NOSTALGIA DIGEST

CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE ©

BOOK TWENTY-SIX | CHAPTER TWO | FEBRUARY/MARCH 2000

Hello, Out There in Radioland!

BY CHUCK SCHADEN

Last year was not a very good year for show business. We lost many of our favorite entertainers and personalities during 1999.
They're gone, but not forgotten.

JOEY ADAMS 88, durable 'borscht-belt' comedian who told jokes for sixty years in vaudeville, movies and TV and who wrote over forty books on humor and comedy. December 2.

MARTIN AGRONSKY, 84, newsman who was a war correspondent on radio during the 1940s and a commentator on television from 1950-88. July 25.

SPENCER ALLEN, 87, Chicago TV news pioneer, the first news director at WGN-TV and producer and announcer on the *WGN-TV Newsreel* in the 1940s. February 23.

KIRK ALYN, 88, film actor who starred as the Man of Steel in two 15-episode movie serials, *Superman* (1948) and *Atom Man vs. Superman* (1950). March 14.

JOHN ARCHER, 84, actor who portrayed *The Shadow* on radio in 1944-45, and who appeared in over sixty motion pictures and many TV shows. December 5.

DIRK BOGARDE, 78, British actor, star of more than 70 films including the *Doctor in the House* series. May 8.

MURIEL BREMNER, 86, Chicago radio actress who appeared on many local and network soap operas and dramatic shows including *Chicago Theatre of the Air* and *Curtain Time;* on TV in *Hawkins Falls.* March 15.

HILLARY BROOKE, 84, actress who seemingly portrayed the "other woman" in dozens of movies. On TV's *My Little Margie* she played Roberta Townsend, who often was linked romantically with Margie's father, Vernon Albright. May 25.

VANESSA BROWN, 71, actress on stage and screen and, as a youngster, appeared regularly on radio's *Quiz Kids* using her real name, Smylla Brind. May 21.

NECROLOGY OF 1999
We Remember Them Well


Kirk Alyn


Muriel Bremner

CHARLIE BYRD, 74, versatile jazz and classical guitarist whose career spanned more than half a century and is credited with launching a bossa nova craze in the U.S. December 2.

RORY CALHOUN, 76, actor in many western films and in TV series *The Texan* and *Capitol.* April 28.

CANDY CANDIDO, 85, comic voice actor on radio and for animated cartoons. Known for the 1940s catch-phrase "I'm feeling mighty low" on the *Jimmy Durante Show.* May 24.

JOHN T. CASE, 76, journalist and conservationist known for his radio series *The Sportsman's Case* which ran on WBBM, Chicago from mid-'70s to mid-'80s. January 22.

PEGGY CASS, 74, comedienne on stage, screen and TV, best known for her portrayal of Agnes Gooch in the Broadway and film versions of *Auntie Mame.* March 8.

MARGUERITE CHAPMAN, 81, actress in films during 1940s and '50s, appearing in both supporting and starring roles. September 1.

DEL CLOSE, 64, leader in the world of improvisational theatre, training and working with many Chicago comedians with the Second City

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Clifton Fadiman


Charles Flynn

comedy troupe. March 4.

IRON EYES CODY, 94, actor who played an Indian in more than 100 films, but best known for his TV commercial as a Native American shedding a tear at the sight of a landscape befouled by garbage, litter, smoke and other pollutants. January 4.

ELLEN CORBY, 87, motion picture and TV actress best known as the grandmother on *The Waltons*. April 14.

MARY JANE CROFT, 83, veteran radio actress who appeared in supporting roles in hundreds of series including *Blondie, Our Miss Brooks, One Man's Family, Romance of Helen Trent, Mel Blanc Show;* on TV as a regular on *The Lucy Show* and *Here's Lucy*. August 24.

ROBERT CROMIE, 90, *Chicago Tribune* reporter and former war correspondent who hosted *The Cromie Circle* and *Book Beat* on TV. May 22.

JOE CUMMINGS, 69, veteran Chicago radio news reporter on WBBM, WNUS and WCFL during the 1960s and '70s; most recently was correspondent on TV's *Wild Chicago* and *Image Union*. *December 4.*

CHARLES 'BUD' DANT, 92, musical conductor on many programs during the radio days, including *Judy Canova Show, Dennis Day Show* and *Glamour Manor*. October 31.

DANNY DAYTON, actor on stage, screen and TV in such shows as *All in the Family* and *Friends*. On Broadway he appeared in *Guys and Dolls, High Button Shoes, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. February 6.

EDDIE DEAN, 91, singing cowboy in western films of the 1930s and '40s. Was the "Yodeling Cop" in the *Beverly Hillbillies* TV series. March 4.

FRANK DE VOL, 88, musical arranger, composer, conductor for radio, TV and films; worked on many recording sessions with Doris Day, Tony Bennett, and Ella Fitzgerald. Played Happy Kyne, the band leader on *Fernwood Tonight* TV series. October 27.

JOE DI MAGGIO, 84, the "Yankee Clipper" who was considered to be one of America's greatest baseball players. March 8.

SHIRLEY DINSDALE, 72, ventriloquist who, with her "puppet" named Judy Splinters, entertained on radio in the 1930s and on TV in the late '40s and '50s. May 9.

CLIFTON FADIMAN, 95, writer and book editor who was host of radio's *Information Please* program, 1938-48. June 20.

CHARLES FLYNN, age unreported, veteran Chicago radio actor who starred as *Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy* from 1939-51. September 29.

HELEN FORREST, 82, big band singer and recording artist whose hits included "I've Heard That Song Before," "I Don't Want to Walk Without You," and "I Had the Craziest Dream." She sang with Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, Harry James. July 11.

ALAN FUNT, 84, radio-TV producer, writer and originator of the popular *Candid Camera* series which began on radio in 1947 as *Candid Microphone*. September 5.

BETTY LOU GERSON, 84, actress whose career began on such radio programs as *First Nighter, Grand Hotel* and *Lux Radio Theatre*. She appeared on many TV shows and was the voice of villainess Cruella DeVil in Disney's animated feature *101 Dalmatians*. January 12.

SANDRA GOULD, 73, actress who played Miss Duffy on *Duffy's Tavern* and Mitzi on *A Date With Judy* on radio and was Mrs. Kravitz, the neighbor on TV's *Bewitched*. July 20.

RONNIE GRAHAM, 79, actor and writer who rose to fame in *New Faces of 1952* on Broadway. He wrote for *M*A*S*H, Mary Tyler Moore* on TV, and for several Mel Brooks films. July 4.

VIRGINIA GRAHAM, 86, hostess of TV talk show *Girl Talk* in the 1960s. December 23, 1998.

HUNTZ HALL, 78, actor in 120 films including 87 with the tough-talking Dead End Kids (later called the Bowery Boys). January 30.

HURD HATFIELD, 80, movie actor best remembered for his title role in the 1945 film, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. December 25, 1998.

PORTER HEAPS, 92, organist for many radio and TV shows; known as "Mr. Hammond Organ" as he performed concerts throughout the world. May 3.


Alan Funt


Betty Lou Gerson


Victor Mature


Donald Mills

ED HERLIHY, 89, veteran announcer and long-time spokesman for Kraft Foods on radio and TV; he was the voice of Universal Newsreels in movie theatres. January 30.

IRENE HERVEY, 89, leading lady in dozens of motion pictures in the 1930s and '40s. She played James Stewart's love interest in the 1939 western *Destry Rides Again*. December 20, 1998.

AL HIRT, 76, legendary jazz trumpeter who recorded more than 50 albums and became the symbol of New Orleans music. April 27.

DAVID HULL, 66, Chicagoland actor who starred on WNBQ's *Chicago Band Stand* in the late '50s and in numerous local theatrical productions. April 30.

HENRY JONES, 86, character actor on stage, screen and TV. Played the suspicious handyman in *The Bad Seed* on Broadway and in the film. May 17.

MADELINE KAHN, 57, actress acclaimed for screen roles in *Paper Moon, Blazing Saddles, Young Frankenstein;* on TV as neighbor Pauline on *Cosby*. December 3.

GARSON KANIN, 86, stage and film director-writer who created the Broadway and Hollywood classic *Born Yesterday*. March 13.

DE FOREST KELLEY, 79, actor best known as Dr. Leonard "Bones" McCoy in the *Star Trek* series on TV and in films. June 11.

RICHARD KILEY, 75, Broadway's original *Man of LaMancha* who had countless roles on the stage, in films and on TV. March 5.

STANLEY KUBRICK, 70, legendary director of such film classics as *2001: a Space Odyssey, Dr. Strangelove, The Shining, Spartacus, Full Metal Jacket*. March 7.

VICTOR MATURE, 86, actor in films of the 1940s and '50s; played Samson in *Samson and Delilah* and Doc Holliday in *My Darling Clementine*. August 9.

YEHUDI MENUHIN, 82, violinist, considered to be the greatest virtuoso of the century. March 12.

TOM MERCEIN, 81, WMAQ, Chicago morning disc jockey in the 1950s who also hosted NBC Sunday night *Monitor* segments. February 21.

DONALD MILLS, 84, last surviving member of the Mills Brothers who sang for more than 60 years, on radio, TV, movies, records and concerts, offering popular renditions of "Paper Doll," "Glow Worm," Tiger Rag," and other hits. November 13.

GUY MITCHELL, 72, popular singer in the 1950s whose big record hits include "Heartaches by the Numbers," "The Roving Kind," and "My Truly, Truly Fair." July 1.

ELLA MAE MORSE, 75, singer whose 1942 hit "Cow Cow Boogie" became the first million-seller for Capitol Records. Had big hits with "Shoo Shoo Baby," "Milkman, Keep Those Bottles Quiet," and "Blacksmith Blues." October 16.

KATHRYN MURRAY, 92, television personality with her husband (who died in 1991) on the *Arthur Murray Dance Party* in 1950, urging viewers to "put a little fun in your life try dancing!" August 6.

ANTHONY NEWLEY, 67, British entertainer who wrote *Stop the World, I Want to Get Off, Dr. Doolittle,* and *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. April 14.

RED NORVO, 91, jazz musician who played xylophone and vibraphone with Paul Whiteman, Benny Goodman and Woody Herman. April 6.

GENE RAYBURN, 81, popular host of TV's *Match Game* and one-time sidekick to Steve Allen on the *Tonight* show. November 29.

OLIVER REED, 61, British actor in many films including *Oliver!* in 1968 in which he played Bill Sykes. May 2.

CHARLES 'BUDDY' ROGERS, 94, actor and band leader who starred in the silent film *Wings*, the first motion picture to win an Academy Award. April 21.

RUTH ROMAN, 75, movie actress who appeared in such films as *Champion, Beyond the*

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Forest, The Far Country and others in the late 1940s and '50s. September 9.

MARTHA ROUNDTREE, 87, first moderator of *Meet The Press* which she created and co-produced (with Lawrence Spivak) for NBC radio in 1945. She was also the creator of *Leave It to the Girls.* August 23.

GEORGE C. SCOTT, 71, Academy Award winning actor for *Patton;* in such films as *Dr. Strangelove, The Hustler, The Hospital* and *Anatomy of a Murder.* September 22.

ROBERT SHAW, 82, renowned choral conductor, founder in 1948 of the Robert Shaw Chorale which appeared often on radio and TV. January 25.

JEAN SHEPHERD, 78, humorist, storyteller and long-time radio broadcaster whose greatest success came with the nostalgic film *A Christmas Story,* adapted from his book, "In God We Trust." October 16.

ROBERTA SHERWOOD, 86, torch singer and entertainer in nightclubs, on records, and frequently on TV in the early years of the medium. July 5.

SYLVIA SIDNEY, 88, film and theatre actress whose career spanned 70 years. July 1.

SHEL SILVERSTEIN, 67, Chicagoan whose off-beat books of poetry for children led him to a career as a singer and song writer. May 10.

GENE SISKEL, 53, film critic for the *Chicago Tribune* and co-star with Roger Ebert of the long-running nationally syndicated *Siskel & Ebert* movie review program on television. February 20.

SUSAN STRASBERG, 60, actress who appeared on stage in *Diary of Anne Frank* and on screen in *Picnic, Stage Struck* and *Scream of Fear.* January 21.

JIM THOMAS, 76, pioneer TV broadcaster, host of outdoors hunting and fishing programs from Chicago for 40 years. November 5.


'Buddy' Rogers


Red Norvo


George C. Scott


Beverly Younger

MEL TORME, 73, Chicago-born jazz singer, entertainer and song writer who, as a child, appeared on many kids adventure shows and soap operas on radio in Chicago. Co-writer of *The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire).* June 5.

BOBBY TROOP, 80, musician and actor who wrote the song "Route 66" and appeared on the TV series *Emergency.* February 7.

JEAN VANDER PYL, 79, actress who appeared on radio's *Father Knows Best, Halls of Ivy* and other programs, and provided the voice of Wilma, Pebbles and Mrs. Slate on TV's *The Flintstones.* April 10

FRANKIE VAUGHN, 71, British crooner of the 1960s, popular in U.S. with such hits as "Green Door" and "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine." September 17.

PHIL WALTERS, 57, veteran Chicago news reporter, writer and producer for more than 30 years at CBS and NBC. September 12.

SENOR WENCES, 103, master ventriloquist who delighted early TV audiences with his puppet-in-a-box Pedro ("'Sokay? 'Sawright!") and his falsetto-voiced hand puppet Johnny ("Deefeecult for you, easy for me." April 20.

BILL WENDELL, 75, veteran television announcer best known for his work on David Letterman's shows. April 14.

JOE WILLIAMS, 80, legendary jazz singer who appeared with Count Basie, Coleman Hawkins, Lionel Hampton and others. March 29.

CLINT YOULE, 83, one of the nation's first television weathermen, starring on WNBQ, Chicago from 1948-59. July 23.

BEVERLY YOUNGER, 83, Chicago-based actress who appeared on such radio shows as *Ma Perkins* and *Kitty Keene* and on TV in *Stud's Place* as Gracie, the soft-hearted waitress. July 24.

GONE...BUT NOT FORGOTTEN
We Remember Them Well

COVER STORY

JACK BENNY'S COMPETITION

BY BILL OATES

In 1990, Joan Benny saw to it that her father Jack's intended autobiography be published as *Sunday Nights at Seven.* The title, a reference to a lifetime guarantee made by CBS President William S. Paley, reinforced Jack Benny as such an important fixture on radio that the time period was forever his.

OLD TIME RADIO IN THE 20th CENTURY

In order to appreciate the twenty-three year career of radio's premiere comedian, the devoted Bennyphile must look at the comedian's stay on *three* networks (both NBC Blue and Red, as well as CBS) and at least *eight* different time slots.

The journey began when he took his first foray into early network radio on May 2, 1932.

The atmosphere into which Jack Benny debuted held at least two major differences from the classic post-war Benny years. First, time slots were not as clearly defined in half and full hour segments. Quarter hour segments, sometimes daily or twice or thrice weekly, were more prevalent.

More importantly, the bulk of early 1930s broadcasting contained a variety of musical aggregations, for example, from a tenor and piano accompanist to entire philharmonic orchestras.

Into this heavily musical atmosphere entered Jack Benny, who was heralded a scant two months earlier on the March 19, 1932 *Ed Sullivan Show.*

Bill Oates, of Kouts, Indiana, is a high school English teacher and author.


Jack Benny

During the week that Jack Benny premiered on radio at 9:30 New York time, his debut met with very little fanfare. Appearing on the same page as "Science News" but not too far removed from other entertainment information, the May 1 *New York Times* listed a relatively incomplete schedule of what was on the air.

More often than not, musical groups were usually listed in the "Outstanding Choices" radio column, and once in a while comedians like Eddie Cantor or Ed Wynn might find a place with the favored offerings. No special mention was made of Jack and company and, as a matter of fact, the first Monday show was listed as "Olsen Orch., Ella Shotta [sic], and Jack Benny, comedy" for Canada Dry on WJZ (NBC Blue.)

The Benny program followed Sinclair's *Wiener Minstrels* and preceded O'Henry

stories. The Blue network already sent out *Vic and Sade*, Marion and Jim Jordan (not yet *Fibber McGee and Molly*), *Little Orphan Annie*, Lowell Thomas with the news, *Amos 'n' Andy*, and Paul Whiteman's Orchestra. Ironically, just prior to Benny on WEAF (NBC Red), Benny tenor-to-be Frank Parker sang at 9:00 with the *A&P Gypsies*.

They were followed on the "other" NBC by regular early Benny competition, *Parade of States*, with the May 2 offering celebrating Kentucky. *The Witch's Tale*, an early horror series, played on WOR (later on the Mutual network.)

On WABC (CBS) Pierre Brugnon sang with the Sondeus Orchestra, and later that evening, George Burns and Gracie Allen were all the rage as the featured comedians on the *Guy Lombardo Show* on the same network. Not too many months later, comedians would become the headliners as backed by the orchestras.

The reasons are not completely clear why the National Broadcasting Company called its two divisions Red and Blue. The organization began on November 15, 1926 when WEAF, twenty new affiliates and four other stations broadcast the initial four-hour show from the Waldorf-Astoria. Shortly thereafter, WJZ joined the aggregation with the intention of being the flagship for a second string of stations. The second edition of *Stay Tuned* (Sterling and Kittross) suggests that when AT&T engineers had to keep the two sets of network lines isolated, they used red and blue wires.

Perhaps one note of trivia is the little known fact that Jack Benny (or George Olsen as the show was listed) replaced two quarter hour sketches on the Blue Network's WJZ. The short programs, *Backward Turn Backward* and *Thompkins Corners*, filled the thirty-minute slot on

Jack and Mary Livingstone

both Monday and Wednesday the week before the Benny *Canada Dry Show* debuted. The flagship station of the Blue Network was shoring up its talent, but Jack Benny and company would soon leave for a brief stay at rival CBS.

To compare the programming in the Chicago area when Jack Benny first appeared on his own show, one must understand Chicago area radio and the lineup of early network affiliates at that time. During the spring afternoons, Depression weary Chicagoans found escape listening to the powerful 1932 Cubs on WBBM. Later that evening the station featured local musical talent opposite George Olsen and Jack Benny, who were heard over WMAQ. The *Chicago Tribune* did not even list the first Benny show, although some area papers showed that it followed the *A&P Gypsies*.

WGN, then the CBS affiliate, carried *An Evening in Paris*. (Earlier in the evening the *Tribune* station played the *Linit Bath Club Revue*, which would later star Benny's feuding friend Fred Allen.)

WENR (NBC Red) carried the aforementioned *Parade of States* show. WCFL

Jack and Fred Allen

featured an organ recital, WJJD offered *Corn Crib Doin's*, and WIBO gave the timely *World's Fair Talks*.

By the second Benny show on Wednesday of that week, "George Olsen Variety" competed with the following: *The Eno Crime Club* (WGN), *Count of Luxembourg* (WIBO), and Nat Shilkret's concert (WENR.) Later that night, both NBC affiliates, WMAQ and WENR, broadcast the eternally popular *Amos 'n' Andy*. The local radio listings were a bit sketchy in those early days with many stations without published program notes.

For the second show of the season, on the following Wednesday at 8:15 Central Time, Olsen and Benny met with only slightly more formidable Chicago competition. With Benny on WMAQ, WENR featured soprano Gladys Rice from the network feed, while torch singer Helen Morgan and the Revelers Quartet were brought to the Midwest via KYW at 8:00 but with nothing else listed on that station at 8:30. WGN sent the *Eno Crime Club* mystery series to listeners in the local market.

Chicago stations did not always line up with the network feeds, while other stations might carry what was not heard on the usual station. (For example WGN, later a CBS outlet, carried Benny for a while, but WBBM also carried some CBS programs. And KYW, WMAQ, and WENR all had NBC programs. Confusing? Even more difficult is to establish what is on all of the stations, when local papers either excluded some programming or merely listed a slot as "music.")

Jack Benny and his competition remained fairly constant during the summer of 1932. Occasionally, a special concert or other event, like speeches during the presidential campaign of 1932, popped in and out of the schedule. By the time the last NBC program appeared during the first season, the show appeared as "Jack Benny, Ethel Shutta, and George Olsen's Orchestra."

One week later Benny and Canada Dry took the show to CBS (two times a week: Sundays at 10:00 and Thursdays at 8:15 Eastern Time), where the program headlined Jack Benny with the Ted Weems Orchestra and soprano Andrea Marsh. Not only was the focus changing to Jack Benny's stardom, but it also indicated the direction of prime time radio away from basically music to variety and comedy.

Radio Guide, which was in its infancy during the week of October 16-22, 1932 (Volume 1, Number 52), heralded "Benny Goes to Columbia Oct. 30." The article went on to report that the comedian who "clicked immediately with radio audiences" changed from violin playing to comedy because "talking is easier on the fingers and neck." He would be heard on "local outlet WGN" in Chicago after fifteen minutes of the Harry Sosnik Orchestra on Sunday and Abe Lyman's Orchestra on Thursday.

When the *Canada Dry Show* ended its

JACK BENNY'S COMPETITION

run on NBC on October 26, 1932, Benny and troupe played opposite the *Theatre of the Air* (WLS) at 8:15. WENR and KYW carried speeches on Veteran's Relief and the Democratic Party respectively.

The *Tribune*-owned WGN often heralded its own station's shows with great prominence, devoting a smaller and unequal share of copy space to the other stations/networks.

At the top of the October 30, 1932 radio page, the paper grouped the three "New W-G-N Features" in a photo spread. Keyboard wizard Jane Carpenter offered piano and organ numbers from the Drake Hotel, while her companions on the page included "clown of the air" Jack Benny and "one of radio's most decorative singers," Andrea Marsh, as the featured singer on the Benny show. The newspaper also added that the Ted Weems orchestra would debut on WGN/CBS from New Orleans, where the group was appearing. The competition that night at 9:00 Central Time came from *Paris Night Life* (KYW), the Jack Miles Orchestra (WBBM), The *Shaeffer Lifetime Revue* orchestra (WENR at 8:45), while H. Leopold Spitalny's orchestra started at 8:45 and Eastman's Symphony Orchestra at 9:15 (both WLS.)

As far as the Chicago Thursday competition rated, the Vincent Lopez orchestra played on KYW, WBBM's slot was occupied by tenor Billy White, and Ben Bernie's musical aggregation offered dance music on WLS.

As if to recognize the new found stardom of Jack Benny, the *New York Times* finally included the new CBS program as one of the week's best on October 30, 1932. The radio column also included a photo of Eddie Cantor with the caption that announced the comedian's return to WEAF for a second year.

Benny's major competition in the city on the first Sunday night came from a condensed version of the opera *Romeo and Juliet*. However, the more formidable rival on Thursday came from the already popularly established *Fleischmann's Yeast Hour* with Rudy Vallee, which began on WEAF (NBC Red) at 10:00 Eastern Time, fifteen minutes before the Benny show started. On that same Thursday night at 8:15, WJZ offered Sigmund Spaeth, *The Song Sleuth* followed by *Rin-Tin-Tin* (fifteen minutes each,) while WOR broadcast two quarter-hour shows with local musical talent.

Jack Benny's first real stint in radio, the *Canada Dry Show*, rolled along until the sponsor took the fizz out of its sponsorship on January 26, 1933. At that time on CBS, the Katzman Orchestra with comedian Fred Allen appeared the hour before Benny on Sundays. The usual competition until the show's end included: Ohman and Arden, piano duo on WEAF; operas like *Il Travatore* on WOR, and thirty minutes on WJZ split between Edna St. Vincent Millay reading poetry and D. W Griffith reminiscing about Hollywood as he knew it.

On Thursdays WJZ offered *Captain Diamond's Adventures*, WEAF featured Rudy Vallee for an hour, followed by another popular show, the *Maxwell House Showboat*, and WOR gave fifteen minutes each to *Chandu the Magician* and the Keller Sisters and Lynch, songs. Parenthetically, Ethel Shutta still appeared with her husband George Olsen on WEAF, when the *New York Times* featured a photo of Jack Benny with the caption "Jack Benny, comedian, on WABC Sunday Nights at 10 O'clock." Unfortunately, this positive recognition turned into a bad omen, for Benny was replaced by the show which normally followed him (Ernest Hutcheson, piano) on Sunday and with *Easy Aces* and *Whispering Jack Smith* each sharing fifteen minutes of his Thursday time slot.

The Jack Benny Jell-O Program
From left: Phil Harris, writers Bill Morrow and Ed Beloin, Don Wilson, Jack Benny, Mary Livingstone, unidentified, Artie Auerbach, Dennis Day

For a comparison of what Chicago had to offer against Jack Benny on Thursdays, "Today's Features" in the *Tribune* listed the following: *The Norsemen* (WBBM), *Elmo Tanner's Star Dust* (KYW), Rudy Vallee (WMAQ), and *Temple of Music* (WLS.) After Benny, Kate Smith sang for fifteen minutes followed by Abe Lyman's Orchestra. Jack Benny had little to fear except the loss of his sponsor, which was exactly what happened.

Jack Benny's absence from radio lasted until March 17, 1933, when Chevrolet assumed the show's sponsorship. The program stayed in a Sunday night 10:00 time period on NBC Blue (WEAF New York - WENR Chicago) through April 1, 1934.

Benny's competition in Chicago in the spring of 1933 included: William Miller and the WGN Orchestra and a sketch (WGN), and the *Adventurers Club* (WBBM.)

The Benny show took a brief hiatus during the summer, and the U.S. Navy Band filled in. When he returned on October 1, 1933, Jack Benny and company (Frank Parker eventually replaced James Melton) held their own in New York against an opera on WOR, fifteen minutes each of an orchestra and baritone on WJZ, and a dramatic sketch on CBS.

The meteoric rise continued as Jack Benny broke into the top ten programs that year, and the Black Orchestra did not lead the list of participants in the time slot. In the spring of 1934, Jack Benny (Mary Livingston was soon included as a principal) faced the following in Chicago: the mystery sketch *K-7* (KYW), *Angelo Patri* (WBBM), and Frank Master's Orchestra (WENR.)

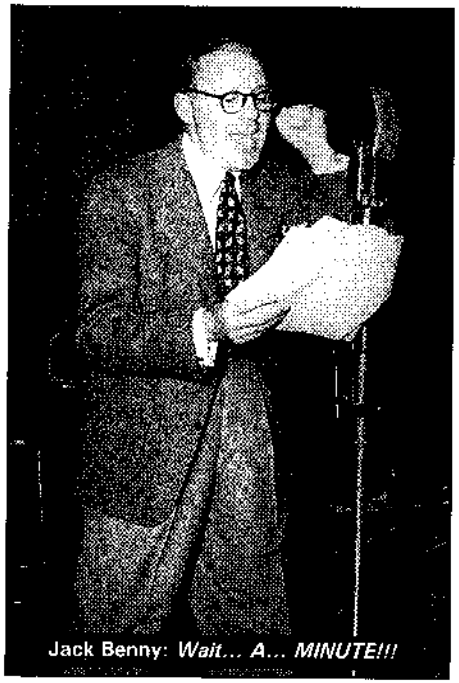
By the following season he was in sixth place, and, from March through December 1935, Jack Benny reveled in his new

status as number one on the dial.

When Benny starred on the *Chevrolet Show*, the primary competition came from now-forgotten music groups like Dorothy Fields and Jimmy McHugh or Rich's Orchestra. The second quarter hour on WJZ found *Vic and Sade* ruminating from their small house half way up the block. Throughout the Chevrolet reign, only the sponsor put the brakes on the comedian's attempts to become a favorite with listeners. Curiously, on the first show of this series, a young Frances Langford is listed as the singer instead of James Melton. The following week Melton is included but as an afterthought with "Zelma O'Neal, songs." Just before Jack Benny and crew left the air for the summer of 1934, a formidable rival emerged at CBS (WABC) in the form of then popular vaudevillian Lou Holtz and soprano Grace Moore.

Once General Motors tired of Jack Benny's style, General Tire took over with virtually no gap. The new sponsor moved the program to Friday at 10:00 Eastern Time (still on NBC, and sometimes at 10:30) until it dropped the show on September 28, 1934. Both of these General sponsors disapproved of Benny's insistence on more comedy and less music.

Near the final days of the run, Benny on NBC faced a pianist on WJR and Milton Kellem's Orchestra on WOR (now part of the new ABS network prior to the formation of Mutual.) CBS offered an unusually slotted forty-five minute show with then popular *Stoopnagel and Budd* at 10:00. To counter Benny's later start at 10:30, the two satirists proceeded Benny's starting time and then finished the hour with music by Carlile and London at 10:45. In Chicago, WENR offered *The Variety Show* hosted by Don McNeill, WGN predicted the news with *Tomorrow's*



Jack Benny: *Wait... A... MINUTE!!!*

Tribune, and WBBM presented a female pianist.

The longest sponsor association with Jack Benny resulted when General Foods attempted to push its JELL-O into first place over leader Royal Gelatin. On the heals of the comedian's success, the General Foods dessert did quite well and heralded its six delicious flavors from October 14, 1934 to August 31, 1942.

When this version of the Jack Benny saga premiered on NBC via Chicago's WENR, WGN broadcast the *Palmer House Ensemble*, KYW offered *The Madhatters*, WBBM sold *The Singing Salesman*, and WMAQ sent out Mischa Levitzke, a pianist.

Two years after Benny took JELL-O to the top, Royal tried to regain its first place position by sponsoring the *Rudy Vallee Show*. However, the Jack Benny dessert continued its popularity so much that General Foods decided to achieve equal success with its Grape Nuts cereal on the same show from October 4, 1942 through June 4, 1944.

When Jack Benny returned to the air in the fall of 1935 on WENR, the primary competition at 7:00 Central Time came from WGN's *Even Song*, WMAQ's *K-7* mystery, and Alexander Woolcott's *Town Crier* on WBBM. When the Benny show premiered in October, the *Tribune* criticized the comedian's new season. Even though "Michael Bartlett and Johnny Green have replaced Frank Parker and Don Bessor" the audience seemed to be growing "monotonous (of the Benny show) particularly the Livingston poems." On the other hand, kudos were proffered for the relatively new *Lux Radio Theater* show on CBS on Mondays at 8:00 Central. Little else challenged Jack Benny in either the 6:00 or 7:00 Central Time slot on Sundays through the 1938-39 season. One CBS upstart in the fall of 1937, *Open House* with Jeanette MacDonald and Don Ameche, seemed qualified but failed in the ratings.

Two dimensions in programming emerged in the late 1930s and early 1940s that offered completely different alternatives to the *Jack Benny Show*.

Late in 1939 CBS began war news coverage at 6:00 Central, while the following year WGN sent big bands like Dick Jurgens and Lawrence Welk from the Aragon and Trianon ballrooms. In 1941, FM programming, like that on Chicago's W59C, gave additional competition to early Sunday evening audiences.

During the war years, Jack Benny's rivals came from a varity of genres. Lawrence Welk (and subsequent orchestras) continued in popularity over WGN, while WEAF (WJZ in New York) gave listeners fifteen minutes of news commentary from Drew Pearson (yes, the infamous "Dreer Pooson") and fifteen minutes of local news. WBBM and WABC in New York (until it became WCBS in 1947) offered a variety of alternatives from the network including *Secret Weapon* (1942-43), *This is the Underground* (1942-44), Kate Smith (1944-45), and *The Thin Man* (1944-45.)

Not until the post war years did CBS offer any long lasting competition for Jack Benny, when *Blondie* competed from 1945-46, as did *Gene Autry* from the fall of 1946 to the spring of 1949.

The only other remarkable alternative to Jack Benny during the late 1940s came from Mutual's *Sherlock Holmes* starting in the fall of 1947 and running through the spring of 1949. However, two great broadcasting achievements caused a phenomenal furor in 1949, when CBS raided NBC's talent and television began expanding.

The entertainment section of the *New York Times* began including regular television listings with radio programming in the fall of 1948. By that year, the four TV networks (ABC, CBS, Dumont, and NBC) offered a full lineup of shows. While Jack Benny was following *Ozzie and Harriet* on the radio over WNBC (formerly WEAF until 1947), WNBT (NBC) telecast twenty minutes of the live comedy *Mary Kay and*

Jack and writer John Tackaberry

JACK BENNY'S COMPETITION

Johnny and ten minutes of news. WABD successfully sent the *Original Amateur Hour* with Ted Mack via the Dumont network; WJZ (by this time part of ABC) split the half-hour with *Pauline Frederick's Guestbook* and film shorts; and WCBS looked back at the week's news. Ironically, independent WATV ran B Westerns, and sometimes they starred Gene Autry, Jack Benny's radio competition on CBS.

The other great force in radio programming in the post war years came when William S. Paley of CBS decided to buy the best comedy shows that NBC had to offer. Jack Benny represented the greatest catch for the network, which brought him first to a new radio home but later tied him to a television network, a power in the entertainment industry that seemed unstoppable in 1949.

Jack kept his 7:00 radio slot when he moved to CBS, and, as was mentioned earlier, the time period was guaranteed to him on CBS radio. Opposite Benny, Mutual programmed *The Adventures of the Falcon* for one season; ABC ran the forgotten quiz show *Think Fast* for one year; and NBC decided that Jack Benny's replacement would start one half hour earlier (6:30 Eastern.) If NBC believed that *Hollywood Calling*, a one-hour quiz show, would recapture its early Sunday night audience, it was sorely mistaken. By January, the Benny replacement was cancelled and another grandiose plan was concocted to woo radio listeners back.

Jack Benny faced little competition in the waning days of network radio. Mutual/WOR continued to broadcast original dramas (*Affairs of Peter Salem* in 1950, *Under Arrest* in 1951, and *Crime Fighters* in 1952), but by 1953 the *Rod and Gun Club* became the mainstay. ABC/WJZ folded even earlier, offering *Sammy Kaye's*

Mel Blanc and Jack

Serenade live in 1950 but then shifted to recorded plays and music the next two years.

The National Broadcasting Company decided to pull out all of the stops in November 1950, when *The Big Show* premiered starring Tallulah Bankhead. The network originated the variety program from New York for most of the shows and presented ninety minutes of tremendous entertainment. The show started at 6:00 its first season and 6:30 the next. The intention was to capture an audience and hold it through the Benny show at 7:00.

Unfortunately, two demons forced the demise of the show, and neither one was named Jack Benny. First, production costs on *The Big Show* lost NBC over a million dollars per season. Secondly, television was growing too quickly to maintain a radio audience. Ironically, RCA television regularly bought advertising on *The Big Show*.

Jack Benny's radio competition the last few years held few problems for him, and the television fare opposite the comedian until 1952 was also little to speak of. But

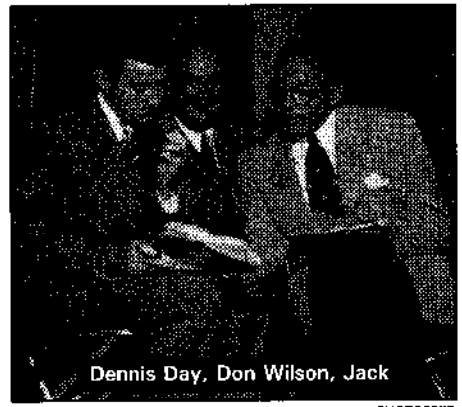
the novelty of the one-eyed appliance drew audiences to anything that flickered in its black and white orb. In 1952, three formidable television challengers to Jack Benny's radio audience emerged: former screen cowboy Gene Autry (in his third year at CBS), comedian Red Skelton (starting his first run on TV at NBC), and the audience request show *You Asked for It* (an early ABC success.) Dumont telecast *The Georgetown University Forum* in 1952 but scored more ratings points with ventriloquist *Paul Winchell and Jerry Mahoney* the following year.

By 1953, television listings preceded radio listings in the newspapers, and Jack Benny was among the few who remained as a traditional radio entertainer. Even he began appearing on television with increasing regularity; although not until the fall of 1960 did he appear weekly.

The last two seasons that Jack Benny presented new shows on radio (1954-55) he experienced no radio challenges, but the competition from television improved in quality. In the fall of 1954, CBS began *Lassie* at 7:00 on Sundays, and when Jack had a television show (at this time he alternated with Ann Sothern on *Private Secretary*), he started at 7:30.

Throughout his broadcasting career, Jack Benny was never on at television at 7:00 - in the early years of TV he would have been opposite himself on radio. *You Asked for It* (ABC) and *People Are Funny* (NBC) represent the last major television shows to play against the Benny radio show at 7:00 through the spring of 1955. The following fall, Edgar Bergen took the 7:00 Jack Benny time slot, when the ventriloquist and Charlie McCarthy started their new 55 minute show (they actually started after five minutes of news at 7:05) and gave listeners one more season of old style radio comedy.

By the time Jack Benny settled into his



Dennis Day, Don Wilson, Jack

PHOTOFEST

familiar Sunday night radio slot, his popularity had grown to the point that playing opposite the comedian was a death knell.

Stations were at their best when they programmed completely different entertainment and tried to reach the few who preferred not to listen to the popular comedian. However, if audiences opted for humor, their best bet was with Benny.

Forty-five years after the last original *Jack Benny Show*, radio listeners continue to be amazed at the remarkable craft that makes the program work.

Just as faithful Chicago listeners of old time radio elected Jack Benny their number one favorite show in 1999, an honor that reflected the high ratings given to the program from the mid-1930s through the television years, new listeners continue to find the show to be a very attractive medium for idle hours. Even Jack himself might be amazed to hear his old shows digitally restored and available on CD a half century later.

And fifty years after the president of CBS made Jack Benny the offer of a lifetime time slot, no one else in radio or television has ever been given and guaranteed such a position. ■

NOTE-- February is Jack Benny Month on Those Were The Days. *See the listings on pages 24-25.*

BUCK! BUCK! HOW MANY FINGERS UP?

BY FRANK ZEMAITIS

Nostalgia comes to the mind more readily when one reaches the so called Golden Years and it came to me one day as I drove by a large Chicago park - the kind with a baseball diamond at each corner of a large field. A Little League practice was in session and two men were in charge of about twenty young boys. I watched briefly while the kids ran through their drills and I suddenly felt sad. Those kids probably never heard of Buck Buck, Red Rover or Kick the Can.

When was the last time you saw boys playing with marbles, tops or yo-yos? Do girls still play with jacks or bounce a ball to the tune of, 'One Two Three O'Leary?'

The Little League concept of competitive play, as organized by adults, may or may not be a great thing for children. Certainly much has been written about the high level of juvenile sports stress. I'm not an expert on juvenile sociology, but seeing those kids in disciplined sports drills did make me think about the difference in the way my generation grew up and the play habits of today's children. I don't know if all parts of the country played the same way we did fifty-five years ago, but I'll wager an Indian Head penny there weren't many differences. In the neighborhoods of the southwest side of Chicago, in the twenties and thirties, we had fun - lots of it. *And we did it by ourselves.*

When was the last time you saw boys playing with marbles, tops or yo-yos? Do girls still play with Jacks or bounce a ball to the tune of, "One Two Three O'Leary?" You never see hopscotch chalk marks on sidewalks or hear the shouts of, "Red Rover - Red Rover, let Johnny come over", "Ollie Ollie Oxen free, new player", "One Two Three, Red Light" or "May I?" I realize, of course, that these were street games and the traffic is much heavier now. And I suppose that if TV and computer games were available, we might have spent just as much time glued to the tube. Still, I can't help feeling that there was more down to earth fun in our self-organized activities than in the best of today's TV. The exceptions could be the excellent children's programs on PBS channels.

Many of our play activities were "dirt" games. In the old days a sudden scramble of kids exploding in all directions could be caused by a game of "Baby in the hole". (Today such a frantic scattering would make one think an act of vandalism had just taken place.) In those happy days of yesteryear, boys with soiled knees and knuckles meant a hot session of marbles. The zip - zip of corduroy pants and the jingle of a pocket full of mibs and aggies were happy sounds. Marble shooting didn't always end at dusk since the best bare dirt surfaces were often around a street light. Not much grass grew between the sidewalk and the curb in some locations. Landscaping just wasn't a high priority for some hard-working blue-collar homeowners.

Frank Zemaitis of Porter, Indiana, is a free-lance writer.

The lamppost was also an ideal place to play Buck-Buck. I don't know if that once popular boy's game tended to build character nor had any lasting or redeeming social value, but to us, a challenge was a challenge. Put four or five boys in a line face to back, bent and grabbing at the waist. Add an equal number of boys leapfrogging to a seat on top. The leader aboard shouts, "Buck-Buck! How many fingers up?" You had to have an honor system in guessing how many fingers were held up and out of sight. When the correct guess was made the lower group collapsed and the teams exchanged roles.

'Engine, engine number nine, running on Chicago time. If the train should jump the track, do you get your money back?'

Until recent decades, Buck-Buck had staying power. It is mentioned in English literature as early as 1658. Even in the days of Nero's Rome, Petronius described a game in which a boy climbs on the back of Trimalchio, slaps him on the shoulder, laughs and cries out, "Bucca Bucca, quot sunct hic?"

As far as I know, Buck-Buck has left the Chicago scene. I'm sad to think it has died after countless generations had passed it on for over 2000 years. Chicago, Philadelphia and the Bronx borough of New York played the game as Buck-Buck. The rest of New York called it Pile On or Johnny on a Pony. In Boston, it was Billy Billy Buck and in England it was called Buck Jumping or High Jimmy Knocker.

But then we live in a highly technical and rapidly changing age. Gone are the days of hand-made scooters fashioned from a piece of 2x4, an orange wood crate and the two halves of a single roller skate. (You could add options of deluxe handlebars and one-candlepower tin can headlights.) I believe kids today still play Hide and Seek but do they begin the game with those delightful guessing preliminaries such as; "I draw a snake upon your back - who will put in the eye? Or, "My mother baked a chocolate cake and somebody poked their finger in."

When playing a game like tag, which one was first to be "It"? Simple. Someone counted fists while chanting, "Eenie Meenie Miney Mo, catch a tiger by the toe, if he hollers let him go, Eenie Meenie Miney Mo." The last fist touched was the "volunteer." Some areas used "Engine, engine number nine, running on Chicago time. If the train should jump the track, do you get your money back?" Other chants started with "Ollicka Bollicka, Susan Solicka." Another was "One potato, two potato, three potato four."

England was the source of many American street games. Even Kick the Can was played in various forms in England in the 1800's. We played our version with the durable condensed milk can. How many of you seniors also stomped on two milk cans until the ends collapsed inward and clamped tightly against your shoes? You then rode off, clippity clop, on your pretend cowboy horse.

Whenever we played a hiding game and it was interrupted for a new player, we shouted something like "Olie Olie Oceans Free - New player." This was probably a corruption of, "All ye urchins, all ye urchins free - New player," as shouted in England a century or so ago.

Nostalgia is a bittersweet thing. It can bring to mind a happy, carefree and slower paced time of your life but it also reminds

you that those days are gone forever, destined to live only in memories. I, for one, miss many things of the good old days. The list is almost endless. Try these on your memory. Extra newspapers, Halloween tricks, (before the bribery of treats were invented) and Saturday matinee movie serials. Remember bulk cookies at the local Ma and Pa grocers, Soldier Carmels, Mary Janes, frozen chocolate covered bananas and those candy dots on paper strips? One of my favorites was the chocolate covered wafer you bought hoping for a winner? You bit into the candy and if it had an orange center instead of white, you won a big candy bar.

On our Atwater Kent radio we listened to *The Shadow, Inner Sanctum* and the *Green Hornet.* After school it was *Orphan Annie, Jack Armstrong, the All American Boy* and *Tom Mix* and his "Straight Shooters always win"

How about the baseball that was kept alive with black electrician's tape and how some of the bases were always sewer covers? In the alleys there were the vendors with their horse drawn wagons and you stepped carefully to avoid the horse's "road apples."

For candy money we saved newspapers, bottles and scrap metal and waited for the junk-man's shouts of, "Rags and Iron." (See, kids? We recycled in those days too.) We looked forward to the hot dog push-cart and the tamales wrapped in real cornhusks. On hot days we loved to greet the iceman and beg him for slivers of ice as he cut the blocks to size. A most delightful sound was the tinkle of the umbrella repairman's cart. (He also sharpened knives and scissors) Remember the organ grinder and his trained monkey? For a penny the monkey would pick out your printed fortune from a box, tip his hat and put the penny in the slot of his master's box.

Remember the Sky-ride at the World's Fair in 1933 and the modern homes on display at the fair? They were filled with features rarely seen at that time but taken for granted today. Bet you didn't know that five of those homes are still in the Chicago area. After the Fair closed, an enterprising real estate developer bought the homes and shipped them by barge to the community of Beverly Shores, Indiana, about 50 miles away. They are now inside the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Park next to the Indiana Dunes State Park. The homes will someday again be placed on exhibition. Currently they may be seen only by drive-by auto sight seeing.

Whenever we played a hiding game and it was interrupted for a new player, we shouted something like 'Olie Olie Oceans Free - New player.'

There is another part of old Chicago that has been preserved for posterity. The streetcars we rode to the World's Fair for three cents, (Seven cents for adults) A few are on display at a railroad museum near Union, Illinois.

Were these the good old days? I think so. I'm sure that some of us kids may have suffered some measure of stress. But certainly nowhere near the levels that many sociologists are concerned about today. I'm not wise enough to suggest remedies or give easy answers, but I can't help feeling that the loss of neighborhood self play activities of yesteryear has more than a little bearing on the social problems of the young today.

I hope that at sometime in the future life's pendulum will swing the other way and kids will rediscover the joys of self made amusement. ■

RADIO SOAP OPERA ORGANISTS

BY ED KNAPP

Many ladies will recall yesterday's afternoon radio "soaps": *Life Can Be Beautiful, Against the Storm, Big Sister, The O'Neills, Young Dr. Malone,* and *Arnold Grimm's Daughter,* to name a few.

These heart-rending programs would not have had the same impact, nor set such dramatic milestones of interest, but for the accompaniment supplied by radio studio organists with the captivating anthems and keyboard art. Every fifteen minute weekday entree had its own particular music theme, played by a dedicated organ craftsman: "Clare de Lune" introduced *The Story of Mary Marlin;* "How Can I Leave Thee?" began *Stella Dallas* ("a story of mother love and sacrifice"); and "Rose of Tralee" headed up the tearful story of *Backstage Wife.*

These and a generous number of radio series soap operas were made all the more dramatic, captivating, and convincing for the at-home housewife listener, with the engaging organ accompaniment furnished by talented keyboard artists. The organ interludes not only identified the particular show, but made the stories more moving, as with *Ma Perkins, Pepper Young's Family, Joyce Jordan, Girl Intern* (later known as *Joyce Jordan, M.D.*), *The Brighter Day, Road of Life,* and *The Guiding Light.*

Paul Carson played the organ for many of radio's weekday dramas. He provided the music for *One Man's Family* for nearly twenty years.

ED KNAPP COLLECTION

Radio broadcast stations had the opportunity to pick from the finest men and woman organists in the field, due to a twist of fate in an entertainment media. Early movie theatres running the "silent" era films, hired skilled organists to play the permanent powerful, deep-throated console pipe-organs, in house. The large harmonious instruments with musician, were used to supply musical background of an appropriate nature and mood to match the changing scenes on the silver screen.

However, once movies found a voice with the arrival of the "talkies" (coming into the decade of the Thirties), the need for musical accompaniment for the films

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

was not required. This led to the discharge of all top-notch organists, which posed a double-jeopardy for the out-of-work musicians, with the Great Depression in full swing. The salvation for many of these fine organists came from what was considered to be competition for the movie business: the radio.

On radio, the increasing popularity of the daytime serial dramas created a need for suitable musicians to furnish background organ themes. The intervention of an organ's mellow interlude was a major improvement to the daily stories of heartbreak, tears, love triangles, infidelity, and family troubles, enhancing their tense moods.

Then, too, the business of radio in its formative years experienced many unexpected technical difficulties at times when it lost the scheduled program's sound — a radio disaster. Radio stations elected, as a protective measure against those troublesome "dropouts," to retain a standby organist at all times, to fill in the silent airspace until the regular program could be reinstated. This action hopefully would keep the impatient listener from tuning out the station because of the silence.

Many more weekday afternoon soaps benefited from the work of the studio organist. Organ stylist Richard Leibert played for such shows as *When A Girl Marries* and *The Second Mrs. Burton. The Road of Life* organ arrangement was by talented pedal-pumper Charles Paul, just one of his many program assignments. Keyboard impresario Gaylord Carter keyed-in the traditional "Perfect Song," the theme for one of the airwaves most popular programs, *Amos 'n' Andy.*

Radio's use of organ and organists found a permanent niche in that field, which was insured with the 1935 introduction of Hammond Organ's new, efficient, beautiful-sounding instrument, the portable electric organ. The extreme flexibility of this new instrument permitted not only the program's theme music, but full effects to mate with every dramatic twist and create

An NBC radio studio prepared to broadcast a weekday "soap" with all the necessary equipment including the ever-present organ.

ED KNAPP COLLECTION

Organist Maizie M. Peralta who played the radio organ for such popular soap operas as *The O'Neills.*

ED KNAPP COLLECTION

sound effects, background tones, crashing crescendoes, muted levels, alarming chords, all suitable to the dramatic moods and emotional story line. The advantage of this new, smaller organ is that it also fit in well with many of the closet-size broadcast studios, where room was at a minimum.

The maximum versatility of the organ and its musicians reached full-flower musically with such keyboard giants as Lew White, Paul Carlson, Fred Feiber, Dolph Gobel, Charles Kingsbury, Paul Renard, Henry John Winters, and Herschel Luecke. Organ master Ann Leaf, known as the "Mighty-Mite of the Organ" due to her petite size, supplied the springy theme music "Funiculi, Funicula" to open the program of lighthearted *Lorenzo Jones.* Ann also did a bouncy organ version of a most popular late afternoon children's adventure program, *Little Orphan Annie.*

One of radio's busiest and most accomplished artists, among the clan of excellent organists, was Rosa Rio. Rosa supplied organ accompaniment to more radio shows over the same period than most of her busy keyboard fellows and gals. Her inimitable style and adaptability came across with such radio favorites (many with back-to-back "live" organ performances in a single day) as *Front Page Farrell, Myrt*

Rosa Rio

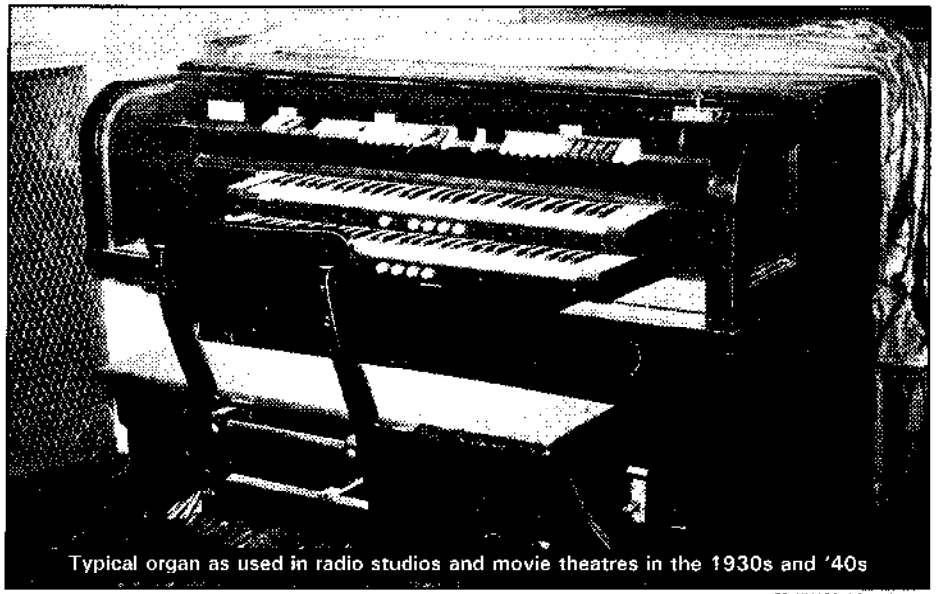
and Marge, When A Girl Marries, The Singing Lady, Deadline Dramas, and more.

Rosa Rio provided the musical theme and background to the very popular Sunday program, *The Shadow,* playing "Omphale's Spinning Wheel" as the mysterious crime fighter announced, "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows!"

Radio organists spent the better part of each day seated before the Hammond organ, going from one studio to another, lending their accomplished talents to the "live" on-air radio performances. Better than nine-tenths of the radio soap operas used organ accompaniment: *The Romance of Helen Trent* ("Juanita"), *Myrt and Marge* ("Poor Butterfly"), *Valiant Lady* ("Estrellita"), and *Hilltop House* ("Brahm's Lullaby").

A mere handful of the housewives' favorite daytime stories dared to be different, leaving organ music for the majority of the soaps. *David Harum* opened with "Sunbonnet Sue" played on the guitar and hummed by Stanley Davis. "My Darling Nellie Gray" was performed musically on the harmonica and guitar by Hal Brown, introducing *Just Plain Bill. John's Other Wife* began to the tune of "The Sweetest Story Ever Told," softly sung and whistled by Stanley Davis. *Your Family and Mine* used a combined violin and piano solo opener. A few others selected non-organ music for their themes, but they, too, were in the minority.

It has always been stated that the real success formula for *The Goldbergs, Portia Faces Life, Bachelor's Children, Young Widder Brown, Bright Horizon,* and *The Life and Loves of Dr. Susan,* and all the other programs, was "trouble." I should like to add to that statement by observing that a good share of the popularity of the radio soap operas was owed to the magnificent, impassioned work and scoring by the faithful organists. They, as much as anything, brought a complete fulfillment to the housewives listening at home who, at the conclusion of a day of drama, as the last notes of the organ faded away, could hardly wait for tomorrow. ■



Typical organ as used in radio studios and movie theatres in the 1930s and '40s

ED KNAPP COLLLCTION

Radio with a British Accent

BY RICHARD W. O'DONNELL

The British launched a major invasion of American radio in the middle of the twentieth century. In June, 1952, to be exact.

OLD TIME RADIO IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Such shows as *Horatio Hornblower, The Queen's Men, The Goon Show,* and other London-based programs came aboard as summer replacements. Most did not last too long, but a few managed to survive for a while.

Why did this invasion take place? About that time, television had started to flex its muscles. Expensive American radio shows were losing their audiences to the tube. Transcriptions of the British shows, made primarily for home consumption, were available for a lot less hard cash, and NBC, Mutual and others put them on in key time slots.

Theatre Royale, produced by the Tower of London Syndicate, was the most distinguished of the imports. Hosted by Laurence Olivier, it featured classic yarns written by Dickens, Stevenson and other greats. Guest stars included Sir Alec Guinness, Robert Morley, Robert Donat, Margaret Lockwood, and other British stars of the first rank.

Host Olivier also acted in several of the dramas. A Dickens buff, he played Micawber in a short version of "David Copperfield," and he had a field day performing "The Pickwick Papers." Needless to say, he was marvelous.

The show was on the Mutual Network in 1953 for a year. It might have lasted longer, except for the fact Olivier was in poor health at the time and had to bow out. *Theatre Royale,* despite its limited run, was one of the great dramatic shows in radio history.

Laurence Olivier

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Then there was *The Scarlet Pimpernel,* heard on NBC Sunday nights. This show had Marius Goring as Sir Percy, the London dandy who was really the elusive Pimpernel. He rescued Frenchmen from the guillotine during "The Revolution," with the help of a few close friends, who were the only ones who knew his true identity. This was an above average thriller, and lasted a couple of seasons.

Horatio Hornblower, starring Michael Redgrave, was a show about the fictional British naval hero. NBC had this one, too. *Horatio* was a smooth production, with an excellent cast of supporting actors but, at times, the further adventures of the main character could get confusing. One week our hero would be a veteran warrior and the following week he would show up, in

Richard W. O'Donnell is a free-lance writer from Port Richey, Florida.

flashback, as a young sailor. Still, the show was exciting.

Orson Welles, an American, was the host of *The Black Museum* on Mutual. The great actor was hired by Towers of London, while he was living in England, because he was a big name who would attract an American audience. Towers produced a number of these syndicated shows.

The Museum was the place where Scotland Yard displayed relics of its famous murder cases. Each week Welles would pick out a different relic — a hatchet, a scarf used in a strangling, even a bathtub used in a drowning murder — and relate the details behind the crime. It was an excellent show, but it survived for only a year. By then, Welles was playing Harry Lime on *The Third Man,* another syndicated show.

The Black Museum, it should be noted, was actually an updated rerun of another English radio show, *Secrets of Scotland Yard,* also syndicated in the United States. The same cases were used. Clive Brook, an English actor who was a popular film


Orson Welles


Michael Redgrave

PHOTOFEST

star in America during the early thirties, was the host of this show, produced in the late forties for strictly British consumption. However, the show did make it over here. It was as good as the Welles series. In addition to being narrator, Brook would play several parts in a show, changing his voice to match the character. He was quite effective.

The Queen's Men was all about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and was another Mutual show. Actors from Canada, as well as England, performed. Fictional cases involving the Mounties were told. It was a good show and, needless to say, the Mounties always got their man. English actors were often called upon to pretend they were Americans and often their British accents got in the way. Nevertheless, *The Queen's Men* was a great way to spend a half-hour.

Towers of London also came up with its own *Sherlock Holmes* series, marketed in the United States in 1955 on NBC. John Gielgud played a gentle Holmes, and Ralph Richardson was a splendid Watson. Original stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle were used. Harlow Wilcox was the American announcer.

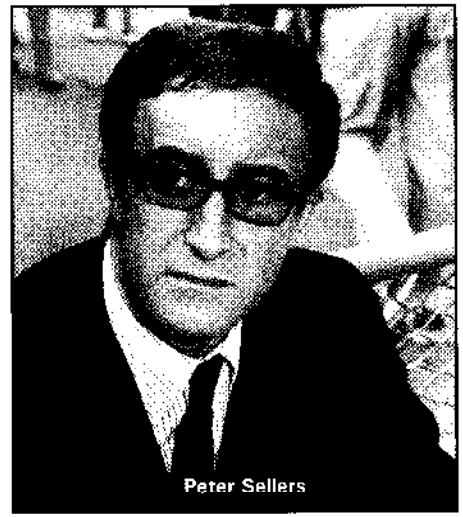
The series might have enjoyed greater success if another actor had been used in the title role. Gielgud lacked the acid of Basil Rathbone, the mightiest Holmes of them all. Gielgud, one of the Twentieth Century's greatest actors, just wasn't right for the part. "Hamlet" yes. "Holmes" no.

That brings us to the *Theatre of the Air,* which can best be described as the English version of the *Lux Radio Theatre.*

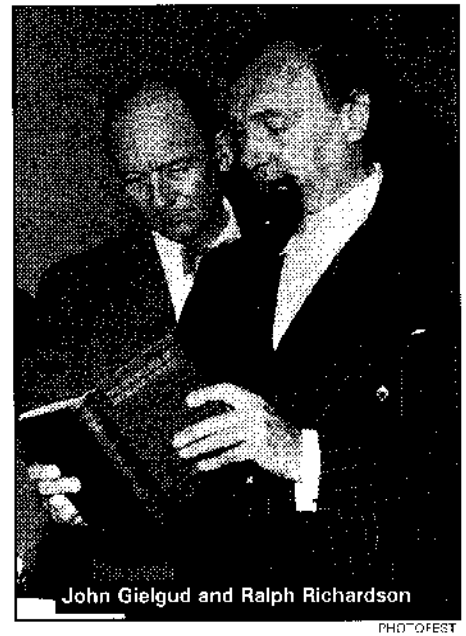
This half-hour show featured top British stars in some of their most famous roles. You could hear Margaret Rutherford in her celebrated role as the psychic in "Blithe Spirit," David Niven in "Stairway to Heaven," Hitchcock's "The 39 Steps," and James Mason in "The Seventh Veil," the movie that made him a star.

The trick about this program was that the original film sound tracks were used. A narrator, usually a supporting actor in the movie, would tell the story and the voices of the star performers in the film would be heard at key points in the drama.

The program enjoyed a long run on the BBC, and a limited run in this country. Along the way, the *Theatre of the Air* would


Peter Sellers

PHOTOFEST


John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson

PHOTOFEST

have original dramas, most of them written by Patrick Hamilton of "Gaslight" fame. These short dramas were the best part of the series.

The Goon Show, starring Peter Sellers and Spike Mulligan, another BBC production, was a great favorite on National Public Radio for a number of years. It was probably the English radio show with the longest life in this country.

The BBC show was a collection of silly sketches that really made no sense.

In England the BBC used to short wave a thirty minute dramatic show to English speaking nations. These neat little dramas came on two or three times a week in a program called *BBC Theatre.*

Since syndication to the United States was all the rage in the early fifties, these programs were also shipped over here. They never really caught on, probably due to the fact that, by 1955, network radio in the United States had lost its old identity and taken on a new face.

Television was in charge — for a while. The British invasion was over. ■

OLD TIME RADIO IN THE 20th CENTURY

Chuck Schaden's

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

FEBRUARY 2000

February is Jack Benny Month

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5th

SPEAKING OF RADIO: The Jack Benny Program (2-5-94) First program in the twelve-part series features recollections by Jack Benny and Sheldon Leonard. *Excerpts:* Jack's first program for Canada Dry (5-2-32); Jell-O Program (1-31-37); Grape Nuts Program (10-11-42); Lucky Strike Program (9-26-46); Jack introduces Sheldon Leonard (5-29-49); Tout at race track (1-23-54); Tout at fruit stand (4-3-49); Tout in department store (12-13-53). (29 min)

SUSPENSE (8-29-56) "Hold-Up" starring Joseph Kearns as a storekeeper who stands his ground when a young punk attempts to rob his store. Cast includes Alice Backus, Sam Edwards, Byron Kane, Larry Thor. Sustaining, CBS. (29 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (4-8-51) Jack's 1950 income tax return is audited by agents of the Internal Revenue Service. Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Dennis Day, Don Wilson, Mel Blanc, Sportsmen, Joe Kearns. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS. (27 min)

PHIL HARRIS—ALICE FAYE SHOW (5-15-49) Mr. Scott, the sponsor (Gale Gordon), throws a party but Frankie Remley (Elliott Lewis) is not invited. Walter Tetley is Julius Abbruzio. Rexall, NBC. (29 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO: The Jack Benny Program (2-12-94) Second program in the series with recollections by writers George Balzer and Milt Josefsberg. *Excerpts:* Jack introduces his writers (5-29-49); Cast at rehearsal (3-24-46), Your Money or Your Life (3-28-48); Dorothy Kirsten and Mary's biggest laugh (4-25-48); Gertrude and Mabel (11-14-48); Jack introduces his switchboard operators (5-29-49).(26 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (3-21-37) From the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Pierre, New York, it's Jack and Mary, Don, Kenny Baker, Sam Hearn (Schlepperman), Abe Lyman and the orchestra. Guest is Mancel Talcott, Mayor of Waukegan, Illinois. In the sketch, "A Day in Our Lives," based on Jack's boyhood in Waukegan, Jack plays the part of his father. Jell-O, NBC. (29 min)

Read the article about Jack Benny's competition beginning on page 5.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12th

SPEAKING OF RADIO: The Jack Benny Program (2-19-94) Third program in the series featuring recollections by Don Wilson and Dennis Day. *Excerpts:* George Jessel narrates Jack Benny's life story (11-4-51); Don Wilson's 16th anniversary in radio (3-12-39); Don's contract (1-23-49); Benny on sight-seeing bus (9-11-49); Jack introduces Dennis Day (5-29-49); Dennis brings his mother (10-6-46); Dennis as Titus Moody (3-17-46); as Ronald Colman (11-9-47); as Hitler and Tojo (1-2-44); sound effects man (2-1-42). (39 min)

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF DENNIS DAY (3-26-47) Dennis stars with Paula Winslowe, Dink Trout, John Brown, Barbara Eiler, Elliott Lewis, Charles Dant and the orchestra. The Andersons (who own the boarding house where Dennis lives) are trying to sell their place to buy a larger one. Dennis tries to help. Colgate Dental Cream, NBC. (29 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (4-15-51) IRS agents are still investigating Jack's 1950 income tax return. They question Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Colman about a dinner party hosted by Jack. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS. (26 min)

HALLS OF IVY (1950) Ronald and Benita Colman star as Dr. and Mrs. Hall of Ivy College, with Peter Leeds, Arthur Q. Brian, Sheldon Leonard, Herb Butterfield. Graduation week at Ivy College finds a professor about to resign. Schlitz Beer, NBC. (29 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO: The Jack Benny Program. (2-26-94) Program four features recollections by Frank Nelson, Veola Vonn, Don Wilson, George Balzer and Mel Blanc. *Excerpts:* Jack introduces Frank Nelson (5-29-49); Floorwalker (12-14-41); Dr. Nelson, Dentist (1-23-49); Shooting of Dan McGrew (3-27-55); "Dreer Poosen" flub (1-8-50); Jack introduces Mel Blanc (5-29-49); the Maxwell; Carmichael the Bear (3-12-39); shopping for a Christmas gift for Don (12-21-47). (36 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (2-6-38) Jack oversleeps and misses the opening of the show. Don wins the orchestra from Phil in a poker game. Mary, Phil, Don, Rochester, Kenny Baker, Frank Nelson. Jell-O, NBC. (29 min)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19th

SPEAKING OF RADIO: The Jack Benny Program (5-7-94) Program five features recollections by George Balzer and Milt Josefsberg. *Excerpts:* Jack introduces Artie Auerbach (5-29-49); Mr. Kitzel, Movie Extra (10-26-47); Jack's echo, Part 1 (10-3-48); Jack's echo, Part 2 (10-10-48); Jack's echo, Part 3 (10-24-48); King Solomon's Mines (1-7-51). (33 min)

(FITCH) BANDWAGON (2-11-45) From the Glenview Naval Air Station in Glenview, Illinois, Dick Powell hosts Phil Harris and his orchestra, with guests Jack Benny and Andy Devine. AFRS rebroadcast. (15 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (4-22-51) Before Jack and the gang take the Beverly Hills Beavers to the circus, the IRS agents show up again. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS. (26 min)

MEL BLANC SHOW (10-15-46) Mel can't take Betty to the Postman's Ball. Cast includes Mary Jane Croft, Earle Ross, Joe Kearns, Hans Conried, Victor Miller and the orchestra. Colgate products, CBS. (25 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO: The Jack Benny Program (7-30-94) Program six features recollections by Jack Benny. *Excerpts:* Jack's life story in music (5-11-41); Fred Allen's tribute to Benny (5-11-41); Benny-Allen feud (6-27-48); Allen and Benny in Vaudeville (4-26-53). (31 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (6-18-39) Mary, Phil, Kenny, Don, Rochester, Andy Devine, Frank Nelson. Jack and the gang plan a trip to Waukegan. Jell-O, NBC. (28 min)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26th

SPEAKING OF RADIO: The Jack Benny Program (9-24-94) Program seven with recollections by George Balzer, Jack Benny, Joan Benny, Milt Josefsberg. *Excerpts:* Mary reads a letter from Momma; Jack and Mary recall the early days of his show (5-9-41); Mary's letter from Momma (3-12-39); Jack takes inventory (10-2-49); Jack's memory loss (10-9-49). (33 min)

GI JOURNAL #92 (4-5-45) Bob Hope is Editor-in-Chief for this edition, with Lucille Ball. Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Arthur Treacher, Mel Blanc, and Connie Haines. Hope gets an invitation to Lucille Ball's swanky charity bazaar, so he gets Rochester to be his chauffeur. AFRS. (30 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (4-29-51) Remote broadcast from Nellis Air Force Base, outside of Las Vegas, Nevada, with Mary, Phil, Rochester, Dennis, Don, Artie Auerbach, Mel Blanc, Sportsmen, Elliott Lewis. Jack tells how he "reserved" a room at the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas. Lucky Strike, CBS. (26 min)

HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (1-5-50) "The Egg and I" starring Claudette Colbert and Frank Nelson in a radio version of the 1947 film about the trials and tribulations of owning a chicken farm. James Hilton hosts. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (30 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO: The Jack Benny Program (10-1-94) Program eight offers recollections by George Balzer. *Excerpts:* How Jack met Rochester (5-31-42); Rochester at sea (2-17-46); Railroad station for Colorado trip (1-11-48); Railroad station in Pasadena (1-29-50). (28 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (5-25-41) Mary, Dennis, Phil, Don, Rochester. Jack complains that he's tired after 35 weeks of radio this season. Don's playlet: "The Life of Philbert Harris" with Jack as "Philbert." Jell-O, NBC. (30 min)

OLD TIME RADIO IN THE 20th CENTURY

Chuck Schaden's

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

MARCH 2000

SATURDAY, MARCH 4th

CHARLIE MC CARTHY SHOW (9-28-47) Edgar Bergen welcomes guest Betty Hutton. Charlie has a date with Betty, but Bergen won't let him go out with her because she's "too wild." Betty sings "Poppa Don't Preach to Me." Chase and Sanborn Coffee, Royal Pudding, NBC. (30 min) ***Those Were The Days listeners have voted CHARLIE MC CARTHY SHOW one of the 20 Best Old Time Radio Shows of the 20th Century. Read the article about Betty Hutton on page 29.***

LUX RADIO THEATRE (2-5-45) "Laura" starring Dana Andrews, Gene Tierney, Vincent Price, and Otto Kruger in this radio version of the 1944 film. A detective, investigating the past of a supposedly murdered glamorous woman, finds himself falling in love with her. Lionel Barrymore hosts. Lux Soap, CBS. (60 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.***

SPEAKING OF RADIO The Jack Benny Program (10-15-94) Program nine in this twelve-part series features recollections by Irving Fein, Jack Benny and George Balzer. *Excerpts:* Drug Store lunch (4-9-50); Professor LeBlanc (5-19-49); George Burns sings Jack's song (1-20-52); CBS closed circuit broadcast (12-23-48); CBS Benny promotional announcements (1948-49); First Benny show on CBS (1-2-49). (37 min)

RADIO CITY PLAYHOUSE (2-21-49) "Portrait of Lenore" with Bernard Grant and Jan Minor. After seeing the film "Laura," a writer falls in love with the painting of a beautiful woman. Sustaining, NBC. (28 min)

YOUR HIT PARADE (6-2-45) The top tunes of the week as presented by Laurence Tibbett, Joan Edwards, Mark Warnow and the orchestra, and the Hit Paraders. Can you guess what the Number One song will be? AFRS rebroadcast. (30 min)

SATURDAY, MARCH 11th

ADVENTURES OF SAM SPADE (8-8-48) "The Bluebeard Caper" starring Howard Duff as Spade. A Redhead's brother hires Sam to save his sister from her boyfriend who has lost three wives under unusual circumstances. Wildroot Creme Oil, CBS. (29 min)

RECOLLECTIONS (3-20-57) Program 31 in the series hosted by Ed Herlihy who looks back at NBC's broadcast history: Connie Boswell; FDR's 1933 Inaugural; Richard Crooks on the Voice of Firestone; Maxwell House Showboat; Ed Wynn, the Texaco Fire Chief; Frances Langford. Sustaining, NBC. (29 min)

JUDY CANOVA SHOW (1-17-48) Judy welcomes guest Eddie Cantor who is running for President and wants all the votes in Cactus Junction. Cast includes Mel Blanc, Ruby Dandridge, Joe Kearns. Halo Shampoo, Super Suds, NBC. (29 min)

SUSPENSE (6-5-47) "Make Mad the Guilty" starring Hume Cronyn as an out-of-work Shakespearean actor. Roma Wines, CBS. (29 min) ***Those Were The Days listeners have voted SUSPENSE one of the 20 Best Old Time Radio Shows of the 20th Century.***

SPEAKING OF RADIO: The Jack Benny Program (11-19-94) Program ten in the twelve-part series features recollections by Don Wilson and George Balzer. *Excerpts:* The Don Wilson Story (1-10-54); Don introduces the Sportsmen to Jack (10-6-46); Don's 30th anniversary in radio (1-10-54); Jack's Vault, secrecy pledge (12-30-45); Jack introduces Joe Kearns (5-29-49); Jack's Vault, "Virus X" (1-11-48). (33 min)

MAIL CALL #142 (4-25-45) Betty Hutton is Mistress of Ceremonies for this special program for servicemen from New Jersey. Guests include Frank Sinatra, Vivian Blaine, King Sisters, B. S. Pulley, William Demarest. Betty sings "Stuff Like That There." Comedy sketch about the good old days in New Jersey. AFRS (30 min)

SATURDAY, MARCH 18th

INNER SANCTUM (6-5-45) "Death Across the Board" starring Raymond Massey in a story about a man who sat in Death's place, playing with human lives, and what happened to him. Lipton Tea and Soup, CBS. (29 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO: The Jack Benny Program (11-26-94) Program eleven in the twelve-part series includes recollections by Phil Harris, Dennis Day and Elliott Lewis. *Excerpts:* Phil's first appearance with Jack (10-4-36); Benny show rehearsal (11-7-48); Too many mistakes (11-13-49); "How Are Things in Glocca Morra?" (5-4-47); Phil and Frankie Remley (6-6-48); "That's What I Like About the South" (11-30-47). (38 min)

COMMAND PERFORMANCE #128 (7-8-44) A Salute to New York with hostess Claudette Colbert, Jimmy Durante, Ronald Colman, Betty Hutton, Alan Hale, Dale Evans, Major Meredith Willson and the AFRS orchestra, all fulfilling requests from G.I. listeners. Betty sings "My Rocking Horse Ran Away." Colbert, Colman, Durante and Hutton in "I'm Gonna Hang My Heart in the Tree That Grows in Brooklyn." AFRS. (28 min)

RECOLLECTIONS (3-27-57) Program 32 in the series: Arthur Tracy; Nellie Revell; Sigmund Romberg and Deems Taylor; Edwin C. Hill; Jack Benny introduces Kenny Baker for the first time; Jesse Crawford inaugurates a new pipe organ at WMAQ, Chicago, in 1936. Sustaining, NBC. (29 min)

LUX RADIO THEATRE (1-9-50) "Sorry Wrong Number" starring Barbara Stanwyck and Burt Lancaster in their original screen roles from the 1949 Paramount Picture based on Lucille Fletcher's original radio script as performed many times on "Suspense." An invalid woman overhears a murder plan on the telephone. Cast includes William Conrad, Frances Robinson, Bill Johnstone, Lawrence Dobkin, Jay Novello, Charlotte Lawrence. William Keighley is host. Lux Soap, CBS. (59 min in three segments)

SATURDAY, MARCH 25th

MURDER AT MIDNIGHT (1946) "Nightmare" with Elspeth Eric and Walter Vaughn. A woman has nightmares that she is being smothered by her husband. Syndicated. (26 min)

BOB HOPE SHOW (2-12-46) From Santa Barbara State University, Bob welcomes guest Betty Hutton who joins regulars Jerry Colonna, Frances Langford, Skinnay Ennis and the orchestra. Bob and Betty do a skit about a country bumpkin who goes to New York to visit the Stork Club. Betty sings "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief." AFRS rebroadcast. (30 min)

DRAGNET (9-17-49) During a routine traffic stop, a police officer is shot. Jack Webb as Sgt. Joe Friday and Barton Yarborough as Ben Romero investigate. From the series' first season on the air. Sustaining, NBC. (31 min) ***Read the article about Dragnet on page 42.***

SPEAKING OF RADIO: The Jack Benny Program (1-14-95) The conclusion of the twelve-part series features recollections by Don Wilson, George Balzer, Dennis Day, Jack Benny, and Joan Benny. *Excerpts:* Jack introduces the Sportsmen (5-29-49); Sportsmen sing "Old Jack Benny Had a Farm" (3-23-47); Jack plays violin with Sportsmen (11-23-47); Special Quartet: Bing Crosby, Andy Russell, Dick Haymes, Dennis Day (3-16-47); Si, Sy routines; Cimmaron Rolls sequence (1953); Birthday surprise for Jack (2-15-42); Radio honors (1-31-37). (36 min)

HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (9-15-49) "Anna and the King of Siam" starring Deborah Kerr as the spirited British schoolteacher who is hired to tutor the royal children of the King of Siam. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (29 min)

RECOLLECTIONS (4-10-57) The last program in the series. Ed Herlihy presents: Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys; Greta Garbo and Lionel Barrymore in a scene from "Camille"; Shirley Temple; Bill "Bojangles" Robinson; Marian Anderson's radio debut; Coon-Sanders Nighthawks. Sustaining, NBC. (29 min)

...and for more good listening...

ART HELLYER SHOW-- Music with lots of commentary and fun from one of radio's legendary personalities, **now in his 53rd 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.*

METRO GOLDEN MEMORIES-- John Sebert and Bob Greenberg host a program of old time radio broadcasts. *WNDZ, 750 AM, Monday, 3-4 pm.*

tion with Lopez it may have cost Betty a chance to join the Glenn Miller Orchestra. Miller selected tamer sibling Marian as band vocalist instead.)

Betty's delivery included everything in the book: grimaces, double takes, popping of the eyes, cartwheels, arm swings, leg kicks, finger-pointing to punctuate lyrics sung in tones designed to raise the rafters; anything and everything to sell the song. Singing may have been her occupation, but show stopping became her trademark.

Radio performance (1940s)
PHOTOFEST

In 1939, her earnings having risen to $175 a week, the entertainer now known as Betty Hutton who had been sent on tour and heard on Lopez's radio program joined Eve Arden, Alfred Drake, and Keenan Wynn in the Broadway musical *Two for the Show.* Hutton's renditions of "Little Miss Muffett," "Calypso Joe," and "A House with a Red Barn" earned her the "Blonde Bombshell" moniker.

Everything seemed to be rolling her way. She didn't have to audition for *Two for the Show* and, based upon her success in that revue, she was hired to aid Ethel Merman in *Panama Hattie.* Again Hutton sang three numbers and received almost as much praise in the press as the star. *Panama Hattie* ran for over 500 performances, but neither Merman nor Hutton appeared in the MGM film version of the musical.

Betty's opportunity to step before the cameras came when producer B. G. DeSylva, who had hired her for *Panama Hattie,* signed Hutton to a contract for Paramount Studios. In her first film, *The Fleet's In* (1942), Hutton's job was ostensibly to support the love story involving Dorothy Lamour and William Holden, but after her character Bessie Dale explained "How to Build a Better Mousetrap" and confessed that "Arthur Murray Taught Me Dancing in a Hurry" in song and dance all attention shifted from the sappy romance of the co-stars to the 5'4" dervish who made boyfriend Barney Waters (Eddie Bracken) look positively static.

For better or worse Hutton was paired with Bracken in several of her early films. In *Star-Spangled Rhythm* she played a telephone operator at Paramount who introduced Eddie and his sailor friends to the stars on the lot. *Happy Go Lucky,* a 1943 vehicle starring Mary Martin and Dick Powell, contained at least one shining moment: "Murder, He Says," a number in which Hutton described Bracken's response to her kisses.

That same year Betty moved up in billing when she played opposite Bob Hope in *Let's Face It,* a farce of false and mistaken identities with spics thrown in for good measure. Most of the songs from Cole Porter's musical had been scuttled before production began, but Hutton did get to solo on "Let's Not Talk About Love" and joined Hope for "Who Did? I Did." Betty seemed at ease with Hope (perhaps because she had appeared on his radio show) and demonstrated that she could handle a leading role in a comedy. That experience proved indispensable for her next feature demanded that its lead actress assume one of the most delicate roles of the 1940s.

The plot of an adventuresome young woman becoming inebriated, having a wild time on the town, and discovering she is pregnant after the escapade but not being able to recall the identity of the man responsible for her predicament is not unusual for a movie produced today; for a film released in 1944 it was tantamount to publicly declaring that year that rationing and buying war bonds were un-American activities.


Red, Hot and Blue (1949)
PHOTOFEST

The Miracle of Morgan's Creek really was a miracle. It succeeded both with the Breen Office and the public because of Preston Sturges' witty screenplay and deft direction and superior performances by Diana Lynn as a wise-beyond-her-years Emmy, William "Pratfall" Demarest as the blustery father, Bracken as a lovestruck schnook, and Betty as the wide-eyed, erring but lovable heroine Trudy Kockenlocker, who gave the film its name when she gave birth to sextuplets.

The Miracle of Morgan's Creek proved that Hutton didn't need frenetic songs and dances to validate her presence in a motion picture. Sturges himself called her a "full-fledged actress with every talent that noun implies" and suggested that her abilities might be better utilized if producers cast her in movies other than musicals.

Hutton gained another positive reference from critic James Agee. Agee, who surprisingly had harsh words for Bob Hope's film work, claimed that "Betty Hutton is almost beyond good and evil, as far as I'm concerned" in commenting on her performance in *And the Angels Sing.*

In *And the Angels Sing* her versions of "His Rocking Horse Ran Away" and "Bluebird in My Belfry" prompted another critic to call her the "human approximation of a buzz bomb." Later in 1944 she appeared slightly more subdued in *Here Come the Waves* with Bing Crosby only when playing the more dignified of identical twins; when hopping around and singing "There's a Fella Waiting in Poughkeepsie" as the hyperactive sister, Betty the Bombshell was in full bloom.

Hutton stretched her acting muscles in *Incendiary Blonde,* the first of several pictures she made based on the lives of real women. As Texas Guinan Betty had the perfect personality to portray one of the people who put the roar in the Roaring Twenties. Her "knock 'em dead" renditions of "It Had to Be You," "Ragtime Cowboy Joe," and "Row, Row, Row" captured perfectly the "anything goes" spirit of that reckless decade.

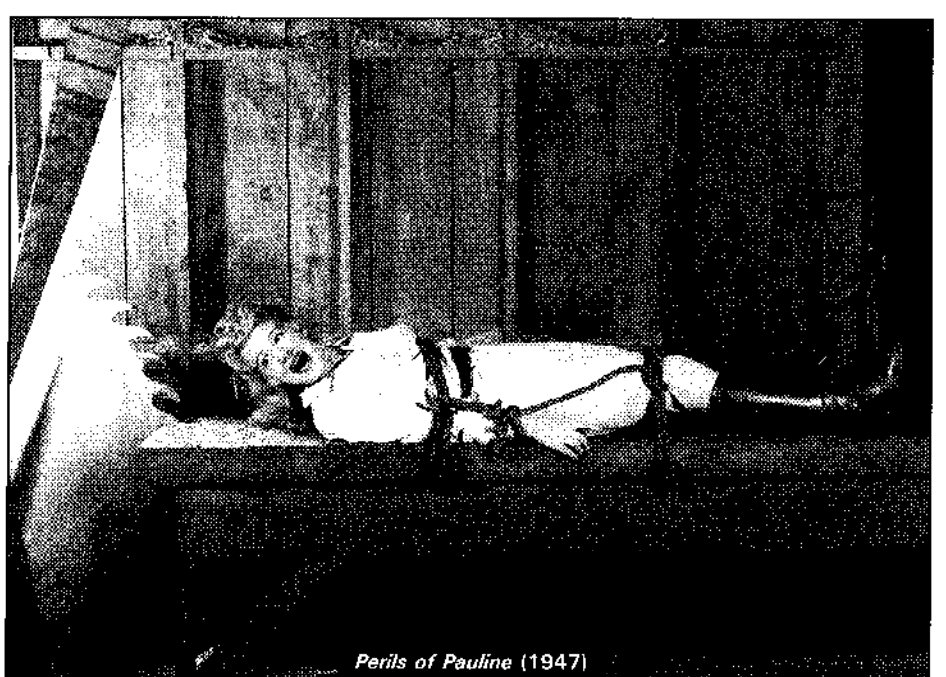
Incendiary Blonde succeeded because a fabled character was played by a larger-than-life actress who had memorable compositions to sing and an interesting story

to tell. But *The Stork Club* emerged principally as a commercial for the famous night spot with its only saving grace being Betty's toe-tapping "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief" number, and *Cross My Heart* suffered from the improbable plot of a woman confessing to a murder just to help the career of a boyfriend who happened to be a lawyer which must have caused viewers to agree with the title of one of the movie's songs, "Love is the Darndest thing."

In 1947 Hutton returned to form in *The Perils of Pauline*. She seemed right at home as Pearl White, the star of silent serials whose roles found her perpetually knocking on death's door. No one should mistake *Perils* for an accurate portrayal of the early days of movie making and at times the sentiment was trowled on with a heavy hand, but the picture is tolerable because of a few notable songs ("Poppa Don't Preach to Me" and "I Wish I Didn't Love You So") and Betty's performance which prompted one reviewer for the *New York Sun* to state that "Miss Hutton grabs hold of the picture and squeezes all possible entertainment out of it."

Plans for more biopics, including those about Mable Normand, Clara Bow, Theda Bara, and Sophie Tucker, died on the vine while Betty labored in the forgettable *Dream Girl* and the lackluster *Red, Hot and Blue*, which is worth watching only to see Betty sing "Hamlet" and to catch a glimpse of composer Frank Loesser playing a crook with the Runyonesque name of Hair-Do Lemke. But the part that Hutton coveted most did not need inventing or developing; ever since she saw Ethel Merman in buckskin on Broadway Betty set her sights on playing Annie Oakley as surely as the legendary sharpshooter eyed her targets.

Judy Garland won the lead in MGM's *Annie Get Your Gun*, but when it became apparent she couldn't continue Hutton moved into the role she was born to play. It is difficult to imagine Garland or even Merman doing a better job than Hutton did as the headstrong hoyden. When Betty sang "Doing What Comes Naturally," she appeared to be doing just that. Her challenges to Frank Butler (Howard Keel) in "Anything You Can Do" came from a woman whose very demeanor suggested that she could back up every boast. "I'm an Indian Too" is a number right out of her "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief" repertoire of boisterous melodies. And yet in "They Say That Falling in Love" she hints as some vulnerability in Annie's character. A writer for *Time* noted that "along with her unbridled vitality, she gives the role something Merman never attempted: she kindles the love story into poignancy."


Perils of Pauline (1947)
PHOTOFEST


Annie Get Your Gun (1950)
PHOTOFEST

Hutton's triumph in *Annie Get Your Gun* marked the zenith of her career. In 1950 she appeared on the cover of *Time*, received *Photoplay's* most popular actress award, and earned over $250,000. However, her other 1950 release, *Let's Dance*, in which she received top billing over Fred Astaire, proved to be tepid entertainment.

Two years later she headed the cast of *The Greatest Show on Earth*. Whether swinging above the crowd on the trapeze or springing into action to save the circus in time of crisis, Betty's character Holly was the most lively two-legged creature in the Oscar-winning film. An unexpected benefit from working in that picture was her election to the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus Hall of Fame.

Betty's final film biography, *Somebody Loves Me*, based on the life of Blossom Seeley, was replete with songs including the standards "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans," "I Cried For You," and the title tune. Little did Hutton know that *Somebody Loves Me* would be her last movie for Paramount and virtually her swan song.

Hutton wanted her husband, choreographer Charles O'Curran, to direct her next

DOING WHAT COMES NATURALLY

project, a film about the Duncan Sisters. When Paramount balked, she walked. Betty couldn't make pictures for other studios because she was still under contract and she had also gained the baggage of having a reputation for being "difficult."

For a number of years Hutton had been supplementing income derived from films with personal appearances at important theatres like The Palladium in London and The Palace in New York, sometimes earning as much as $17,500 a week, so she returned to the stage while her movie career was on hold. Unfortunately, Hutton the earner couldn't keep up with Hutton the spender. A 1950 article reported that she had saved very little of the $1.5 million in salaries paid her since 1936.

In 1954 an attempt to capitalize on her popularity in *Annie Get Your Gun* by bringing Hutton to television in a ninety-minute extravaganza called *Satin and Spurs* in which she played the star of a rodeo landed flat on its chaps. A one-hour special fared little better the following year. After her only series limped through the 1959-60 season, she adamantly claimed that it was her decision and not the mediocre ratings that ended *The Betty Hutton Show.*

During the 1960s Hutton tried comebacks on tours of *Gypsy, Gentleman Prefer Blondes,* and *Annie Get Your Gun* without much success. In 1967 she couldn't fulfill her contractual agreement with Paramount to make two westerns and was fired. That same year she filed for bankruptcy. Problems with drugs and alcohol as well as regrets over her four failed marriages and estrangement from some of her children hampered her progress as well.

A humbled Hutton worked as a housekeeper at a rectory on the East Coast, appeared before the public eye briefly for a few weeks in 1980 on Broadway in the cast of *Annie,* and then returned to a secluded existence.

The actress who, in the words of film historian Ken Wlaschin, "was probably the most energetic personality ever to explode on the screen" deserves a champion to rescue a number of her movies from the shadows. Some of them have not aged well because of the blandness of her leading men: Don DeFore in *The Stork Club,* Sonny Tufts in *Cross My Heart,* John Lund in *The Perils of Pauline,* Macdonald Carey in *Dream Girl,* Victor Mature in *Red, Hot and Blue,* and Ralph Meeker in *Somebody Loves Me.*

Too often Betty was the only power hitter in the lineup. In *Somebody Loves Me* (1952) Meeker, Billie Bird, Robert Keith, Adele Jergens, Sid Tomack, and Ludwig Stossel were all the support Paramount could muster for her. That same year at MGM Gene Kelly had Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds, Jean Hagen, Rita Moreno, and Cyd Charisse to help him sing in the rain.

Regardless of who stood around her, the status of the star should not be diminished. The players were pyrotechnists who just lit the fuse. When Hutton exploded, that's when the fireworks began.

Both Marilyn Monroe and Betty Hutton made their screen debuts in the 1940s while in their early twenties and both hit audiences with a powerful impact. One became a screen legend, the other languishes on the verge of obscurity.

But to a certain group of film aficionados who fondly remember an irrepressible singing and dancing dynamo their clarion call remains, "Good-bye, Norma Jean. Hello, Betty." ■

NOTE-- Tune in to several Betty Hutton radio performances during March on Those Were The Days. *See listings on pages 26 and 27.*

JERRY LEWIS, WE LOVE YOU!

BY WAYNE KLATT

If you howl at Jerry Lewis movies, you are either French or were born around 1940 to 1945.

Although Jerry Lewis seemed like a fresh force when he and Dean Martin appeared in their first film, as orange-juice squeezers in 1949's *My Friend Irma,* he represented a generation of comedians that even then was fading away. He was the New Jersey equivalent of a Catskills hotel clown who would do anything for an instant laugh: fall down, make faces, talk funny, walk funny, or leap into the arms of a surprised guest.

But Jerry added a certain universal humanity to his clowning, he reflected the awkward goonish phrase of adolescence. The Marx Brothers had stopped making films, and Abbott and Costello were now gearing their material toward children. Jerry instantly connected with millions of teenagers. Fans saw themselves on the screen, only better because Jerry always managed to catch the crooks and win the love of his life. He was saying it's all right to be a geek for a few years. The fact that parents didn't "get" Jerry Lewis made him all the funnier.

Although Jerry began as a powerhouse of diffuse energy, by the time he and Dean had their first starring roles, in *At War With the Army* (1951), he was a genuine comic actor who could dance, mock-sing, and pull off a funny and touching portrayal of Barry Fitzgerald. They were also a hit in nightclubs across the country, such as Chicago's Chez Paree.

Paramount had struck a gold mine, and

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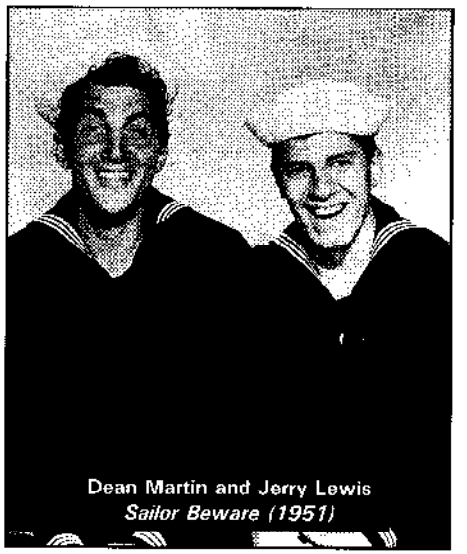


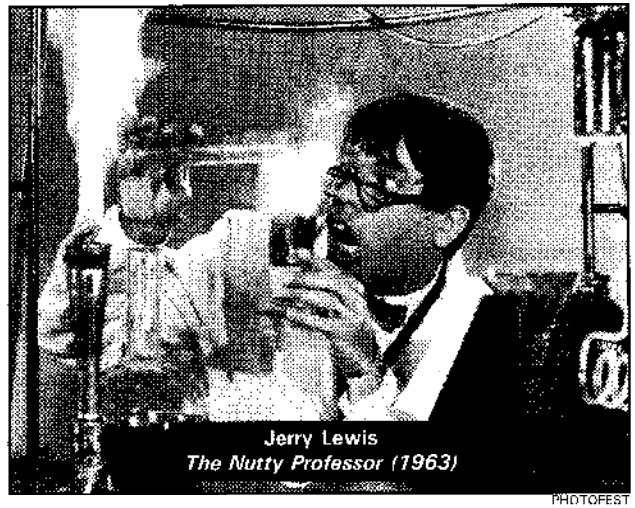
Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis
Sailor Beware (1951)

to Jerry it must have seemed that his adoring public would never turn its back on him.

Dean Martin was always slighted by the critics and fans. Few people outside the business know how important straight men were (in vaudeville they received 60 per cent of the team's salary). But unlike Bud Abbott, Dean was a contributing partner. He came up with a number of funny routines that Jerry played out but was never given credit for it or much of a chance to show his talent for light comedy. In twenty minutes the two of them, for example, worked out the funny, unscripted has-been fighter scene in *Sailor Beware,* released at the height of their popularity, in 1952.

By then, there were mobs of fans outside places where they were staying during personal appearances. Dean and Jerry sometimes would open a window and drop hundreds of publicity photos to the sea of outstretched hands. This writer fondly

JERRY LEWIS



Jerry Lewis
The Nutty Professor (1963)

PHOTOFEST

remembers reading a Martin and Lewis comic book on his way to seeing *Sailor Beware,* then going home to watch them on the *Colgate Comedy Hour* that night.

When the team broke up in 1957, a lot of people thought Jerry was through. Instead, he did a remarkable transformation. He achieved some success singing, he found a director — Frank Tashlin — suited to his style, he did well as a talk show host, and he set out to become, in his own words, a "Total Film-Maker." Ego? Talent? Take your pick. The results were uneven, but even his failures in America became hits in France and French-speaking Canada.

Jerry without "Dino" needed more gags to sustain a film, and that meant losing some of the likability of his bumbling character, and now in his middle thirties he no longer could convincingly portray the embarrassments of adolescents. Instead of a character, he now represented sheer physical comedy in the abstract, something adored by the French but dismissed by the British as "a mixture of exaggerated mugging and sticky sentiment."

Jerry knew that he was working himself too hard, co-writing, starring in, and directing films, including *The Nutty Professor* in 1963. The movie is now considered one of his best, but at the time the reviews were only lukewarm and it was panned in Boston. That summer, he launched a tour of multiple appearances in 35 cities within 40 days. He showed up not only downtown but at movichouses in neighborhoods that had never seen a star in person before.

At Chicago's Congress Theatre on Milwaukee Avenue in the Logan Square neighborhood, the film was paired with a Japanese Mothra movie.

The theatre was packed for the afternoon showing, but most of the moviegoers were children. There was screaming and popcorn throwing in row after row as Jerry stepped out in front of the blank screen to have a chat with the audience and show outtakes of his film. He told wonderful anecdotes, but few people were paying attention and he was drowned out by the unappreciative munchkins. This writer felt dismay that hundreds of people were showing disrespect for a star trying to bring something special to their lives.

Lewis appeared to have been shocked that he should be treated this way rather than with the teary-eyed receptions he received in haunts like Las Vegas. He immediately canceled his personal appearances in neighborhoods and, like the trooper he is, went on to crank out films like *Who's Minding the Store* and *The Family Jewels* that still delight fans — who are either French or born between 1940 and 1945.

Maybe Jerry still remembers Chicagoland with bitterness, but we want to tell him that we loved him, too. ■

This is NBC
The National Broadcasting Company
Bong
Bong Bong

BY BILL HARRIS

Almost anyone who ever listened to radio has, at some time or other, heard the famous three note chime that has been the long time trademark of NBC. These chimes were used on the hour and half-hour to announce station breaks on the network.

I became interested in the history of the chimes after discovering a book at the library titled *The Fourth Chime* by NBC, printed in 1944. I had never heard of a "fourth" chime and my curiosity was aroused. I checked out the book to find out more about this extra chime. However the book told very little about the fourth chime, but dealt mainly with the role NBC played in the reporting of special world-wide news events, primarily during World War II.

I began to seek more information about this fourth chime. Was it a different note from the other three or maybe a repeat of one of the others? Where could I get a recording of this fourth chime?

This article, by Bill Harris of Roanoke, Texas, originally appeared in The Reproducer, *the quarterly journal of the Vintage Radio & Phonograph Society, Inc, Irving, Texas, and in* Radio World *for December 25, 1996. Reprinted with permission.*

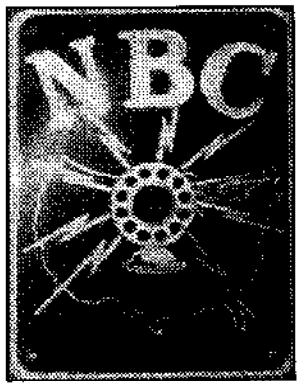
A letter to the editor of *Antique Radio Classified* brought some results. My request for more information was published in the December 1994 issue of ARC *Radio Miscellanea* column, and shortly I received a letter with a copy of an article by Rod Phillips about the history of the chimes. I also made inquires on the *Old Time Radio Digest* on the Internet. I was particularly looking for a recording of the fourth chime. The response was great to say the least, and I began to be able to put the pieces of the puzzle together.

As I began to gather information, there seemed to be at least two versions of how the chimes came to be. Perhaps only those early radio broadcasters who were involved with the beginning of the chimes know exactly how it happened, but hopefully the information I have collected will shed some light.

The National Broadcasting Company was incorporated on September 9, 1926 under the laws of Deleware. It was a corporation owned jointly by RCA, GE, and Westinghouse. The NBC network began broadcasting on November 15 of the same year from studios WEAF in New York City. There was a combined group of nineteen

scattered affiliated stations, using more that 3500 circuit miles of telephone wires.

As the number of affiliate stations grew, there was some confusion among the affiliates as to the conclusion of network programming and when the station break should occur on the hour and half-hour. Some sort of coordinating signal was needed to signal the affiliates for these breaks. Three men at NBC were given the task of finding a solution to the problem and coming up with such a coordinating signal. These men were Oscar Hanson, a former engineer for AT&T; Earnest la Prada, an NBC orchestra leader; and Phillips Carlin, an NBC announcer. During the years 1927 and 1928 these men experimented with a seven note sequence of chimes, G-C-F-E-G-C-E, which proved too complicated for the announcers to consistently strike in the correct order, so the sequence was reduced to four notes, G-C-F-E. This was later reduced to the three notes G-E-C, and these three notes were first broadcast on November 29, 1929. The notes were struck at 59 minutes 30 seconds, and 29 minutes 30 seconds past the hour.



I also received information from a person who worked for WSB-TV in Atlanta, Georgia for 24 years, that the chimes had their origin at Atlanta radio station WSB. Supporting this, Paul Terry phoned in the following to the *St. Petersburg Times* that appeared in the February 9, 1995 *Action*, column.

"I read in your Jan. 17 Action column that NBC officials said the chimes used for network identification are the musical notes G, E, and C and originally stood for General Electric Corporation which was part owner of NBC.

"I think if you research this a little further you will find that the chimes really originated in Atlanta, GA., at radio station WSB.

"In the late 1920's, WSB station manager Lambdin Kay began using a miniature xylophone to hit those same three notes to signal station breaks. Later, when WSB joined the NBC network, WSB cut in one day during a Georgia Tech football game with the chimes. NBC liked it so well that it got permission to use the chimes for its own identification."

Terry, 87, started working for American Telephone at age 12 and retired 52 years later. When not working he would hang around station WSB, and that is how he came to know about the chimes. Mr. Terry passed away two days after phoning in his story to the *St. Petersburg Times*. Elmo Ellis who was hired by WSB in 1940 and retired as general manager of the station some years ago, confirmed Terry's story.

WSB claims to be the first radio station to use a musical identification at the end of its programs. The xylophone that Lambdin Kay used was given to him by a young lady, Nell Pendly, the night she and her twin sister Kate, appeared on the station.

Nell suggested to Kay that he try the chimes as a musical identification. The notes used by WSB were the first three notes of the World War I song "Over There," which are the notes E-G-C. This becomes important when discussing the fourth chime as I will clarify later. NBC rearranged the notes to G-E-C. Station WSB went on the air in 1922 and became an affiliate of NBC on January 9, 1927.

The original chimes were manufactured by the J. C. Deagan Company of Chicago, a manufacturer of musical instruments. I wondered if any of the original Deagan hand chimes used on the NBC network still existed. A search on the Internet produced an article about television station WCSH in Portland Maine being sold by the family who were the original owners of the station from the time it was one of the original NBC radio affiliates. The grandson of the station's founder and current owner stated that the station still had the original hand chimes used at the radio station to sound the tones on the NBC network, and these chimes were currently on display in the lobby of the station. The Deagan company was sold a few years ago to the Yahama Music Company.

In 1932, two NBC engineers, Robert M. Morris, and O. B. Hanson visited a Captain Richard H. Ranger at his home in Newark, New Jersey. The purpose of this visit was to see an electronic organ Captain Ranger had invented. Morris describes the organ as "quite complex, and had many features of the pipe organ but the equipment consisting of countless tubes, relays, oscillators, amplifiers, filters, modulators, etc., occupied all of a two car garage."

After their inspection of the electronic organ was complete, Captain Ranger accompanied Morris and Hanson to the Robert Treat Hotel for some refreshments. It was here that the subject of a possible electronic version of the NBC Chimes arose. It was suggested that Captain Ranger design such a unit and present it as a proposal to NBC.

Approximately a month and a half later Captain Ranger had a working model. The machine was an electro-mechanical device constructed much like a music box. A set of finely tuned metal reeds were plucked by the fingers on a revolving drum. These vibrations of the notes were picked up by a modified RCA microphone and then amplified and sent out over the network.

Initial tests of the Rangertone Chimes indicated a tone quite different from the soft-toned hand-struck Deagan chimes. This problem was referred to the music department and Earnest LaPrada was assigned to work with Roland Lynn of the NBC Laboratory to see if a better tone quality could be produced, and after many days of effort, the desired tone was achieved. After necessary circuit changes were made in the studio control system the new electronic chimes were put on the air in New York in late 1932, and now the famous chimes could be sounded with the simple push of a button. Additional units were ordered for other major NBC studios. An announcement of the introduction of the electric chimes appeared in the October 1, 1932 issue of *Radio World*. The Rangertone chimes were used up until sometime around 1939, at which time they were replaced by all electronic chimes developed by the NBC Laboratory.

Legend has it that the notes G-E-C were chosen to stand as an identification for the General Electric Company, a part owner in NBC. However, I have found no documentation to substantiate this claim and the choice of the notes being the same as the

initials of General Electric is more than likely just coincidence. In defense of this, in 1938, Mr. Morris made a trip to various European countries to observe the progress of television in Europe. D. C. Brinkenshaw of the BBC commented how he liked to listen to the States over short wave from the General Electric station at Schenectady N.Y. Mr. Morris states:

"He thought it most ingenious of them to use an aurally coded identification for the G. E. stations by using chimes with the notes G-E-C for General Electric Company. I tried to persuade him that the chime signal came from NBC and had nothing to do with General Electric. I'm not sure he really believed it."

The fourth chime is what started my interest in this subject. The book *The Fourth Chime* stated that it was originally contrived as a confidential alert to signal the members of the NBC news staff, engineers, and other personnel responsible for broadcasting the news to the people. It was first heard on the air with the crash of the dirigible Hindenburg, in 1937 at Lakehurst, New Jersey; then during the Munich crisis in 1938. It sounded again with the news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and during the D-Day invasion.

The fourth chime continued to be used throughout World War II to alert the NBC news department and the radio audience of special news bulletins.

"The Fourth Chime will ring out again and again from the NBC News room in New York whenever events of utmost significance demand the intensive nationwide coverage of the news the American people have come to expect from the National Broadcasting Company."

The home of the chime was the RCA building in NYC, room 404, the *News and Special Event's Room.*

I received a tape of a documentary produced by a radio station in Washington D.C., of NBC news broadcasts of the 1944 D-Day invasion of Europe. At one point the chimes using the fourth chime were heard. In reading what Rod Phillips wrote in his article on the history of the chimes where he states that the fourth chime was a second strike of the "C" note, I assumed that the fourth chime sequence would be G-E-C-C. I was surprised at what I heard on the tape. The sequence of the notes was B-D-G-G, in the key of G. If you transpose this sequence to the key of C, they become E-G-C-C. As stated in an earlier paragraph the note arrangement of E-G-C are the notes as originally used by radio station WSB, and the first three notes of the World War I song "Over There."

Why did NBC use that sequence for the fourth chime? Was there some patriotic reason because of the war song, or did it just sound better than G-E-C-C? Why was it sounded in the key of G instead of the key of C? Perhaps they wanted a different sequence and tone that would not be confused with the so familiar G-E-C notes and would be more likely to catch the listener's attention.

At the end of the fourth chime there are four "throb like" sounds, similar to an echo, as if the last note did not end properly. My first thought on hearing this was that it was possibly a network problem of some sort creating this throb-like echo. However, in the book *The Fourth Chime* we read, "But at *3:18 am*, again, the four chimes were sounded...followed a second later by the familiar throb of the coded V for Victory...the prearranged H-Hour cue."

The letter V in Morse code is three dots and a dash, or as those who are proficient in Morse code would say "dit, dit, dit, dah." Listening to the four throbs, they are all of the same duration which one could also interpret as "dit, dit, dit, dit"...Morse code for the letter H. So the question is, do these four throbs represent the letter V for Victory as the book states, or possibly the letter H for the "prearranged H-Hour cue"? Either way, it was definiately a coded signal as part of the fourth chime alert.

In 1950, NBC filed with the U. S. Patent Office to make the chimes a registered service mark, the first such audible service mark to be filed with that office.

NBC discontinued the use of the chimes in 1971. In November of 1976, however, the network began using the chimes once again following all broadcasts in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the network.

The NBC radio network was sold to Westwood One in 1987, and today the NBC radio network no longer exists.

The chimes haven't been heard on the radio in a number of years and are not likely to be heard there again except perhaps as a part of an old-time radio program broadcast...and so another piece of radio history fades into the past. The NBC Television network occasionally uses musical variations of the chimes at the top of the hour and some affiliate stations sound the chimes during local news and weather broadcasts.

I received an e-mail from an engineer at NBC in New York City regarding the Rangertone electronic chimes machine. Sometime in 1977, the last of the Rangertone chimes machine was found in the trash bin and was rescued by one of the engineers. The machine was restored to working order and is now in the NBC engineering department *model shop*. The unit was designed to be rack mounted and is approximately 15 inches high and 15 inches deep.

It seems that today few companies and corporations know or care little about their history and how they got to where they are today. I am glad the engineer at NBC had the foresight to rescue the chimes machine. The chimes were such a familiar part of radio and were, and possibly still are, one of the most recognized sound trademarks in the world. It is good to know that this important part of NBC network history has been reclaimed. ■

NOTE-- For expanded information about the NBC chimes, including sources and references pertaining to this article, as well as a collection of sound clips, including some of the earliest recordings of the chimes, and musical variations of the chimes used on NBC-TV, visit Bill Harris' internet website:
www.flash.net/~billhar/chimes.htm

THE MUSIC OF THE CHIMES

There have been many songs written about the chimes and even concerts performed around the famous three notes. For the 25th anniversary of NBC in 1951, a tribute to the chimes was written by Meredith Willson, The Three Chimes of Silver. --B.H.

YOUR VERY OWN SET OF NBC CHIMES

In 1938 one could order their very own set of NBC hand chimes. These were sold as promotional items by RCA/NBC. This was a three bar chime with the note bars G-E-C mounted in that order above sound tubes with N-B-C stamped on the bars and were painted brown. A 1938 issue of the RCA magazine LISTEN contained an advertisement for the chimes. It is important to note that these chimes were simply promotional items and were never used to sound the chimes over the air. The tone of these chimes is quite "tinny" compared to the Deagan hand chimes or the electronic chimes.

NBC presented sets of these promotional chimes to various railroads to be used as a dinner chime to signal when the dining car was open for service. --B.H.

Jack Webb's *Dragnet* Changed Cop Drama History

BY RANDALL G. MIELKE

Dum-de-dum-dum.

The first four notes of this theme music by Walter Schumann will forever be seared into television viewers' and radio listeners' memories. After the introductory music came a quiet, clipped monotone voice:

This is the city. Los Angeles, California. I work here. I carry a badge.

RANDALL G. MIELKE COLLECTION

The voice was that of Jack Webb, a powerhouse of a writer, producer, actor, and director who was playing Sergeant Joe Friday, a hard-working Los Angeles cop who seemed to have no personal life and no interests other than bringing criminals to justice.

Dragnet was a show that would change the face of police drama and, in some fashion, the program affected every crime show that followed it. It all began on radio.

In the late 1940s Webb was heard in a number of radio programs, including *Johnny Modero, The Whistler,* and *This Is Your FBI.* When not on the radio, Webb appeared in motion pictures, some twelve films in all, including *He Walks By Night,* a semi-documentary play based on a case from the Los Angeles Police Department files. During the filming of the story, Webb, playing Lieutenant Lee, met Sergeant Marty Wynn, who had been assigned by the police department to give technical advice for the picture. Wynn's suggestion that someone should develop a radio program of documentary stories adapted from actual police cases gave Webb the idea for *Dragnet.*

With the cooperation of the Los Angeles Police Department Webb began to study police procedures, techniques, and terminology. He took the plots and characters for his program from department files, preparing stories that would authentically describe the work of the police department and its routine manner of investigating crime.

Dragnet made its debut on radio as a summer replacement over NBC in Los Angeles on June 3, 1949. The show proved so successful on radio that the producers decided to transfer it to television. On December 16, 1951, the *Chesterfield Sound-Off Time* program previewed *Dragnet.*

The show began its official TV run on January 3, 1952. Friday's partner in the preview was played by Barton Yarborough, of the radio series. He died suddenly of a heart attack a few days after the telecast. Several actors subsequently portrayed Friday's sidekick until Ben Alexander took over as Officer Frank Smith for the remainder of the seven-and-a-half year original television run. Alexander's character gave the show a touch of comic relief, offering counterpoint to Friday's matter-of-fact approach. By the time *Dragnet* left the air in 1959, Friday and Smith had earned promotions to lieutenant and sergeant, respectively.

The concept of *Dragnet,* as created by Webb, caught on immediately, and the TV show became an enormous hit. Part of the show's popularity was due to the fact that it stood out so sharply against the police-private eye caricatures then on the television airwaves.

Webb directed most of the episodes and also served as narrator. He stressed realism in *Dragnet* with police jargon, paperwork, and intense investigation characterizing the show. At the end of each episode, after the criminal was apprehended, an announcer would describe what happened at the subsequent trail and the severity of the sentence, stating:

The story you have just seen is true. The names have been changed to protect the innocent.


Jack Webb and Barton Yarborough


Ben Alexander and Jack Webb

Other aspects that marked *Dragnet's* popularity were the show's catch phrases and devices which became national bywords and were widely satirized. There was Webb's terse "My name's Friday — I'm a cop," and "Just the facts, ma'am"; the attention to the details of police work ("It was 3:55... we were working the day watch out of homicide division"); and, of course, the arresting theme music.

In 1967, after a hiatus of

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more than seven years, *Dragnet* returned to TV as a mid-season replacement show. It was titled *Dragnet '67* (and later *Dragnet '68,* etc.) to distinguish it from the reruns of the original series still being played on many stations. (Reruns were also known as *Badge 714,* after Friday's badge number.)

Webb again starred as Sergeant Joe Friday (how he lost his former rank was never explained) and Harry Morgan was featured as his partner, Officer Bill Gannon. Once again, as with the Officer Smith character, Morgan's character was often used for comic relief.

The format of the second incarnation was essentially the same as the original *Dragnet,* but there was stronger emphasis on issues like student dissidence and drug use.

Harry Morgan and Jack Webb

RANDALL G. MIELKE COLLECTION

The show seemed a bit heavy-handed, but still lasted two and a half seasons.

The success of the TV show even spawned a feature film. In 1987 *Saturday Night Live* alumnus Dan Aykroyd paid comic respect to the series in a theatrical film. The film starred Aykroyd as Joe Friday's nephew and Tom Hanks played his partner. Harry Morgan appeared as their supervisor, Captain Gannon.

Aykroyd's deliriously funny impersonation of Jack Webb carries most of the film and while Hanks adds some funny moments of his own, the contrived screenplay about political double-dealing in Los Angeles never gets off the ground.

Dragnet broke new ground in the area of crime drama and the formula has endured.

Today, nearly 50 years after its first TV broadcast, reruns of *Dragnet* can still be seen on many cable or local television stations. ■

Dan Aykroyd and Tom Hanks

RANDALL G. MIELKE COLLECTION

Remembering the Commuter Railroad

BY C. MACKEY

Artwork by Sharon Bartley

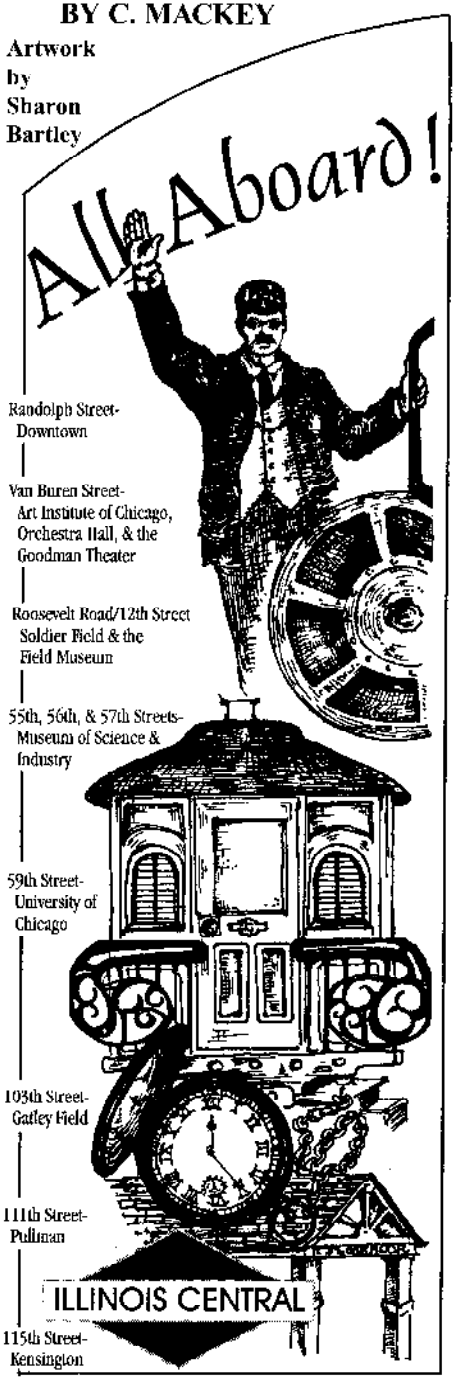
I've been riding the commuter train for years. In my youth it was called the Illinois Central Commuter Railroad—IC for short– and had the distinction of being Chicago's first real commuter train. It was then, and is now, the popular mode of transportation between Chicago's southern suburbs and its downtown. In 1856 when service began, it ran south to Hyde Park, a new suburb at the time. Over the years, the train continued to expand south as the metropolitan boundaries grew; and my needs did the same. As a child, I boarded at 115th Street; and today my ride begins at 193rd Street.

I never really thought about my history with the IC until the other day when I left my book at home and was forced to spend the forty-five minute ride gazing out the window. When I reached 115thy Street, my bored mind focused on familiar sights and was instantly filled with childhood memories and images.

Railroad employees, once again, sat behind barred windows in their tiny, dark offices under the viaducts. Communication was always difficult as trains rumbled overhead, but they answered questions, sold tickets, and waved customers on towards the tall, metal turnstile. Steep stairs led to a long wooden platform where passengers waited impatiently for the train, much as they do now.

A white line was painted about eighteen inches from each side of the platform, and Mom warned that it was dangerous to cross that line so, of course, I never did—when she was looking. I remember how courageous I felt as I inched my toe closer and closer to the line, into its middle, and fi-

C. Mackey is a graphics designer and free-lance writer from Flossmoor, Illinois.



nally, as I grew older and braver, over the line and into the forbidden area.

A long, open wooden shelter ran down the middle of the elevated platform, but it offered little protection from fierce winter winds or a scorching summer sun. Ragged advertising posters covered its walls, and both posters and walls were covered with grafliti. I caught myself wondering once more if Lulu minded that her phone number was carved into station walls all over the city.

Like the shelter, the train didn't protect riders from Chicago's weather. Its cars were heated in winter but usually were so hot that passengers were forced to open windows. In summer, since there was no air conditioning, the only relief from the temperature was, again, provided by open windows. Consequently, a fine dust covered everything: walls, seats, floors, and passengers.

I was fascinated by the yellow wicker seats on the train. They resembled benches but had adjustable backs allowing the conductor to move them to conform to the train's direction. Thus, no one ever rode backwards.

The train conductor always looked impressive in his navy blue uniform trimmed with gold braid and buttons. He'd step off the train at each stop, consult his pocket watch, and declare, "Train Downtown. Watch your step." He'd tip his hat to the ladies; and when everyone was safely onboard, he'd close the doors. The ring of his money changer and the sound of his punch continuously echoed throughout the train car as he collected the forty-cent fare and punched each ticket with innumerable holes. Small, white paper dots always littered the floor.

As a kid, I never tired of looking out the window as we rode from stop to stop; and last week, I recaptured those feelings. There are changes, of course. The doors of energetic companies like R.R. Donnelley and Pullman are long closed, and communities reflect the effects of poverty or renovation. But Chicago's neighborhoods look much as they did years ago. Tree-lined streets divide neat rows of brick homes, wooden flats, and family businesses. Fenced-in back yards for kids and front porches to welcome neighbors are common. Every block or so, a church steeple rises over the roof tops, usually a beacon for an ethnic group rather than a religious sect. Tall apartment buildings caught my attention, too; and I imagined, as I had as a child, scurrying down their metal fire escapes which zigzag down their sides.

The most enjoyable part of my commute that morning, however, was the trip back to the past, my past. Since I've ridden the IC most of my life, many of its stops triggered specific memories from my youth. The 111th Street Station unveiled images of Junior Achievement meetings which were held in the old Pullman shops. It was curious to roam their large, empty rooms where men had built huge train cars and where we constructed simple items to sell to gain first-hand business experience.

Gately Field at the 103rd Street stop brought many enjoyable events to mind. Christian Fenger Public High School, my school, played its football games there. I recall walking between it and the field with my friends, all of us dressed in school colors and shouting about our invincible athletes. You weren't considered a true supporter of the team unless you left the stadium hoarse from cheering for victory.

Further down the IC line still stands Mt. Carmel Catholic High School, an arch rival of Fenger. I automatically frowned as its brown and white sign came into view. Many City Championship games were played between the two schools; and to my way of thinking, the title wasn't always won by the right team. I guess some strong feelings don't ease with time.

Next I spotted the wide, manicured lawns of the Midway which run perpendicular to 59th Street and the University of Chicago. Its stately Gothic buildings house one of the most respected universities in the world. Towering above all looms the spire of Rockefeller Chapel, very near my summer workplace during my college years.

Fifty-seventh Street is the exit for The Museum of Science and Industry, my favorite museum. It was the first to introduce interactive exhibits, including tours of a World War II German submarine and a coal mine, futuristic inventions called television and phone-o-vision, and a mock barnyard where city kids could pet lambs and bunnies and watch chicks hatch.

The columns of Soldier Field and a rickety wooden trestle, now re-enforced with steel, still hover over the 12th Street/ Roosevelt Road Station. The first is the setting for City Championship football contests, and the latter leads over the tracks to the Field Museum. Images of dinosaur bones, huge elephants, mummies, and Indian artifacts were awakened.

Van Buren Street, departure point for Orchestra Hall and the Art Institute is next. Both were reluctantly visited at my mom's insistence as a child and now are frequented by choice. The Goodman Theater is also reached from Van Buren, and this recollection brought a grin to my face as I relived my first live stage production. The play began as two ominous witches parted the curtains, scuttled forth, and snarled and shrieked at one another. I responded quickly with an announcement to the entire audience that I wanted to go home.

"Randolph Street. Far as we go!" blared the train's loudspeaker and interrupted my ride through the past.

"Randolph Street," I thought, "ornate theaters featuring first-run movies and lavish stageplays, marvelous restaurants and world-famous pizzerias, famed department stores stocked with goods from all over the world, and gateway to the Loop for the southsider."

I rose to exit the train as I had numerous times in the past; but this time, I sensed a new appreciation for the role the commuter rail system has played in my life. ■

Our Readers Write

WE GET LETTERS

ST. CHARLES, IL-- Not too many years ago I barely knew what "old time radio" was (I grew up with TV). Thanks to *Those Were The Days* I'm now a regular listener who enjoys the radio shows so much that I've begun quite a tape collection of my own. Thanks for sharing so much with all of us! --**JOANN BENNETT**

BENSENVILLE, IL- It is with pleasure that I once again renew my subscription. I am proud to say I am a charter subscriber and have maintained a complete library of every newsletter, which I refer to regularly. Needless to say I am also a compulsive "tape worm" of every old radio show I can find. So, Chuck, please accept not only this renewal, but the thanks of a 69-year-old devotee of your broadcasts. You keep me young. Those truly were the good old days and still are, due to your enthusiastic broadcasts. Many thanks to you, Ken Alexander, Karl Pearson and your entire crew. --**DON ANDERSON**

ARIZONA-- Someone wrote in to complain about what she thought was too much big band music, which she claimed was available everywhere. Everywhere but the modern airwaves! You can surf the dial out here a long time before you'lll find the good old big band stuff, which was certainly a big part of OTR. You never did overdo the big bands, as I recall. There's something for everyone on your program. I do not miss the cold winters of Chicago, but I do miss

MORE LETTERS

radio back there! Try as I have, I have not been able to get any big band stuff. Sure do like getting the *Nostalgia Digest.* There ought to be some award the mayor could give out periodically to people like you, who have brought so much culture to the area; perhaps a special city sticker that would exempt you from paying parking meters! **--FRANK HORN**

CHICAGO-- Congratulations on the 25th anniversary of *Nostalgia Digest.* It sure has brought back memories and is a real saver. **--NORMAN ROSS**

EVANSTON, IL-- Congratulations on achieving 1,500 programs (Aug. 7,1999). All the accolades you have received are well deserved. You must have had a vision of the future in the 1970s when you started recording interviews with the people involved in all the facets of radio broadcasting. Your "Speaking of Radio" segments over the years have provided a splendid insight into how radio was in the early days. **--LLOYD IDELMAN**

LISLE, IL-- It's difficult to imagine how empty Saturday afternoons would be without *TWTD* and *Nostalgia Digest.* To be reminded of happy memories of childhood adolescence and young adulthood (I'm 73) is pure joy. When I think back to 1948/49, I feel guilty having been one of those who jumped on the TV bandwagon and abandoned radio, contributing to the premature demise of that medium. Heartfelt thanks, Chuck, for keeping those golden days alive for a large, appreciative audience. Ken Alexander's first class written and verbal contributions are most welcome. I enjoyed a friendly chat with him one Saturday in your studio, reminiscing about his DJ days in the 1960s at that "easy listening" station. **--JOHN LASTOFKA**

CHICAGO-- While I have been a listener for some 20 years, I have only recently been a subscriber to the *Nostalgia Digest.* In the first several issues I have been very impressed with the level of writing the *Digest* carries and what appears to be careful editing of articles. "The Name's Tallulah, Dahling" by Bill Oates in the December/January issue is particularly well written and quite authoratative as the meticulous research done on Ms. Bankhead's professional life shines through the text. Similar remarks apply to many artices in the *Digest* and all of them bring a flood of memories of more civil times.

In a real sense those civil times the *Digest* and *TWTD* capture reflect a period of our cultural development which relied on the written and spoken word to carry on daily commerce, education, and entertainment with the occasional film and, less frequently, live theater constituting our visual diet. But the onslaught of television and video devices took but one generation to turn our country and much of the world into a visually driven society. We need to remember that this transformation happened once before when the highly literate Roman Empire fell and the ensuing Dark Ages were ruled by illiterate leaders who, like the respected Charlemange, were people who thought visually but could not read or write. Were it not for the Irish monks who protected, copied, and taught from Eruope's more important written texts, the Renaissance may have never occurred. So today the *Nostalgia Digest* and *TWTD* serve as our Irish monks by preserving and teaching us about radio history and about how life was in more civil and gentler times. With an eye on the *Digest* and an ear on the radio, I await the Second Renaissance. **--WILLIAM D. O'NEILL**

NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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←**ED HERLIHY**
was one of many favorite entertainers and personalities who died during the last year.
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