in for Chuck, and it seems that I didn't goof up too badly, because the following year Chuck appointed me to be his

permanent guest host.

So I wasn't completely retired, after all.

On one *Those Were The Days* show when I was sitting in for Chuck in 1991, I rambled on about the Saturday afternoons long ago when, as a kid, I, together with some neighborhood boys, would go to the movies. Chuck heard my rambling, and he asked me if I would like to commit some of my memories to paper for publication in the *Nostalgia Digest*. Although I'm no writer, I did my best, cranking out thirty-eight articles until a year ago, when I ran out of memories.

In 1986, shortly after I had quit WAIT, my old friend Sonia Atzeff — she was now Mrs. Bill Florian and the general manager of WNIB — asked me if I might like to return to the station as a substitute announcer, filling in for the regular announcers when they were ill or on vacation.

The state of FM radio — and WNIB — had changed for the better since I had left WNIB twenty years before. WNIB had moved into its own building just northwest of the Loop; the transmitter was now atop the Standard Oil building (now the Amoco Building), one of the tallest buildings in the city. The station was now broadcasting in multiplex stereo and was on the air 24 hours a day. And the announcers were no longer taping their announcements, but working live on the air.

I've been subbing at WNIB since '86. In addition, for the past couple of years,

I've been working a regular shift each Tuesday and Wednesday from noon to six.

And that brings us up to date.

My thoughts on these forty years?

I realize that there are many occupations that are more worthy than mine. A few radio stations specialize in the dissemination of news and information, but most are in the business of providing entertainment of one kind or another.

We who work in radio do not save lives. We don't relieve suffering. We don't protect life and property. But then, not all of us can be physicians, nurses, paramedics, firefighters, police officers, or members of the armed services. Nor can all of us be teachers or members of the clergy.

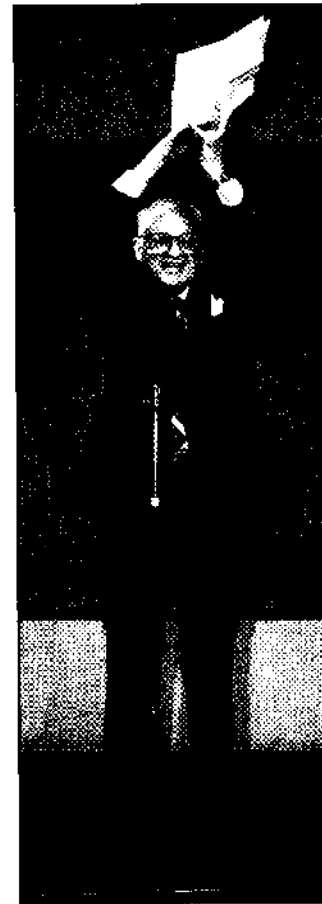
I am deeply grateful for the forty years of work which has been so enjoyable as hardly to seem work at all. I wish that all people could be as happy in their work as I have been.

The late Buddy Black, and Maurice Rosenfield and Bill and Sonia Florian have my thanks for allowing me to be part of their

respective radio stations. And I'm grateful to Chuck Schaden, who owns not a radio station, but a radio program in which he has let me play a role.

So, that's forty years — and counting.

How much longer will I continue to work in radio? Who knows? But I will share this thought with you: I feel sure that when I do finally quit, I will quit because I have to, not because I want to. ■





Chuck Schaden's

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

OCTOBER 1999

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2nd

**ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET** (1-23-49) The family and friends of the Nelsons are not thrilled when Ozzie tries out his new book of card tricks on them. International Silver Co., NBC. (29 min)

**THE SAINT** (8-22-50) Vincent Price stars as "the Robin Hood of modern crime." Investigating a murder, Simon Templar's chief suspect is shot. Cast includes Arthur Q. Brian and Barbara Eiler. Sustaining, NBC. (29 min)

**COUPLE NEXT DOOR** (12-10-58) Peg Lynch and Alan Bunce star as Mr. and Mrs. Piper. He is a reluctant patient at the dentist's office. U. S. Steel, CBS. (15 min)

**SPEAKING OF RADIO** (9-8-71) Actor Vincent Price recalls his radio career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded in Chicago. Vincent Price died in 1993 at the age of 82. (15 min)

**SUSPENSE** (10-19-58) "Three Skeleton Key" starring Vincent Price in "that story about the rats" who invade a light-house. Cast includes Ben Wright and Lawrence Dobkin. Sustaining, CBS. (19 min)

*Those Were The Days* listeners have voted **SUSPENSE** one of the 20 Best Old Time Radio Shows of the 20th Century. See page 2.

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (5-25-48) Jim and Marian Jordan star with Bill Thompson, Arthur Q. Brian, Gale Gordon, Harlow Wilcox, Herb Vigran, Ken Christie, King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Molly has a toothache so Fibber wants her to see a dentist. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (31 min)

*Those Were The Days* listeners have voted **FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** one of the 20 Best Old Time Radio Shows of the 20th Century. See page 2.

**RECOLLECTIONS** (2-13-57) Host Ed Herlihy with program 26 in the 33-part series observ-



Vincent Price

ing NBC's 30th broadcast anniversary. A program with a Lincoln theme. Raymond Massey in a scene from Robert Sherwood's play, "Abe Lincoln in Illinois;" Alexander Woolcott, the "Town Crier," speaking about the Gettysburg Address; Frank Black and the NBC Orchestra. Sustaining, NBC. (24 min)

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9th MOVIES AND MOVIE STARS ON OLD TIME RADIO DURING THE 20th CENTURY

**SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS** (1-7-46) "Lost Weekend" starring Ray Milland, Jane Wyman and Frank Faylen in the radio version of the 1945 Academy Award winning film. Milland repeats his Oscar-winning role in this unrelenting drama of alcoholism. Lady Esther Products, CBS. (29 min)

**LUX RADIO THEATRE** (12-2-40) "Knute Rockne, All-American" starring Pat O'Brien, Ronald Reagan, Donald Crisp and Fay Wray in the radio adaptation of the 1940 film, the biography of the legendary Notre Dame football coach. Reagan delivers his memorable "Win one for the Gipper" line. Cecil B. DeMille hosts. Lux Soap, CBS. (59 min in three segments).

*Those Were The Days* listeners have voted **LUX RADIO THEATRE** one of the 20 Best Old Time Radio Shows of the 20th Century. See page 3.

**SCREEN DIRECTORS' PLAYHOUSE** (8-12-49) "Jezebel" starring Bette Davis in her Academy Award winning role in this radio version of the 1938 film. A Southern belle goes too far to make her fiance jealous. Cast includes Gerald Mohr, Paul Frees, Ralph Morgan. Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer, NBC. (31 min)

**SCREEN DIRECTORS' ASSIGNMENT** (1-9-49) "Stagecoach" starring John Wayne, Claire Trevor and Ward Bond in the radio adaptation of the 1939 film. Passengers on a stagecoach travel through Indian country. First show in

the series that was later called *Screen Directors' Playhouse*. Sustaining, NBC. (30 min)

**OUR SPECIAL GUEST** is movie historian and frequent *Nostalgia Digest* contributor **BOB KOLOSOSKI** who will talk about these films and the role that movies played on radio in the 20th Century.

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16th REMEMBERING HANS CONRIED

**ADVENTURES OF MAISIE** (1950) Ann Sothern stars as Maisie Revere with Hans Conried, Pat McGeehan, Elvia Allman, Peter Leeds and Joan Banks. Maisie talks her boyfriend into taking her to a fancy night club to celebrate their "anniversary." Syndicated. (26 min)

**SUSPENSE** (3-13-56) "The Groom of the Ladder" starring Hans Conried in the story of John Price, an English executioner and public hangman known as Jack Ketch. Cast includes Betty Hartford, Bill James, Stanley Jones, Ben Wright, Richard Beals. Sustaining, CBS. (28 min)

**SPEAKING OF RADIO** (1-19-71) Actor Hans Conried recalls his career in radio, television and films in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded backstage at the Pheasant Run Playhouse in St. Charles, Illinois. Hans Conried died in 1982 at the age of 64.

**MY FRIEND IRMA** (1-13-52) "The Professor Needs a Wife" starring Marie Wilson as Irma Peterson with Cathy Lewis as her roommate, Jane Stacy. Hans Conried co-stars as Professor Kropfkin who has gained custody of a child by saying he was married to Mrs. O'Reilly (Gloria Gordon). John Brown is Irma's boyfriend Al; Alan Reed is her boss, Mr. Clyde. Ennds Tablets, CBS. (29 min)

**SUSPENSE** (10-21-54) "Rave Notice" starring Hans Conried as an actor who played his part too well. Cast includes Edgar Barrier, Parley Baer, Lawrence Dobkin, Jack Kruschen, Howard McNear. Sustaining, CBS. (25 min)

**LIFE WITH LUIGI** (3-11-52) J. Carroll Naish stars as Luigi Basco who receives a registered letter from the Internal Revenue Service. Cast includes Hans Conried as Schultz; Alan Reed as Pasquale; Jody Gilbert as Rosa; Mary Shipp as Miss Spaulding. Wrigley's Gum, CBS. (30 min)



Hans Conried

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23rd

**HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE** (4-28-49) "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn," the story of two children from a poor neighborhood and their father who shows them that there is a world beyond their neighborhood, and that it is within their reach. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (29 min)

**CHASE AND SANBORN 101st ANNIVERSARY SHOW PRESENTS FRED ALLEN** (11-14-65) Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy present a collection of broadcast clips from Allen's great radio shows starring Fred and Tallulah Bankhead, Jack Benny, Milton Berle, Shirley Booth, Bing Crosby, Leo Durocher, Maurice Evans, George Jessell, Bert Lahr, Oscar Levant, and Bea Lillie. *Read the article about Fred Allen on page 26.*

**JUNGLE ADVENTURES OF FRANK BUCK** (1934) The first two episodes in the series starring world renowned animal trainer and handler Frank "Bring 'em Back Alive" Buck. Chapter 1: "Ghost Tiger." Chapter 2: "Giant Jungle Man." RKO Radio Pictures. (25 min in two segments) *Read the article about Frank Buck's program on page 10.*

**RECOLLECTIONS** (2-20-57) Program 27: Jessica Dragonette, Helen Hayes and Vincent Price, Perry Como with Ted Weems orchestra, The Stroud Twins, Al Jolson. Ed Herlihy hosts. Sustaining, NBC. (24 min)

**PASSING PARADE** (1942) John Nesbitt offers stories about a modern Jekyll and Hyde, a two-edged sword, and a modern dual. Nesbitt's California Orange Drink. (14 min)

**GANGBUSTERS** (10-9-48) "The Case of the Incurable Killer" who "broke out of prison and broke back in only to find that when the breaks run out, the penalty is death." Cast includes Ken Lynch, John Larkin, Mason Adams. Tide, ABC. (29 min)

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# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

OCTOBER -- NOVEMBER 1999

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30th ANNUAL HALLOWEEN SHOW

**THE SHADOW** (10-31-37) "The Three Ghosts" starring Orson Welles as Lamont Cranston with Agnes Moorehead as the lovely Margo Lane. A newlywed couple take a home in the country in a house inhabited by ghosts. Blue Coal, MBS. (29 min) *Those Were The Days* listeners have voted **THE SHADOW** one of the 20 Best Old Time Radio Shows of the 20th Century. See page 2.

**SUSPENSE** (11-24-42) "The Body Snatchers." In the early 1800s, medical students in England were unable to obtain a sufficient number of dead bodies to study, so they turned to "Resurrection Men" to provide the corpses they needed. Sustaining, CBS. (30 min)

**LIFE OF RILEY** (10-29-44) William Bendix stars as Chester A. Riley, up to his old tricks for Halloween, trying to prove to Junior that ghosts don't exist. American Meat Institute, NBC. (30 min)

**CRIME CLASSICS** (12-2-53) "If a Body Needs a Body" features Lou Merrill as Thomas Hyland, "connoisseur of crime, student of violence, and teller of murders." He relates the story of Mr. Burke and Mr. Hare, who had a successful business providing cadavers for medical students in Scotland in 1826. Cast includes Jack Kruschen, Jay Novello, William Johnstone, Jeanette Nolan. Sustaining, CBS. (27 min)

**INNER SANCTUM** (1940s) "Return from the Grave." In New England, an older woman hears the howling winds outside and the heavy footsteps of her dead husband, climbing the cellar stairs. Her nephew discovers his uncle's body and accuses his aunt of murder. Cast includes Ralph Bell and Everett Sloan. AFRS rebroadcast. (23 min)

*Today's program will be presented on a special ghost-to-ghost network and, because this Halloween broadcast will be, once again, too scary to do alone, Chuck will be joined by Ken Alexander and the usual suspects.*

## SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6th

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 1. Judy and Jimmy Barton discover that the silver star for the top of their Christmas tree is missing. Searching for the ornament in their attic, they meet Paddy O'Cinnamon. First of 26 consecutive episodes. (13 min) *Those Were The Days* listeners have voted **THE CINNAMON BEAR** one of the 20 Best Old Time Radio Shows of the 20th Century. See page 6.

**SPEAKING OF RADIO** (8-12-76) Broadcaster **Art Linkletter** talks about his long career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded in Mr. Linkletter's office in Beverly Hills, California. (32 min)

**PEOPLE ARE FUNNY** (1-5-54) Emcee **Art Linkletter** presents stunts about a man who must break a gift sent to him in error; newlyweds; a fast-talking, fast-thinking wife; and a "swindler" of housewives. Mars, Inc., CBS. (29 min)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 2. Judy and Jimmy de-grow and take a glass airplane to Maybe Land in search of the silver star. (13 min)

**RECOLLECTIONS** (2-27-57) Ed Herlihy hosts Program 28 in the series celebrating NBC's 30th Anniversary. Harriet Hilliard, Bob Burns, Bunny Berigan and the orchestra, Elsie Janis, Gene Raymond. Sustaining, NBC. (24 min)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 3. Weary Willie and the Looking Glass Valley. (13 min)

**HAVE GUN, WILL TRAVEL** (5-17-59) "Gold Mine" starring John Dehner as Paladin, with Ben Wright as Hey Boy. Annette Vargas inherits a valuable gold mine, but an evil prospector aims to steal her deed. Multiple sponsors, CBS. (23 min)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 4. The Inkaboos! (13 min)



Art Linkletter

## SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13th

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 5. The Crazy Quilt Dragon is rescued! (13 min)

**BIG TOWN** (1940) "Death Rides the Highway" starring Edward G. Robinson as Steve Wilson, managing editor of the Illustrated Press, with Ona Munson as Lorelei Kilbourne. Wilson goes after the hit-and-run driver who killed his friend. *Sound effects by Ray Earlenborn.* Rinso, CBS. (25 min)

**SPEAKING OF RADIO** (10-22-98) Sound effects man **Ray Earlenborn** recalls his career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded at the Friends of Old Time Radio convention in Newark, New Jersey. (19 min)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 6. Wesley the Wailing Whale, Samuel the Seal. (13 min)

**AL PEARCE AND HIS GANG** (2-7-40) Al Pearce as Elmer Blurt, the reluctant salesman, this time selling hot dogs on a busy corner. Cast includes Arlene Harris, the "human chatterbox," Carl Hoff and the orchestra, Marie Green and her Merry Men, Artie Auerback. Announcer is Wendell Niles. *Sound effects by Ray Earlenborn.* Dole Pineapple, CBS. (28 min)

**BLONDIE** (3-11-45) Penny Singleton and Arthur Lake star as the Bumsteeds. Dagwood is the first casualty of the football season. Cast features Hanley Stafford as Dagwood's boss J. C. Dithers and John Brown as neighbor Herb Woodley. *Sound effects by Ray Earlenborn.* AFRS rebroadcast. (28 min)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 7. Mr. Presto, the Magician. (13 min)

**BURNS AND ALLEN SHOW** (9-7-43) Gracie gets the idea that she may have some competition for George's affections. Cast includes Bill Goodwin, Mel Blanc, singer Jimmy Cash, Felix Mills and the orchestra. *Sound effects by Ray Earlenborn.* Swan Soap, CBS. (29 min)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 8. The Candy Pirates. (13 min)

## SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20th ANNUAL THANKSGIVING SHOW

**CHARLIE MC CARTHY SHOW** (11-18-45) For his Thanksgiving show, Edgar Bergen welcomes guest Margaret O'Brien who appears as Pricilla in Charlie's version of "The Courtship of Miles Standish." Mortimer Snerd talks about hypnotism. Pat Patrick as Ersel Twing, singer Anita Gordon, Ray Noble and the orchestra. AFRS rebroadcast. (30 min) *Those Were The Days* listeners have voted **THE**

**CHARLIE MC CARTHY SHOW** one of the 20 Best Old Time Radio Shows of the 20th Century. See page 5.

**SPEAKING OF RADIO** (4-26-71) Versatile **Mel Blanc** talks about his radio days and other aspects of his unique career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded in Chicago. Mel Blanc died in 1989 at the age of 81. (27 min)



Mel Blanc

**MEL BLANC SHOW** (11-26-46) There's going to be a Thanksgiving party at Mel's Fix-It Shop, but there are complications, as usual. Supporting cast includes Mary Jane Croft, Joe Kearns, Hans Conried, Earle Ross, Jerry Hausner, Victor Miller and the orchestra. Announcer is Bud Heaston. Colgate Tooth Powder, Halo Shampoo, CBS. (24 min)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 9. The Roly Poly Policeman. (13 min)

**DON MC NEILL SHOW** (11-28-68) It's Thanksgiving Day on the Breakfast Club. Don, Captain Stubby, Bob Newkirk, Sam Cowling, and Cathy Taylor tell what they're most thankful for. Broadcast from the Clouds Room of the Hotel Allerton in Chicago. Multiple sponsors, ABC (WLS-FM, Chicago). (58 min in two segments)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 10. Professor Whiz, the educated owl, and Fraidy Cat. (13 min)

## SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27th RADIO TO GET INTO THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT BY

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 11. Fee Foo, the friendly giant. (13 min)

**GREAT GILDERSLEEVE** (12-1-48) Harold Peary stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve who tries to get a holiday job for Leroy so he can earn some Christmas money. Walter Tetley as Leroy; Mary Lee Robb as Marjorie; Lillian Randolph as Birdie; Earle Ross as Judge Hooker. Kraft Foods, NBC. (30 min) *Those Were The Days* listeners have voted **GREAT GILDERSLEEVE** one of the 20 Best Old Time Radio Shows of the 20th Century. See page 4

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 12. The Rhyming Rabbit and Bumble Bee. (13 min)

**CONTENTED HOUR** (12-20-48) Singing star Buddy Clark offers a program of Christmas music and entertainment → →



Chuck Schaden's

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

## NOVEMBER 1999

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27th (Continued)

with the Ken Darby Singers, Ted Dale and the orchestra, announcer Jimmy Wallington. Selections include "Santa Claus is Coming to Town," "Winter Wonderland," "Twas the Night Before Christmas," and "White Christmas." Carnation Evaporated Milk, NBC. (30 min)  
**Read the article about Buddy Clark on page 8.**  
**LIMIT BATH CLUB REVUE** (12-25-32) Fred Allen takes listeners to the Mammoth Department Store for some last minute shopping. Cast includes Portland Hoffa, Joe Miller. Linit Products, CBS. (30 min)

**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 13. Through the Picture Frame to see the Wintergreen Witch. (13 min)  
**PHIL HARRIS-ALICE FAYE SHOW** (12-18-49) When Phil discovers there's to be no Community Christmas Tree this year, he goes to the mountains to cut one down. Elliott Lewis as Remley, Walter Tetley as Julius, Hans Conried as the Mayor. Phil sings "Woodman Spare That Tree." Rexall, NBC (29 min)  
**CINNAMON BEAR** (1937) Chapter 14. Queen Melissa of Maybe Land offers help. (13 min)

## Coming in December and January

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1999

A Special CHRISTMAS DAY Broadcast -- Our Last *TWTD* Program of the 1900s

SATURDAY, JANUARY 1, 2000

An Exciting NEW YEAR'S DAY Broadcast -- Our First *TWTD* Program of the 2000s

*...and for more good listening...*

**ART HELLYER SHOW**-- Music of the big bands and the big singers with lots of knowledgeable commentary and fun from one of radio's legendary personalities, now in his 52nd year on the air! *WJOL, 1340 AM, Saturday, 11am-2 pm.*

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

**WHEN RADIO WAS**-- Carl Amari hosts a weekend edition of the popular series featuring old time radio shows and interviews. *WMAQ, 670 AM, Saturday and Sunday, 10pm-midnight.*

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

**IMAGINATION THEATRE**-- This series is broadcast weekly in many cities across the country. For the station in your area, call Tim McDonald at TransMedia Productions at 1-800-229-7234. For a list of stations carrying the program and an **episode guide**, the Internet address is: [tmedia@aimnet.com](mailto:tmedia@aimnet.com)

**METRO GOLDEN MEMORIES**-- John Sebert and Bob Greenberg host a program of old time radio broadcasts. *WNDZ, 750 AM, Friday, 3-4 pm; repeated Saturday morning, 6-7 am.*

## "When Radio Was" -- WMAQ-AM 670 Monday thru Friday Midnight to 1 a.m. Host Stan Freberg

| Monday  | Tuesday   | Wednesday  | Thursday  | Friday   |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| <b>October, 1999 Schedule</b>   |   |  |   |  |
| <b>OUT OF AREA LISTENERS PLEASE NOTE</b>  |   |  |   | <b>1</b><br>Damon Runyon Theatre<br>The Unexpected |
| If WMAQ Chicago is out of your reception area, "When Radio Was" is heard on a great many other stations throughout the country. For a complete station listing, plus more detailed program information, and a steady audio stream on the Internet, visit <a href="http://www.radiospirits.com">www.radiospirits.com</a> |   |  |   |  |
| <b>4</b><br>Gangbusters<br>Burns & Allen pt 1   | <b>5</b><br>Burns & Allen Pt 2<br>Dimension X                 | <b>6</b><br>Lone Ranger<br>Jack Benny Pt 1               | <b>7</b><br>Jack Benny Pt 2<br>Box Thirteen                 | <b>8</b><br>The Shadow<br>Vic and Sade             |
| <b>11</b><br>Philip Marlowe<br>Abbott & Costello Pt 1   | <b>12</b><br>Abbott & Costello Pt 2<br>Tales of Texas Rangers | <b>13</b><br>Suspense<br>Charlie McCarthy Pt 1           | <b>14</b><br>Charlie McCarthy Pt 2<br>Sgt. Preston of Yukon | <b>15</b><br>Six Shooter<br>Unsolved Mysteries     |
| <b>18</b><br>Hopalong Cassidy<br>Fibber McGee Pt 1  | <b>19</b><br>Fibber McGee Pt 2<br>Mercury Theatre             | <b>20</b><br>Lone Ranger<br>Great Gildersleeve Pt 1      | <b>21</b><br>Great Gildersleeve Pt 2<br>Murder By Experts   | <b>22</b><br>The Shadow<br>Strange Dr. Weird       |
| <b>25</b><br>Green Hornet<br>Abbott & Costello Pt 1   | <b>26</b><br>Abbott & Costello Pt 2<br>Boston Blackie         | <b>27</b><br>Mystery in the Air<br>Lights Out Sketches   | <b>28</b><br>Lights Out<br>Strange Dr. Weird                | <b>29</b><br>Suspense<br>Unsolved Mysteries        |
| <b>November, 1999 Schedule</b>  |   |  |   |  |
| <b>1</b><br>Lux Radio Theatre:<br>'Maltese Falcon' Pt 1   | <b>2</b><br>Lux Radio Theatre Pt 2<br>Gunsmoke                | <b>3</b><br>The Shadow<br>Charlie McCarthy Pt 1          | <b>4</b><br>Charlie McCarthy Pt 2<br>The Whistler           | <b>5</b><br>Philip Marlowe<br>Lum and Abner        |
| <b>8</b><br>Suspense<br>Abbott & Costello Pt 1  | <b>9</b><br>Abbott & Costello Pt 2<br>Green Hornet            | <b>10</b><br>Lone Ranger<br>Fibber McGee Pt 1            | <b>11</b><br>Fibber McGee Pt 2<br>Gangbusters               | <b>12</b><br>Tales of Texas Rangers<br>Bob and Ray |
| <b>15</b><br>Box Thirteen<br>Johnny Dollar Pt 1 of 5  | <b>16</b><br>Six Shooter<br>Johnny Dollar Pt 2 of 5           | <b>17</b><br>Dragnet<br>Johnny Dollar Pt 3 of 5          | <b>18</b><br>Jack Benny<br>Johnny Dollar Pt 4 of 5          | <b>19</b><br>Suspense<br>Johnny Dollar Pt 5 of 5   |
| <b>22</b><br>Lux Radio Theatre:<br>Maisie Was A Lady' Pt 1  | <b>23</b><br>Lux Radio Theatre Pt 2<br>Frontier Gentleman     | <b>24</b><br>Have Gun, Will Travel<br>Burns & Allen Pt 1 | <b>25</b><br>Burns & Allen Pt 2<br>Sgt Preston of Yukon     | <b>26</b><br>Lone Ranger<br>Baby Snooks            |
| <b>29</b><br>The Shadow<br>Great Gildersleeve Pt 1  | <b>30</b><br>Great Gildersleeve Pt 2<br>Life of Riley         | <b>1 Dec</b><br>Nick Carter<br>Ozzie & Harriet Pt 1      | <b>2 Dec</b><br>Ozzie & Harriet Pt 2<br>The Man Called X    | <b>3 Dec</b><br>Suspense<br>Baby Snooks            |

# FORGOTTEN LAUGHTER

## Revisiting the Radio Works of Fred Allen

BY ELIZABETH MC LEOD

*All that the comedian has to show for his years of work and aggravation is the echo of forgotten laughter.*

— Fred Allen, 1954

His programs are an acquired taste. Lacking the mass appeal of a Jack Benny



or the down-home style of a Fibber McGee, Fred Allen has always been something of a dilemma for the old-time-radio newcomer. Some are put off by his reputation as a "topical" comedian — others find his shows just a bit too

astriquent, lacking the warmth of more mainstream radio comedy.

But Fred Allen was an entirely different kind of comedian. He was a wordsmith, not a jokester; an observer, not an actor. His humor didn't grow out of the standard set-up/punchline progression — it was strung thruout his sentences. And far from being a "topical" comic whose material was as perishable as yesterday's newspaper, the heart of his comedy flowed from a distinctly absurdist view of the human condition. In many ways Fred Allen doesn't at all fit the image of what a radio comedian was supposed to have been.

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

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Fred's earliest radio shows grew out of his work on the Broadway revue stage — the *Linin Bath Club Revue*, the *Hellmann's Salad Bowl Revue*, and the *Sal Hepatica Revue* were all essentially the same series. Each week, Fred and his supporting cast would present a sketch set against some occupational background — a hotel, a department store, a courtroom, a prison. This was a unique concept for the era — most of the stage comics who descended on radio en masse around 1932 stuck to the vaudevillian comic/straight man pattern. Allen's early broadcasts were among the first to adapt the revue sketch format for the air.

A typical example is the "Linin" show for December 25, 1932 — in which Fred is cast as the harried president of the Mammoth Department Store. Like the Broadway sketches of the era, the show has a hard, cynical edge — the Depression was not a "gentle" time. Fred is abused by his incompetent staff, harassed by surly customers, persecuted by an efficiency expert, and wraps up the show by watching his store Santa commit suicide. The final comment on this bizarre Christmas Night scene comes from a smart-mouthed kid — who sums up all the bitterness of Herbert Hoover's America in a single sentence: "There ain't no Santy Claus!"

It took a while for the Broadway cynicism to wear off Fred's shows — and it never disappeared entirely. The only known recordings of his 1934 *Sal Hepatica Revue* series, fragmentary airchecks found in



the Rudy Vallee Collection, confirm that Fred's early style was consistently hard-boiled, sophisticated, and primarily "urban" in its appeal. It wasn't until the advent of the *Town Hall Tonight* format in 1934 that a trace of warmth began to creep into Fred's programs.

The "Town Hall" years were Fred Allen's happiest in broadcasting, and marked a considerable shift in his style, as he tried to broaden his appeal into the small towns. Each week, Fred led a parade of rural zanies to a show "at the Old Town Hall," and in the earliest shows, the setting was specified as the town of "Bedlamville." Local characters emerged — Hodge White the Grocer, Pop Mullen the Lunch Wagon Man, and others, all described by Fred in his weekly "Town Hall Bulletins," but never given voice.

It was also during this era that Fred first gained his reputation for "topical" humor, introducing the "Bedlam News" in May

1934. This feature quickly developed into the "Town Hall News," a parody newsreel which "Sees Nothing - Shows All!" Fred seldom commented on the Big News Of The Era in these newsreel sketches — instead, he focused on the silly happenings which might get a paragraph or two in the back pages of the newspaper, stories which highlighted the inane side of life in the thirties. The sketches were brought to life by the most outstanding comedy cast ever assembled on a single show — Jack (aka J. Scott) Smart, already a radio veteran, and Minerva Pious, a former understudy to Fannie Brice, were the cornerstone of the original "Mighty Allen Art Players," and between them

could master any known dialect or characterization. In years to come they'd be joined by other equally flexible performers: Alan Reed, Charlie Cantor, John Brown, Eileen Douglas, and Walter Tetley — and this talented cast brought to the "Town Hall" stage a versatility unmatched on any other program. The newsreels may be "topical" humor, but they're surprisingly fresh and alive today. The headlines may have changed in sixty-five years, but the human foibles behind them haven't.

The newsreels and the weekly Art Players sketch — a carryover of Allen's original "revue" format — were consistently amusing. But the best moments on the Town Hall shows are those features which allowed Fred to do what he did best: to be extemporaneous. Beginning in early 1935, the second half hour was devoted to an amateur-show format. For Fred, this was a flashback to his earliest days on the stage, as an MC for "Sam Cohen's Amateur

## FORGOTTEN LAUGHTER

Shows" in Boston. Allen enjoyed promoting new talent, and looked forward to interacting with the performers in these unscripted segments. The sour-apple Broadway comedian here gives way to the real Fred Allen - a gentle, decent man with an expansive sense of humor.

1939 marked the start of an unpleasant new era for Allen. A new advertising agency had taken over the show, and was much more prone to interference than the previous producers. The "Town Hall" format was abandoned over Allen's objection, and other unwanted innovations were thrust onto the program. Fred had never liked the idea of using "guest stars," preferring to feature ordinary people like the amateurs or his "People You Didn't Expect To Meet" discoveries. But the agency insisted on name guests, and so they came. Fred had no taste for the "Hollywood" approach to radio, and it shows — the best guest segments by far are those which feature either offbeat personalities or Fred's old vaudeville cronies like Jack Haley and Doc Rockwell.

Fred's transition back to a half-hour format in 1942 had a further effect on the content of the show — it was stripped down to two brief segments: the newsreel (soon replaced by "Allen's Alley") and the guest star. Never again would Fred have the chance to interact spontaneously with ordinary people, and never again would he be particularly happy as a radio performer. The agency and the changing tastes of the audience had taken away the one part of the program that had really given him joy, and while his half hour shows would certainly have their moments, the intangible feeling that comes from hearing a man who was happy in what he was doing was gone.

The stress of doing the show began to take its toll on Fred's health during these

years, and it shows in many of the programs. Fred Allen was a very sick man in 1943-44, and while there are some brilliant programs during this period — his Gilbert-and-Sullivan and Rogers-and-Hammerstein parodies are among the most memorable comedy ever done on radio — there are also shows that come across as half-hearted.

Fred took the 1944-45 season off on doctor's orders, and the year off appears to have done him a lot of good. Some of the old spark returns in his 1945-47 programs — the new series kicked off with a very funny running gag involving Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, and there were some unusual guests on subsequent shows, ranging from Tallulah Bankhead to H. V. Kaltenborn.

The "Allen's Alley" segment assumed its best-known configuration in this era, with Senator Claghorn, Titus Moody, Mrs. Nussbaum, and Ajax Cassidy. The Moody segments are the highlight — Parker Fennelly is wonderfully dry, and as a New Englander himself, Allen understood the Moody character better than that of the other "types" featured in the Alley. Although all the Alley denizens are funny, only Titus emerges as more than a comedy stereotype.

By 1947-48, Fred's conflicts with the NBC censors were again getting out of control, and his blood pressure was rising. Adding to Fred's unhappiness, radio itself was changing for the worse — jejune give-away shows were beginning to flood the networks, and these, to Allen, represented the ultimate betrayal of radio's creative potential. Ironically, his show had for the first time achieved the number-one spot in the Hooperratings when this Quiz Show trend heralded its downfall.

The story of how ABC counter-programmed against Fred with the venal *Stop The Music* is a familiar one — but Fred's



response to the attack is interesting. His shows during this period were perhaps the most aggressive of his entire career — lashing out ferociously against the cheapening of the medium. His first show of the 1948-49 season featured fellow malcontent Henry Morgan as guest star, in an acid-throwing parody of *Stop The Music* itself — and the rest of the season was just as corrosive.

The stress of this period took its toll — Fred's chronic high blood pressure came surging back, and in early 1949, his doctor told him point blank that his life was in danger if he kept up the way he was going. Fred's sponsor, Ford Motors, was pressuring him to go into weekly television, but he was forbidden to do so by his doctor. Ford decided not to continue the radio show after the end of the season, and shortly after his final show of the season, Allen suffered a stroke - putting an end to

any thought he might have had of returning in the fall.

Fred didn't disappear completely from view — there would still be the short-lived *Big Show* appearances, sporadic and largely unsuccessful attempts at television, and an all-too-brief career as an author. The creative spark was still there — but times had changed, and Fred's edgy approach was out of step with the ultra-conformity of the 1950s. Even if he had been healthy, it's unlikely he would have been able to blend his brittle personality into this new era, as Jack Benny did so seamlessly, or that he would have been able to exploit the quirks of the new technology in the manner of Ernie Kovacs. He was, in the end, a man of words — in a world that

had come to care only for images.

Fred Allen was a paradox — a man who hated the drudgery of radio and the tiny corporate minds which controlled it, and yet couldn't stay away from performing. He was a complex, introverted man who was physically incapable of being "warm and fuzzy" and yet had a reputation as the most compassionate person in show business. His shows are equally complex — and they don't lend themselves to simple nostalgia. But to brush off Fred Allen as a mere "topical" comic, to pass over his shows because they aren't as "warm" or "nostalgic" as the old favorites is to miss out on a rich listening experience. ■

*NOTE-- To hear Fred Allen on the air tune in to TWTD October 23 for a 1965 NBC tribute broadcast hosted by Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy; and November 27 for a 1932 Linit Bath Club Revue.*

# A Favorite Radio Memory

BY RICHARD W. O'DONNELL

What is your favorite radio memory? We all have them; some new, some not-so-new, and others from long, long ago.



Have you got one tucked away in your memory book? Perhaps you have. Think about it, and while you are reflecting, I will relate, as best I can, a treasured kilocycle recollection from the days when I was a lad.

At first, I was tempted to recall the evening I tried to listen to *Lum and Abner*, those Jot 'Em Down cronies from Pine Ridge. There was a hurricane howling away that night, and Lum, and Abner too, were blown all over the radio dial. Or so it seemed.

The show was on for only 15 minutes, and I must have adjusted the dial about 115 times to keep up with what was going on with the Arkansas store owners that night. At that, I never heard the end of the show. That hurricane swept it away, I guess.

However, I think another peek into the past may be of more interest. This particular story takes place over a period of years, I should point out. It has to do with Orson Welles' famous Halloween show, "The War of the Worlds," aired by CBS at 8 p.m. on October 30, 1938. It has been called the most famous radio show ever to hit the airwaves.

To begin at the beginning, my father had three days off over that weekend. We lived in South Boston back then. My Dad decided we were going to spend the entire three days down at our Uncle Billy's place.

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located a few miles outside of Providence, Rhode Island. And so we did.

Sunday night arrived, and like the rest of the nation, I expected we would listen to Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy at eight. Not so. Uncle Billy had come across what he called "a great show." We ended up listening to Welles' show. At that, we were a few minutes late tuning in, because Uncle Billy had to fidget with the dial for a while before he finally had it tuned in properly.

Let me tell you, those Martians were all over the place. I wasn't interested. I was tired and sleepy, and not too impressed with all the jabbering on the radio. My Dad didn't take it too seriously either. Mom and the rest of the family were out in the kitchen chatting with Billy's wife, Elsie. The space invaders were the last thing they had on their mind.

About the only person who was gripped by the madness of the moment was Uncle Billy, who always claimed he was an atheist. He started attending church on a regular basis the following Sunday.

After the show was over, and the nation recovered the next day, our family headed back to South Boston. And "The War of the Worlds" became a vague memory. Then everybody remembered the *Mercury Theatre* tale of terror.

At this point, certain names will be changed, because some of the people involved may still be around. In the days before Halloween, we would sit on the front steps, or stand on the street corner, and recall what happened the day of Orson's shocker.

All I had to offer was Uncle Billy, and that wasn't much. As for my friends, and neighbors, they had some amazing yarns

to tell.

"Uncle Fergie got up on the roof," recalled Billy Castle, a friend, "and scanned the skies over South Boston, looking for those Martians. Then he thought he saw them, and was going to leap off the roof. I guess he figured death was better than dishonor. If my Pop hadn't grabbed him, Fergie would be a goner today."

As for Mrs. Maybelle McNultee, the neighborhood social leader, she recalled, "was in downtown Boston on my way to see a film at the Metropolitan. Tremont Street was crowded with people, and you could see the terror written all over their faces. A man at the corner of Winter Street was telling everybody the Martians were coming. Fortunately, I remained calm. My daughter, Prissie, was with me, and I didn't want her to be frightened. We simply returned to the subway station, and caught a train home."

Then there was Mr. Murphy, our letter carrier. He said: "When I heard them on the radio, I went down to the cellar and found that heavy metal helmet I wore in the first world war. If those Martians ever showed up, I was going to give them their money's worth. Fortunately, by the time I found that helmet, the Welles' show was almost over, and everybody knew the world was safe."

The years went by, all too quickly, and I was writing feature stories for the *Boston Globe*. Halloween was approaching, and Al Monahan, my old city editor, came up to me and said, "Halloween is coming. Do the Welles show. Talk to people. Give it a Boston angle."

Some of the guys in the office offered me a few tidbits. One said, "I was down in Quincy, when it happened. All the lights went out in Quincy Square. Sort of a blackout, I guess, so the Martians wouldn't see us."

A news editor offered: "The first thing

I did was start filling bottles with water. I figured the Martians would go after our water for sure."

Armed with an adequate supply of horror tales, I headed for the newspaper library to learn how *The Globe* had handled the space invasion. *The Globe* reported Bostonians had remained cool, calm and collected despite rumors those creepy Martians would soon hit town.

I was mighty proud of my fellow Bostonians, until I got a little deeper into the *Globe's* account of the invasion. I think it was about the sixth or seventh paragraph that the Park Street Church was mentioned.

That was when I decided to look up the radio listings in the Sunday edition, published the same day as Welles' celebrated exercise in calamity. And I did just that.

Do you know what I found out?

At eight o'clock that Sunday night, while the rest of the nation, and Canada too, was being jolted by the space monsters, Bostonians were listening to a one-hour broadcast from the Park Street Church. WEEL, CBS' outlet then, had chosen religion over radio drama, because the latter had a low rating.

After all those years—it must have been three decades—it dawned on me the "War of the Worlds" had not been broadcast in Boston that Halloween weekend.

Yet scores of my friends, neighbors and relatives, even enemies, and all of them presumably in Boston at the time, had vivid and stunning recollections of what happened to them, and those close to them, the night Orson Welles caused the nation to get weak at the knees.

Al Monahan, my city editor, took my discovery in stride. "Well," he said, "if you can't do Welles, then do something about pumpkins. Get hold of somebody who can tell you how to carve a pumpkin."

That's what I did. I nicked my thumb twice. ■



# DECOY

BY CARY O'DELL

Even with reruns, Nick-at-Night and, of course our collective memories, television of the 1950s (when it was very new, usually single-sponsored and always black and white) was a far more diverse and realistic place than many of us might originally recollect. This is especially true in its primetime portrayals of women. While Gracie Allen was delightfully ditsy and Dagmar was delicious, they were not the only images of women put forth in the early days of the medium. From (literally) pioneering women like Gail Davis in *Annie Oakley*, to careerists like Eve Arden in *Our Miss Brooks*, to savvy homemakers like Peggy Wood in *Mama*, there were many forward-thinking females leaping out at America through the tube.

There are other shows, buried like golden nuggets inside an already overflowing treasure chest of television series — long running or short-lived — which were not only “ahead of their time,” but always highly entertaining and, ultimately, inspiring.

Consider *Decoy*. *Decoy* was — is — an amazingly progressive television series. It ran in the fringe world of first-run, off-network syndication for one season in 1957. Produced in black and white and one half-hour in length for each of its 39 episodes, *Decoy* (a.k.a. *Policewoman Decoy*) was the story of New York City police woman Patricia “Casey” Jones.

*Decoy* was produced as a tribute to America's police women and its plots were

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(allegedly) torn from real-life Gotham cases, much as *Dragnet* dipped into the LAPD for its dramatized reenactments. As a series it was financed under the banner of Pyramid Productions (actually a consortium of major independent stations) and was produced by Everett Rosenthal, Stuart Rosenberg and Arthur Singer. For its one and only season it was syndicated, nationwide, by Official Films.

The series starred actress Beverly Garland, a respected, dependable film veteran and something of a TV industry good luck charm, based on the number of pilots in which she starred or guested and ended up getting picked up for full runs. She was, with her smart and gutsy performance, the heart and soul of the series and its only regular cast member making her still one of only a handful of actresses to front her own dramatic series.

Garland, straight from a career milestone co-starring with Frank Sinatra in *The Joker is Wild*, got the lead in *Decoy* after receiving a call from an east coast producer. She remembers, “They asked, ‘Would you be interested in doing a television series about a police woman in New York City?’ Television was very new and I didn't pay much attention to what television meant [at that time] to the motion picture industry. But it was a great opportunity and it was work.”

Garland went to New York. She remembers, “I tested. Did a whole show, a half-hour. And then they went out to try to sell one of the networks on it.” Selling the networks on a female-centered cop drama, however, proved difficult. When there were no takers, the producers sold the se-



Beverly Garland

ries into syndication. Eventually *Decoy* would air on independents in Boston, New Orleans, Buffalo, Oklahoma City and other markets. However, no stations in New York City or Los Angeles picked it up which would ultimately add to the show's now “underground” mystic and, no doubt, also lead to the program's short life-span.

With *Decoy* a “go,” Garland relocated to the Big Apple and began work in the same city studios that were home to *Sgt. Bilko* and which would double for *Decoy*'s 16th precinct. And she went to work creating the character of Officer Jones: badge number 300; weekly salary, \$75. Remembers the actress, “I had to learn karate. I had to learn to shoot a gun...”

For authenticity and to keep production costs down, the series was filmed mostly on the streets of New York (“We would take cabs from location to location and change clothes in the rest rooms of hamburger joints,” recalls Garland of the less than glamorous working conditions). This method gave the series a unique documentary feel and a sense of neo-realism not unlike what *East Side, West Side* would later be celebrated for. Such economy also meant that Garland almost always did her

own stunts. The majority of episodes were sometimes shot in as little as three days, often with filming going late into the night. The long work days usually left Garland with just enough time each night to get back home and start memorizing the script for the next morning. Being the lead also meant, of course, being in every single scene and, in time, the workload would take its toll on the actress. Garland, who worked through colds and a case of the measles, said, “One day I fainted on the set. They revived me and I went on with it.” She also recalls, “We shot through the winter. I remember one time, one of the first shows we did, and I'm running through Central Park and the camera is packed so it won't freeze up and I'm out there without a coat.”

Being shot in New York also gave the series easy access to many talented up and comers. Ed Asner, Phyllis Newman, Colleen Dewhurst, Barbara Barrie, and Lois Nettleton, among others, all made guest appearances on the series.

Besides being filmed in New York and having a female in the lead, *Decoy* was unusual for fifties TV in many other ways as well, especially in its tackling of often taboo subject matter. Early television did not always shy away from tough situations as frequently as many remember. Though it took the talents of Norman Lear and others to fully bring social consciousness to all levels of entertainment, television of the 1950s and '60s frequently took on tough issues and dealt with them responsibly.

During its one season, *Decoy* had plots which capably dealt with a wide variety of social issues: in an episode titled “Death Watch” there's a sensitive portrayal of a brain damaged adult; in another, “Bullet of Hate,” we see an insightful treatment of a child abuse victim now trying to cope as an adult; in “Dream Fix,” Jones attempts to help, and understand, a drug-addicted young debutante whose dependency is

## DECOY

treated without sugar coating or shame; in "Scapegoat," Casey must come to the aid of a distraught mother who is considering murdering her son because he was born mentally retarded and is now ostracized from the woman's family. This episode ends in a climatic scene on a city bridge where Casey counsels, cajoles, and eventually taunts the woman into reconsidering. It is a scene of such power and suspense it could easily fit in today into episodes of *NYPD Blue* or *Homicide: Life on the Street*.

Additionally the series also had the ability (and gumption) to address many "women's issues": unplanned pregnancy, attempted rape, and, in its own way, feminism. In the episode "First Arrest" (the second to last episode shot), Jones, five years on the force, relates the story of her first undercover case to a fellow police woman just starting on the force. It is an image of supportive partnership years before the teamwork of *Cagney and Lacey*. This episode, told in flashback (and actress Garland's personal favorite) took place at Coney Island and recounted Jones's first assignment and how she dealt with her new job, its new demands and her neophyte jitters. Trying to collar a fence, Jones is shown as jumpy and insecure, frequently calling back to her sergeant seeking advice until, at episode's end, she not only catches the crook but finds a level of self-assurance.

Casey Jones, as a character written and played, brought enormous compassion and humanity (what we would once have called a "woman's touch") to her policing that the bare bones demeanor of Joe Friday could probably never comprehend. The black and whiteness of good and evil, of legal and illegal, so easily discerned by Friday or by Elliot Ness on *The Untouchables* was

far less clean cut on *Decoy*. Officer Jones frequently found herself less than thrilled at an episode's close, wrestling with the moral issues at hand and frequently feeling sympathy for the guilty as well as for the victimized. In the series pilot, Officer Jones is seen making the arrest of a woman, a near rape victim who killed her abuser in order to get away, and then walking the woman out to the waiting police car, her arms around her. When did Joe Friday ever do that?

But *Decoy* never fell to any heavy-handed moralizing about issues; neither did its lead character. In an episode titled "Dark Corridor" Casey is sent deep undercover into a women's prison. She will pose as an inmate and only the warden will know her true identity. As her superior tells her of the important complexity of her role "on the inside," Casey cuts him off briskly, "I'm a policewoman, not a sociologist. You just tell me where to report."

In some ways *Decoy* did borrow a page from the larger *Dragnet* archetype. As with *Dragnet* Officer Jones' personal life was a non-issue. Though we can easily assume that Casey was unmarried, we would probably also have to assume that there was no steady man in her life. For Casey, her work was her life. Actress Garland, in fact, can only remember one scene that took place in Casey's apartment. And that was a simple phone call scene with no other actors and only minimal scenery. She said, "If the show had gone on they might have gone more into her personal life, but it was fascinating [to me] that we didn't really know that much about her." The only insight we had into her background was in the series pilot when Casey makes mention of training for the ballet before — somehow — segueing into the police force.

Also, as with *Dragnet* and other hard-core cop shows of the era, Garland as Jones narrated each episode through voice-over.



setting up the basic plot, then explaining to the audience that week's "sting" operation. Occasionally, Jones broke the fourth wall, addressing the audience directly, and giving the show and her character a unique, authoritative and personal voice.

Though the series was called *Decoy* and Casey's job was often to pose as something she wasn't, she was not the traditional female "decoy" character we have normally seen on television. Characters like Cinnamon Carter on *Mission: Impossible* or Eve Whitfield on *Ironside* had as the crux of their roles the art of distraction. Using feminine wiles (and, of course, no shortage of smarts) these women were always part of a team, always assisting in moving the scheme, that week's impossible mission, forward but seldom, if ever, were they seen as the mastermind or the key individual in the plan's resolution.

Later, even in series where the female hero took more center stage, they always seemed to have a man nearby, handy and able to pull them out of trouble. *Police Woman* Pepper Anderson could always call on Bill Crowley to get her out of a tight spot, just as Emma Peel had Mr. Stead on *The Avengers* and Honey West had her part-

ner Ben Bolt. Casey Jones was always on her own. In no episode does she become the hunted or the trapped, the clichéd damsel in distress. Smart, calm and resourceful, Casey was always shown as the one in charge. Says Garland about her alter ego, "I was really one of the guys. You never got the feeling that this was a 'feminine' cop. She was just a cop. She always handled things herself."

Additionally and interestingly, *Decoy's* Casey Jones never depended for plot or ratings on "jiggle," the sexual overttness that would color other series with heroic female leads, including *The Avengers*, *Honey West*, and, of course, *Charlie's Angels*. Though when first glimpsed in the show's pilot, Officer Jones is draped in mink. That was as openly seductive and glamorous as Garland was ever allowed to get. In this regard, *Decoy* outdistances *Police Woman* which frequently sent Angie Dickenson's Pepper undercover as a go-go girl or prostitute. "I never recall ever getting a script where I thought Casey was being compromised as a professional or exploited," said Garland. Conceived as a series as a tribute to real-life policewomen, the show took its promise seriously and would only portray the women in blue with respect and with serious attention to realism. To keep the series true to life, the producers even hired a real-life New York City policewoman to stay on the set and make sure Officer Casey Jones did everything by the book.

Playing a police woman who was sometimes pounding the beat, but most often undercover, was an actress's field day and Garland made the most of her role. One week she was a "plain clothes man," the next she was "doing time" in a woman's prison playing a tough inmate without a trace of sentiment or hesitation. Later, in another episode, she's a nurse; after that a dancer in a carnival. Garland was up to any challenge. Her work is stunning, it

turns on a dime, going from astute, observing police officer to hardened gun moll in slight seconds. That she was not Emmy-nominated is simply due to the series' syndicated form and its lack of exposure in New York and Los Angeles, certainly not to Garland's work which is still striking and timeless.

*Decoy*, during its run, racked up some impressive ratings. It was the highest rated show on independent stations in three major markets, New Orleans, Boston and Buffalo. But without being under the largeness of a network and with no big studio backing, the producers of *Decoy* had to scramble for the money to keep the show afloat. After 39 episodes they had run out of financing. Says Garland of her series' sudden demise, "I was so tired. SO TIRED. I was really rung out. So when those 39 were done, I was sort of glad it was over. Later, I thought it would have been good to go back. It was too bad, really, that they didn't have the money to go on." After the show ceased original production, it was syndicated successfully for seven more years under the title *Policewoman*. Even then, it was frequently in the ratings' top ten off-network series.

Though proud of the series, Garland believes it may have done some damage to her career in the long run. She had said, "Because the show wasn't on in New York or Los Angeles, when I went back to California no one knew where I had been." Considering Garland's omnipresence in front of TV audiences via recurring roles on *My Three Sons*, *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, *Lois and Clark*, *Seventh Heaven* and in innumerable guest appearances, whatever damage that might have been done was certainly short term. She is still a producer's good luck charm and a TV devotee's favorite.

But she holds no ill will towards *Decoy* or Officer Casey. "I was fascinated by it. I LOVED doing it. It was one of the first television shows that had a woman as the star. I didn't have a chance to talk to a lot of police women during the series due to the shooting schedule, but I did know a lot were pleased that I was doing this because they were sort of the unsung heroes. Now, throughout my life, I've had ten or twenty women come up to me and tell me that they saw me on *Decoy* and because of it they became policewomen."

Definitely *Decoy*, as a series, had a sense of duty, not only to entertain its audience but to educate them about female police officers, the work they did at the time and would do in the future. At the end of the very first episode, Casey Jones/Beverly Garland's closing speech, from her desk at the station, was proof enough of that. Her monologue, again addressing the camera directly, spoke of her and her fellow female officers past and present:

*Remember [police woman] Jean, the girl I talked to? She has a degree from the University of Southern California. She's a fully qualified chemist. Edna was a nurse. Marion was a social worker. I studied... believe it or not, to be a ballet dancer. Down the line you name it and we've done it. Today, tomorrow, next week, we'll pose as hostesses, society girls, models, anything and everything the department asks us to be. There are two-hundred and fifty-nine of us in the department; we carry two things in common wherever we go: a shield -- called a "potsie" -- and a .32 revolver. We're New York's finest. We're police-women.*

Seventeen years before *Police Woman* and twenty-five years before the "break-through" of *Cagney and Lacey*, Beverly Garland's Casey Jones made the streets safe and early television a far more interesting place. ■

# Halloween Origins

BY FR. KEVIN SHANLEY, O.CARM.



Few youngsters who prowl the dusky gloom on Halloween to ring doorbells for "trick or treat" requests are aware that they are celebrating a Celtic pagan tradition that goes back some 20 centuries. Much of the tradition, however, has been obscured by the passage of time and faulty memories.

But when the Church turned the feast into All Hallows Eve, and the following day into All Saints Day, the customs and celebrations of the ancient Celts took on new meaning.



Even today in Ireland, one of the few countries where ancient Celtic customs still survive, All Hallows Eve (Halloween) before All Saints Day is known as the Eve of Samhain (pronounced "sowen"). Samhain was the beginning of the Celtic New Year, and marked the end of the grazing season and harvest. According to ancient custom, all fires had to be extinguished and new ones lighted to mark a new year which would bring abundance and light, and another victory for the sun over the powers of darkness.

For the ancient Celts, Samhain Eve was also a night of danger and dread when otherworld spirits roamed freely and sometimes disastrously. With the joining of the old year to the new, our everyday world and the otherworld were open to each other.

The spirits of the dead could return to

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this world, perhaps to even an old score or to demand justice for a previous wrong done to them, and ghosts and demons roamed about freely. It was a time, also, when the future could be foretold by following certain particular practices. With the beginning of the new year, any were anxious to know what the future would hold for them. Costumes were worn by the Celts to disguise themselves from malevolent spirits.

Our present custom of bobbing for apples dates back to the Celtic divination arts to discern who should marry, thrive or die in the new year. The Celts ducked for apples, and when they caught one in their teeth, would peel it and then fling the peel over their shoulder. The peel was then supposed to form a letter of the alphabet to indicate one's future spouse.

Behind the masks and mischief of present-day Halloween, the Jack-O-Lanterns and "treat" offerings, still lurks the ancient fear of malevolent spirits and the attempt to placate them. Although there were no pumpkins in Ireland, there were plenty of oversized rutabagas and even potatoes if necessary, that could be hal- lowed out, carved with grotesque faces and illuminated by a candle. They were placed outside each home to guide the spirits of their ancestors.

An ancient Irish legend tells us that the jack-o-lantern was named after "Stingy" Jack, a miser who liked practical jokes.

When he died, he was refused entrance to heaven because he would not share his wealth with the poor, and to hell because he had tricked the devil. When Satan came to claim his soul, Jack suggested that they

## HALLOWEEN ORIGINS

have a drink before setting out on the road to hell. Since neither had any money, Jack persuaded Satan to change himself into a shilling. When the drinks were paid for, Satan could change back into himself.

As soon as Satan changed into a shilling, Jack seized the coin and popped it into his purse which had a cross-shaped catch. Since Satan couldn't cross the barrier of the cross, he was wild with anger.

"Promise never to claim me, and I'll let you out," said Jack. The enraged Satan had to agree. Jack was delighted until he found out that now he could find no rest in either heaven or hell. His punishment is to walk the earth each night with his lantern till Judgement Day, weary but finding no rest.

If you think that black cats crossing your path bring bad luck, you can blame the Celts who believed that cats were once human beings but were changed into animals as a punishment for doing evil. They also believed that spirits lived in trees and would "knock on wood." This assured them good luck. They also believed that spirits lived in an image, and bad luck would follow from breaking a mirror.

Whatever the exact Celtic or Christian origins of Halloween, today's children can thank the ancient Celts, and their more modern counterparts the Irish, for preserving the customs of a day looked forward to by youngsters all over the country. The celebration was brought to America in the mid-19th century when thousands of Irish crowded the shores of the U.S. following the Great Famine of 1847-50.

They have given the world a zest for life, an incredible supply of legends dating back to the Arthurian tales and farther, and great modern writers and poets.

And also, with all that, they brought Halloween for the enjoyment of our children. ■



## Our Readers Write WE GET LETTERS

**NAPERVILLE, IL** -- I have enjoyed listening to *Those Were The Days* for many years. The shows are so much better than what is on the air today. The comedians really knew how to make us laugh. I also enjoy the *Nostalgia Digest* and the interesting stories about the olden days. The story "The Ice Cream Parlor" (Aug-Sept, 1999) brought back very pleasant memories. --BERT HOCH

**ORO VALLEY, ARIZONA**-- Sure miss you on the radio! Getting the *Digest* helps. Keep up the good, informative material. --STEVE KACPRZAK

**WEST CHICAGO, IL**-- The *Digests* are really "keepers!" One can go back to them time and time again, and gather so much interesting information of bygone days. You and your crew have done a terrific job! It is a true pleasure to hear exciting, romantic or mysterious programs without all the filth that seems to be transcending today's movies, television and radio. --GABRIELE GOERING

**SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA**-- It's renewal time again and, of course, always a pleasure. Of all the "Chicago Things" I miss, *Those Were The Days* and my wonderful former customers (of Celtic Carpet Cleaners) are missed the most. I ran my best radio antenna up my tallest palm tree, but no use, still can't get *TWTD*. We do pick up Eddie Hubbard and the Browsers from a Tuscon (580 AM) station every Saturday morning. Please say hello if you see or hear from any of Celtic's dear old customers. And let them know that I've only gone to the Valley of the Sun, and not that other hot place! --BOB LANGWORTHY

**CHICAGO**-- Just received the August-September issue and wish to make a correction to the picture caption on page 7 of the TV cast of Gunsmoke. Ken Curtis' character was named *Festus*. The role of Chester was played by Dennis Weaver. I so enjoy reading the *Digest* as it brings back so many nice memories. I remember Sunday afternoons, listening to the likes of Gun-

smoke, Johnny Dollar, etc. Saturday mornings brought Let's Pretend, Grand Central Station... the list goes on. Thanks for letting me have my input. I wish you continued success. --ADRIENNE OHANIAN

**CHICAGO** -- The latest issue of the *Nostalgia Digest* is terrific. I especially enjoyed John Mies article on Radio Giants (Aug-Sept, 1999). I'll sure look forward to your 1500th broadcast August 7. --NORMAN ROSS

**CHICAGO**-- Old TV shows just don't hold the nostalgia for me that these radio programs do. It thrills me that my daughter listens to old time radio every Saturday and gets her two sons to listen, 13 and 9 years of age. If kids today were listening to tapes of old radio shows or the rebroadcasts on WNIB and WMAQ, their world would be a saner and safer place for them to live. Thanks for the memories every Saturday. --DOLORES J. MADLENER

**DOWNERS GROVE, IL**-- Going over my list, I've decided my choice for the best old time radio show of the 20th Century is The Whistler. Thanks for the opportunity to vote. It gave me a chance to really measure my tastes. --RON HARDING

**CHICAGO**-- I cast my vote for Fibber McGee and Molly, my favorite old time radio program because it had a story. I enjoyed the variety of characters, especially when Fibber and Molly gave Mayor LaTrivia a hard time with a play on words, miscommunications and tongue-twisters. --ANMARIE DANIELS

**PARK FOREST, IL**-- There is no question that the Lux Radio Theatre is my absolute favorite radio program. I remember sitting almost at the top of the stairs (it was on after my bedtime) listening to all of the adventures while Mom sat in front of the Zenith and did needlework while she was listening. --MARIE VAN GEMERT

**ELMWOOD PARK, IL**-- The Jack Benny Program. I have enjoyed this program for many years and I can't think of a program in the series that hasn't made me laugh. The writing is excellent, ranging from brilliant to simply silly. I feel strongly about The Jack Benny Program since Jack and I share a

birthday and in 2000, I'll turn 39 (for the first time!). --DAVE BAKKER

**CHICAGO**-- If I were to think of my favorite radio series, it would have to be The Shadow. Four o'clock on Sunday afternoons, my sister and I listened to it and sometimes with our friends. It had to be missed because of "emergency only." --SISTER FRANCES AULT

**LA GRANGE, IL**-- Lux Radio Theatre. My mom, sister and I made it a Monday night ritual to listen. Dad was bowling Monday nights so we girls had our choice. --JOAN V. ROEDER

**CHICAGO**-- Inner Sanctum. I love a lot of shows, but I *always* look forward to hearing this one. Raymond is a stitch (in a shroud, of course) and the stories are entertaining in a wonderfully horrid sort of way. --ELIZABETH LIECHTI

**CHICAGO**-- The Whistler, because, as the show introduction says, "A mystery program that is unique among all mystery programs because even when you know who's guilty, you always receive a startling surprise at the final curtain." --JIM OSTARELLO

**OAK PARK, IL**-- Sgt. Preston of the Yukon is the best radio program of all time for me. The music (classical), the dog King (I pretended my black cocker spaniel in Caledonia, Wisconsin was King), the drama (good vs. evil, clearly defined), and I liked Sgt. Preston's deep voice. I feel like a boy again when I hear a program! --LARRY JOE GRANT

**E-MAIL**-- Jack Benny. Week after week, year after year, Jack made Sunday evenings something to look forward to. Jack's program made the thought of school on Monday a little less ominous. His shows were always in good taste. It was tip top humor and we often found our family laughing out loud at the characters and the situations. All this with real audiences and no laugh tracks. --ROBERT S. FELTON

**OAK PARK**-- Our Miss Brooks is the best for me. Excellent on radio, appealing to all ages. As a result I became a (slightly) eccentric high school English teacher. --ELLYN LEVELL → → →



## MORE LETTERS

**E-MAIL--** Our Miss Brooks. I'm sure I'm a teacher because of that show. --**MARGARET ELLENSTEIN**

**E-MAIL--** The Great Gildersleeve. The cast was a great ensemble cast; their voices were easily recognizable, and they played well off each other. The predicaments the characters got into were not too far off the mark from those of ordinary people.

This program shines in the quiet moments where friends and family come together to resolve whatever conflict has been the theme for the broadcast. Simple human warmth and understanding, forgiveness, and maybe a song unite everyone at last, proving the Biblical admonition to "not let the sun go down on your wrath." --**JULIE GOLTERMANN**

**PARK RIDGE, IL--** One Man's Family. In our home, nothing was ever scheduled for the time that One Man's Family was on the radio. I could see Seaciff and the beautiful home the Barbour family lived in. Paul was my older and most-loved brother, Hazel was the only sister I would ever have had. The twins were as interesting as anyone I ever knew and I know I fell in love with Jack when I was about nine years old. Even as I write this I can smell the sea air and hear the fog horns. To me it wasn't an imagined household. It is as dear as my own. --**CAROL SCHULTZ**

**ST. CHARLES, IL--** No contest. The best radio show of all time was Vic and Sade. Why? Because of its humor, which was aimed at sophisticated adults; is timeless, yet "off-the-wall" and "about nothing;" it didn't have to depend on studio laughs to tell its listening audience where the humor was; and it was based on familiar and universal situations, not on dated one-liners. I repeat: no contest. --**JAN BACH**

**PARK FOREST, IL--** Amos 'n' Andy. It is one of the few shows that I remember listening to on the radio in the early fifties. I really did like the characters on the program;

they are like friends that one enjoys being with. My favorite episode is the annual Christmas program where Andy plays Santa Claus so that he can get Amos' daughter Arbedella a doll for Christmas and Amos interprets The Lord's Prayer for her. --**L. YOUNGBERG**

**SYCAMORE, IL--** Fibber McGee and Molly. I was born on April 16, 1935 the day that show began on radio. --**JOYCE OETJENS**

**EARLVILLE, IL--** Suspense has to be number one on your list of the twenty best shows of the century. The story lines are compelling. I have to listen to the entire drama, beginning to end, to catch every clue, every plot nuance. I love the background/mood music, the sound effects, the superb acting. --**TONI OLSON**

**MELROSE PARK, IL--** My pick for the best radio show is War of the Worlds. I heard it as a boy and had to check other radio stations to see if it was just a play! It was a well-done waker-upper. --**COURT BRAUNELL**

**CHICAGO--** The Jack Benny Program. Of course! Sixty years later and I'm still laughing. And you'll find my name inscribed on the plaque outside the vault at the Museum of Broadcast Communications, too. Thanks for doing the show all these years, Chuck, and for all the joy you have given me. --**GEORGE VENETIS**

**E-MAIL--** The Jack Benny Program. I can't wait for February! --**PAUL BAKER**

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← **FRED ALLEN**

felt that all he had to show after years on the radio was "the echo of forgotten laughter." Elizabeth McLeod's story begins on page 26.

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