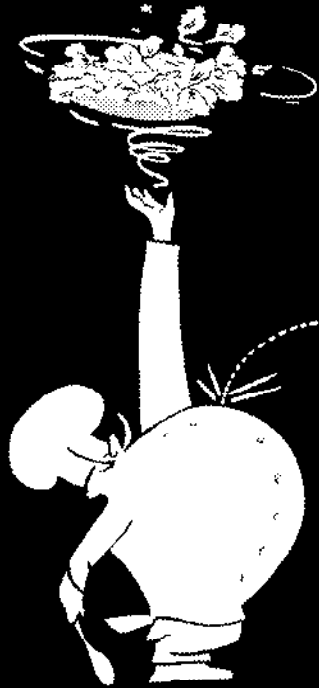


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# CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

BOOK TWENTY-EIGHT

CHAPTER THREE

APRIL/MAY 2002

## *Hello, Out There in Radioland!*

A funny thing happened during our *Those Were The Days* program Saturday, December 22, 2001.

Right in the middle of Bing Crosby's Christmas story, "The Small One," his program --and ours-- was cut off the air!

What happened?

As was subsequently reported, heavy winds toppled the WDCB antenna tower in DuPage County, knocking the station off the air for five days!

By mid-week, WDCB was back on the air with all of its programming intact but at greatly reduced power, broadcasting a 1,000 watt signal from a temporary tower 60 feet tall. The station had been transmitting a 5,000 watt signal from a 310 foot tower.

Currently, the broadcast range of the station from the temporary tower is estimated to be 12-15 miles.

A new tower is being erected and station officials indicated WDCB would be back to normal "around the end of February."

We hope our *Those Were The Days* listeners who have been unable to hear the program because of the temporarily reduced power will be patient. We hope to be "up and at 'em again" real soon.

In the meantime, it is said that it's an ill wind that doesn't blow some good.

Because of the collapsed tower, WDCB worked to expedite streaming audio on the Internet and, since the first of the year, all radio programming from the College of DuPage station --including, of course, *Those Were The Days* -- has been heard world wide at: [www.wdcb.org](http://www.wdcb.org)

**Now! World Wide on the Internet  
[www.wdcb.org](http://www.wdcb.org)**

So we're very happy to welcome back a great many listeners from across the country and around the world who had been tuning in on the web when we were on WNIB.

We're also pleased that our webcasting may assist *TWTD* listeners who were unable to hear our program after the switch to WDCB a year ago and during the current reduced-power situation.

Thanks so much for your support and understanding. And thanks for listening.

--Chuck Schaden

## MRS. TELEVISION

## Everyone Loves Lucy

BY CLAIR SCHULZ

♥ If a psychiatrist conducting a word-association test with a patient used the terms *tonic*, *grapes*, *footprints*, *chocolate*, *starch*, and *loving cup* and received the same four-letter response each time, the doctor might mutter, "This patient seems to have a fixation with someone named Lucy."

If having images of Lucille Ball caught in ludicrous situations on the brain is symptomatic of neurosis, most Americans are candidates for the couch because it is difficult to imagine a time when she has not been part of the national consciousness.

Lucille Desiree Ball, who first appeared on life's stage on August 6, 1911 in Jamestown, New York, gave one of her first acting performances as a toddler tied to a metal clothesline by her busy mother, who found the tot trying to con a milkman into releasing her. As Lucy grew older, she enjoyed playing fantasy games with an imaginary pal she called Sassafrassa, en-

*Clair Schulz is a free-lance writer, movie historian and collector from Muskego, Wisconsin.*



Lucille Ball

gaging in dress-up skits with friends, and watching Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin cavort on the screen.

From performing in impromptu plays in her neighborhood it was only a small step

for Lucille to becoming involved in theater at school where she organized the Dramatics Club. Regarding her work on *Charley's Aunt* she recalled that "I played the lead, directed it, sold the tickets, printed the posters, and hauled furniture to the school for scenery and props." Ball might have added that she also supplied the audience because

her mother, DeDe, always a strong supporter of her daughter's career, was out in front laughing louder than anyone else as she would do years later from her choice seat during the filming of *I Love Lucy*.

A sure sign of having acting fever settled upon Lucille every time she watched vaudeville performers and said to herself, "I want to be up there." At the tender age of fifteen, with the financial backing of DeDe, Lucy entered a dramatics school in New York City and, although it was a case of "too much, too soon" and she had to return home a few weeks later, she already

had the spunk of the title character in *Wildcat* which she would play many years later who, in her signature song, "Hey, Look Me Over," could have been singing Ball's credo: "When you're down and out, the only way is up."

The "Look out, world, here I come" part followed shortly thereafter when Lucille forsook

Jamestown and returned to the big city, determined to do any kind of work, be it dispensing sodas at a drugstore or modeling clothes, until her big break came along. Because Lucy bore a resemblance to Constance Bennett, she consented to have her hair peroxided, as if to adopt another head if one day cameras will shoot this fresh white face."

Working as a model for Hattie Carnegie, it was not long before that face, seen in an ad as a Chesterfield cigarette girl, led to an offer to go to Hollywood for a bit part as some of the pulchritude supporting Eddie Cantor in *Roman Scandals*. Ball only spoke two lines as a slave girl in the picture, one of a series of uncredited roles that had Lucy adapting the lyric the Ricardos and Mertzels would sing when they headed West by taking it one step further: "California, Here I Stay."

Lucille, never a talented dancer or singer, grew tired of strutting in showgirl parts or doubling for Constance Bennett at United Artists, found little improvement at Columbia, and finally settled upon a contract near the end of 1934 with RKO where she learned more from watching Irene Dunne and Katharine Hepburn act than she did



*Room Service* (1938)  
Lucille Ball with Harpo, Groucho and Chico Marx

PHOTOFFST

playing background scenery for Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in *Roberta* and *Top Hat*. By the time she appeared in *I Dream Too Much* in 1935 Ball had earned enough stripes to merit a name in the credits (Gwendolyn Diddle) and a spoken line worth remembering: "Culture is making my feet hurt."

The first film that foreshadowed the manic Lucy Ricardo, *That Girl from Paris*, found her skidding across a slick dance floor on soapy shoes. The painful pratfalls she took probably caused her to wonder, "Where is Constance Bennett when I need her to double for me?" The reviews called her "a find" and, for the first time, used the term that later became her occupational title: comedienne.

As Judy in *Stage Door*, the young lady with the ready quip who chose marriage over a career, Lucille could not be overlooked, but even a boarding-house reach left little to grab after noted scene-stealers Katharine Hepburn, Ginger Rogers, and Eve Arden were through feasting.

She moved up to second billing in *Go Chase Yourself* (1938) as the wife of Joe Penner and in two related films starring Jack Oakie, *The Affairs of Annabel* and *Annabel Takes a Tour*. The publicity stunts

that Oakie, as a zealous press agent, forced plucky Annabel Allison into included assuming the diverse roles of maid, aristocrat, and jailbird.

After appearing in seven films in 1938 including *Room Service*, a movie that wasted the talents of both the Marx Brothers and Lucille, Ball began to wonder if the groove she was in had become a rut. Her suspicion that she had become a tool of the studio was deepened when she was called upon to read for the part of Scarlett O'Hara before producer David Selznick. Knowing that she stood little chance of landing the coveted role in *Gone With the Wind*, Ball arrived wet from a rainstorm and, bolstered by a glass of brandy, delivered her test before Selznick in fine Lucy Ricardo style from her knees.

Lucy got back on her feet and continued to grind them out for RKO. In *Dance, Girl, Dance* (1940) she added some bumping to the grinding by performing an animated but limited striptease while warbling, "Mother, What Do I Do Now?" During the filming of this movie she met Desi Arnaz, a young Cuban who would be in her next picture, *Too Many Girls*, which, given his wandering eye, might have been an appropriate title for his autobiography.



*Too Many Girls* (1940)  
Lucille Ball and (see if you can find) Desi Arnaz

PHOTOFLIST

It was not exactly love at first sight because his first glimpse of Lucy came after her catfight on a set with Maurcen O'Hara in which she looked beaten and bedraggled, but within weeks the couple became fodder for Hollywood's gossip columnists and by November, 1940 they were married.

While Desi struggled to find an identity so he would not be known as Mr. Ball, Lucille battled for better parts in RKO features. *Look Who's Laughing* served as a showcase for radio's stellar comedy stars Edgar Bergen, Fibber McGee and Molly, and the Great Gildersleeve, but did not advance Ball's career a whit and *Valley of the Sun*, a dull western, almost sank it.

In *The Big Street* (1942) a Damon Runyon tale, she flourished in the emotional role of Gloria Lyons, a canny manipulator who selfishly used her paralysis to suit her own purposes. Ball considered this film, in which she received better reviews than co-star Henry Fonda, one of her favorites, perhaps because it validated her status as an actress.

The size of Lucille's contract with RKO and her dissatisfaction with parts she had been given made a switch to another studio inevitable so she welcomed an offer from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. For her first feature, *DuBarry Was a Lady*, she became a Technicolor redhead and stayed a technical redhead for the rest of her life. With salary in her pocket, she put some celery in her mouth and wrestled with a headdress not unlike the getup she donned in the "Lucy Gets in Pictures" episode of



*I Love Lucy* as she romped with Red Skelton, providing the comic highlight of the film.

But *Best Foot Forward*, a revision of the *Annabel* plots, showed anything but Lucille's best and in *Meet the People* audiences met the same Lucy playing another version of another actress whose career needed a boost. By this time Ball began to suspect that she was indeed playing herself.

Even though Lucy was seemingly ignored by the MGM brass who continued to place her in routine farc like *Two Smart People* and *Easy to Wed*, the critics were taking notice, calling her "a superb farceuse" and hailing the byplay of Ball and Keenan Wynn in the latter film as proof "that they are the funniest comic team on the screen just now — and by a wide margin."

By 1946 Lucille realized that MGM would continue to parade her flaming red hair in color musicals while dubbing her singing voice or else pair her in B+ comedies with supporting actors like Wynn and

William Gaxton so she decided to freelance. But lackluster pictures for Universal (*Lover Come Back*), United Artists (*Lured*), and Columbia (*Her Husband's Affairs*) should have convinced Lucy that in that medium she was likely going to be just that, medium: never egregious but never a star of the first magnitude.

A welcome change of pace for Lucy came in the form of an offer from producer Herbert Kenwith to star in the Edgar Rice play *Dream Girl*. In the title role of a day-dreaming bookstore owner whose vivid imagination carried her from one fictitious crises to another, Lucille blossomed in this production, earning praise for her ability to mix pathos and sharp-edged repartee. Her supreme accolade came from Rice himself who declared that, of all the productions he had seen of *Dream Girl*, "the only actress whose performance really delighted me was Lucille Ball."

Although *Dream Girl* played for just a few months on the West Coast, the spontaneity of live performances triggered a special gear in Lucille's mechanism that raised her to another level. In the summer of 1948 a vehicle came rolling up her driveway that provided the very ingredients she thrived on and which motion pictures had not offered: an audience and a role in which all action centered around her.

Ball, who had appeared on radio first in 1938 on Jack Haley's program and had also been heard on *Lux Radio Theatre* and *The Abbott and Costello Show*, accepted an offer to star in a comedy series tentatively titled *Mr. and Mrs. Cugat*, based on a book of the same name by Isabel Scott Rorick. During the growing pains of this situation comedy, three changes were made: Richard Denning replaced Lee Bowman as the male lead, the Cugats became Liz and George Cooper, and the title of the series became *My Favorite Husband*.

A young writing team of Madclyn Pugh

and Bob Carroll, Jr., mentored by radio veteran Jess Oppenheimer, developed a winning game plan that proved to be successful both on *My Favorite Husband* and later when they followed Lucy to television: give it to Ball and let her run with it. By putting Lucille in situations that built in absurdity and letting the gifted actress grow along with kooky Liz and later into loony Lucy, the writers were merely mining the lode of talent that had been untapped.

Liz Cooper, one half of the couple "who live together and like it," had her heart in the right place, usually on her sleeve, as she meddled in her husband's affairs. Her attempts to convince Rudolph Atterbury (Gale Gordon) to raise George's salary through a series of ruses portended the guises Lucy Ricardo would adopt to further her schemes on *I Love Lucy*, just as her hilarious efforts to teach Iris Atterbury (Bea Benaderet) how to drive and corral a runaway car that started out behind them, passed them, and then backed into their front bumper is an audio slapstick gem that works best on radio but which would not have been beyond the machinations of Lucy and Ethel.

Ball's skill at milking a situation for every possible laugh is apparent even when she could not be seen. On television she could puff out her cheeks and widen her eyes to indicate she had squeezed herself into an old dress that no longer fit her to convince George that she had not gained weight, but on radio she forced the words past her larynx in gasps while holding her breath lest the zipper give way.

In *My Favorite Husband* Ball also demonstrated she was mastering the art of varying her delivery to match her character's mood. If Liz felt upbeat, her tone glided toward giddy such as when she observed to Iris upon being passed by the Atterbury's automobile, "You drive much better when you're not in the car." When on the defen-



*My Favorite Husband* (1948-51)  
Lucille Ball and Richard Denning

sive, however, after Iris accused her of putting weight on the hips, Ball's voice assumed a note of dry sarcasm in a retort delivered with an air of finality: "I prefer to think of it as a little avoiddupois in the back of my lap."

Besides slamming the punch lines home, Lucy was developing her own distinctive bag of tricks. The cry, alligator tears of the first water, sometimes flowed out with a "You don't love me anymore" feeler, disappearing as soon as Liz/Lucy got her way or saw that the gambit had failed.

The "spider voice," a term employed to describe Ball's reaction as Little Miss Muffet after seeing a spider during a commercial, became Lucy's double take. The sound, which emerged from her lips in a "Yeeeoouugh," generally followed the extraction of her foot from her mouth, as in the scene at a posh restaurant where the waiter informed Liz that she had just selected from the French menu an order of "Closed on Monday."

Ball was already working on her curve

ball, a change of direction in mid-sentence executed frequently in the Ricardo apartment, while warming up in the bullpen of the Cooper's living room. After George suspected that a stogie found in an ashtray was planted to make him jealous Liz declared, "It was not a phony cigar. It was a real one and a real man was here and how did you find out it was a fake?"

Despite the moderate success of *My Favorite Husband*, Lucy's escapades in films made during this period, including *Miss Grant Takes Richmond* in which she mishandled everything from typewriters to jackhammers and *The Fuller Brush Girl* who got down and dirty in a smokestack and then came clean while stretched across some clotheslines, indicated that clearly she had to be seen to be fully appreciated.

Desi and Lucy, who had toured the country doing an act centered around her antics with a cello and her interruptions of his musical performances, decided to use their Desilu Productions to package a comedy series based upon the premise that Arnaz would play a Cuban singer and Lucy would be Lucy. William Frawley and Vivian Vance were brought in as neighbors Fred and Ethel Mertz to help stir the plots concocted by Pugh and Carroll.

Whatever the story was Lucy had to have her ham-handed fingers in it. Even if the title of the episode was "Ricky Loses His Temper" and Ricardo released one of his Spanish imprecations like "*Miraquetienecosalamujeresta!*," the cause of his outburst had to be one of Lucy's harebrained schemes.

*I Love Lucy* was not an immediate success, but within a month of its debut on October 15, 1951 most Americans who had televisions were tuning in their fuzzy sets to CBS on Mondays to find out what Lucy would do next.

For Lucille Ball life truly began at 40 as she adapted quickly to her new playground



Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz

by either refining her old shtick or adding new tricks to her bag of sight gags. She turned her plaintive cry into a laughable wail by crinkling up her face like a sponge and pushed across her spider voice by extruding her lips like a horse that had just eaten a sour apple. Her skills as a pantomimist, lauded most notably in the mirror routine with Harpo Marx performed in 1955, were actually on display almost from the beginning of the series in bits such as her open-mouth reactions to overheard tidbits and struggles with inanimate objects that seemed to have a life of their own like the yeasty loaf of bread which emerged from her oven like a battering ram.

By the end of the first season *I Love Lucy* had become the most popular program on TV. Lucy's pregnancy during the following year, far from hampering the show, was turned into the focal point of a number of memorable episodes.

One of the pleasures of early television comedies also became its chief disadvantage: long seasons of thirty or more episodes provided loads of chuckles but devoured lots of premises. If Lucy became

locked in a freezer in the spring, having her entrapped in handcuffs in the fall was still funny because of Ball's affinity for physical comedy but it may also have seemed a bit like *deja Lu*. Watching Lucy dismantle Fred and Ethel's flat in 1953 might have prompted viewers to ask, "Didn't she do something like that to the Ricardo's apartment last year?" (She did.)

After 100+ episodes of plopping Lucy in fine messes around New York, the writers put the show on the road to Hollywood and Europe during the fourth and fifth seasons. Though some of these programs are amusing, the focus of humor was often misdirected away from the real star to the guest celebrity of the week such as an unexpected witticism coming from John Wayne or the sight of William Holden being splattered with pastries. *I Love Lucy* still rode high atop the ratings, but the plots had shifted the emphasis from "What will Lucy do next?" to "Who will Lucy do it to next?"

It was not until the 1956-57 season, when the Ricardos moved to the country, that domestic dilemmas became the center of attention again. One sequence alone in "Lucy Does the Tango," in which Ricky

crushes Lucy and the eggs she had concealed on her person at the same time, became the visual equivalent of Jack Benny's response to "Your money or your life" in length of audience reaction, and clearly demonstrated that Ball had few rivals in taking physical comedy to its ultimate limit.

The arduous routine of doing a weekly television show took its toll on Lucy and Desi both physically and on their always-fragile marriage. From 1957 to 1960 they cut back to producing three to five one-hour specials per season that usually took them to places like Alaska where they met Red Skelton or to Sun Valley to complicate the life of Fernando Lamas.

By the time the final special aired on March 8, 1960 Lucy, who had tolerated Desi's private and public drunken displays and repetitive philandering for years and had first filed for divorce back in 1944 before reconciling, had been granted a degree ending two decades of rancorous sparring.

Never one to remain inactive long, Lucy quickly entered into projects such as movies with Bob Hope (*The Facts of Life* and *Critic's Choice*) and *Wildcat*. If hard work and enthusiasm assured success, *Wildcat* would have been a smash because Ball rehearsed exhaustively and threw her body into each performance, but musicals live and die on singing and dancing and no amount of mugging or gyrating could hide her deficiencies in both areas. When she virtually passed out one night on stage due to weight loss and

overexertion, the decision to close the Broadway show after 171 performances proved to be a graceful and merciful end to an embarrassing misuse of her abilities.

In 1962, after a short period of recuperation and a marriage to comedian Gary Morton who later became her producer, Lucy returned to the medium that was her lifeblood in

*The Lucy Show*. Vivian Vance and Gale Gordon added to the meriment of this series whose episode titles alone (e.g. "Lucy and Viv Put in a Shower," "Lucy and Viv Learn Judo," "Lucy is Kangaroo for a Day") bring back memories of riotous clowning by a woman in her fifties frolicking like a frisky teen. Reward for her antics came in the form of her second and third Emmys presented in 1967 and 1968.

In the fall of 1968 the show became *Here's Lucy*. Gordon changed from scowling Theodore Mooney to glowering Harrison Carter, and Desi Arnaz, Jr. and Lucie Arnaz joined the cast as children of their mother. Guest stars appeared with greater frequency in this version of *Lucy Faces Life*, but the funniest episodes continued to be those showing the havoc created by the red tornado at airports, drive-in movies, hospitals, laundries, ski lodges, etc.

When the end of the run came in March of 1974, *The Lucy Show* and *Here's Lucy*, with the same two main performers and minor changes in names and locales, had left a ratings legacy to be envied: nine consecutive years in the top ten followed by two more in the top fifteen. But when



*I Love Lucy* (1951-56)  
Ethel and Fred Mertz, Ricky and Lucy Ricardo

PHOTOFEST

*Here's Lucy* dropped out of the top twenty-five during the twelfth season, the show was not renewed in what may have been the completion of the housecleaning CBS had begun several years before with the cancellation of *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Green Acres*, and *Petticoat Junction*. Even though Lucy dwelt (or stumbled) in marble urban halls rather than tilled homespun soil, there was the perception in some circles that she belonged to the "wee doggies" school of humor that the network was trying to shed.

Whether Lucy dished out corn is debatable, but she certainly became the one to coax the blues out of the horn when she tackled the role of *Mame* for the screen in 1974 without ever managing to get her arms around the character or bring her down to earth. Ball's attempts to climb into *Mame's* eccentricity seemed as out of focus as the camera work employed to mask the imprints of time on her face. That a performer so innately endowed with charm could flounder in a flop devoid of that quality and which virtually sounded the death knell of movie musicals should have told Lucy that the old magic was gone and what was left was just old. ➔



*I Love Lucy* (1951-56)  
William Frawley, Lucille Ball, Vivian Vance, Desi Arnaz

PHOTOFEST



Ball ruefully accepted the semi-retirement that the public's rejection seemed to have forced her into, emerging occasionally for a special. She gave TV another shot as a homeless woman in the dramatic telefilm *Stone Pillow* (1985) which disappointed her fans and yet another series with Gale Gordon called *Life With Lucy* that expired in less than two months in 1986. The grim reality facing her at the age of 75 was that the only television in her future would be sitting before a set watching herself in reruns.

There was one last hurrah at the Academy Awards ceremony in March of 1989 when Ball and Bob Hope received a standing ovation. A month later she underwent an open-heart operation and on April 26 died from complications of that surgery.

Although Ball began to wonder during her last years if her public had abandoned her and if she might be forgotten, the obituaries which followed her death and the tributes that continue to this day indicate that her legacy is certain. A dominant force in popular culture and a ratings leader in three different decades, she was a Monday evening tradition in millions of homes. If Milton Berle was Mr. Television, there is little doubt who bears the distaff version of that title.

For those patients suffering from Lucycitis, the remedy is to take a dose of the tonic that has been bracing viewers for fifty years, the cure-all known as Lucylaughaminuteregimin. The best dispenser of that prescription is Lucille Ball herself for, thankfully, that doctor is always in and, somewhere in televisionland, she is always on. ■

*NOTE-- May, 2002 has been designated "Lucille Ball Month" on Those Were The Days. Every vintage program during May will feature a radio appearance by Lucille Ball. See pages 23 and 24.*

## A Two-Week Furlough

BY MICHAEL CAMPO

As a child I attended a Hull House camp called The Bowen Country Club, located in Waukegan, Illinois.

During the summer, groups of mothers and children spent two weeks at this beautiful camp filled with grass, flowers and trees. It was quite a welcome change from the Taylor Street area where we all lived.

Part of the staff of this camp was made up of former campers and, in 1942 or 1943, staff was hard to get. World War II had begun and all the young men were either in the service or doing other essential war work. It had gotten so bad that women were recruited as counselors for the cottages that housed the boys.

At this time, a former camper, Mike Garippo, whose nickname was *Superman*, received a two week furlough before going overseas to the war. Instead of spending his leave with his family or looking for girls in bars, Mike volunteered to come out to Camp Bowen and work as a counselor at the cottage that housed boys ages six to ten.

He felt that a male influence was important for boys at this young age. So he came to Waukegan to spend his furlough.

One of the main requirements for children to move from the "baby" cottage to the "children's" cottages was

*Michael Campo is a Nostalgia Digest subscriber from Wheaton, Illinois.*

the ability to be able to handle a knife and fork at the table. There were other requirements as well. I filled out those requirements at the age of five, so I was put into the cottage where Mike Garippo was acting counselor. All of the other kids in that cottage were older and bigger than I was.

One of the games that was played was called "Scalp Rush." It consisted of a dirt-filled bag that someone would hold and try to prevent the others from taking.

It was a rough and tumble game that involved a good deal of physical contact. It was played in an open field. Somehow, the other boys in the cottage thought that it would be a good idea to shove the "scalp" into the hands of me, the smallest one, and then all pile on top of me.

They did that and one or two thought that it would be an even better idea to shove my face into the dirt. They did that, too.

To this day, I can still feel the fear of not being able to breathe and of having all these people on top of me so that I couldn't move. I struggled and managed to lift my face a few times to gulp some air, but I was panicked and weakening fast.

Then, all of a sudden, I heard a voice yelling. The bodies on top of me started to get tossed aside. At last I could turn over on my back and breathe.

I opened my eyes and there was a giant standing over me. His back was to the sun so that I couldn't make out his features, but it looked like he had a halo around his head, from the sun.

It was Mike Garippo asking if I was okay. And, when I said that I was, he tore into the other boys, saying that they should have been ashamed of themselves for ganging up on the smallest one. He also had a few choice words for the other

two inexperienced counselors who had allowed it to happen. From then until the end of the camp period, he sort of looked after me.

While Mike was at camp, he wrote a camp song to the tune of "Bless Them All," a popular World War II song. It goes:

*Bless them all, bless them all,  
The long and the short and the tall.  
Bless all the campers who play all the day,  
Bless all the counselors who show them the way,  
For we're saying 'Have Fun' to them all,  
Swimming and playing baseball,  
No griping or fighting, nor any back-biting.  
So cheer up my lads, bless them all.*

Later that year we all got word that Mike Garippo was killed in action in the war. It hurts to this day. They say that war takes the best of what we have and in this case it was really true.

At every reunion, the campers and staff of the Bowen Country Club sing that song and Mike is remembered. To me at least, Mike Garippo was a perfect example of what American men are supposed to be.

He was strong, kind, and brave and he looked out for those weaker than himself. What more perfect example of a hero could you want?

And when I close my eyes, I can still see him: a giant with his back to the sun, wearing a halo.

*Many years later I worked as a counselor at the Bowen Country Club, and I can tell you that the smallest campers, and the timid ones, found an instant and fierce protector in me, for I was passing along the gift that I was given by my friend Mike Garippo.* ■

# Hollywood Radio Gossips

BY RICHARD W. O'DONNELL

Radio had three important gossips during its glory years. They were Jimmy Fidler, Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons. (Some may claim Walter Winchell should be added to that list, but he was New York based and covered just about any topic that interested him.)

All of these radio rumor spreaders were newspaper columnists. They also enjoyed lengthy careers on radio. They never hit it big on television. All three tried acting. All three didn't make it.

**Jimmy Fidler** tried the silent flicks in the twenties, didn't amount to much, and drifted into journalism where his gossip column enjoyed great success. In 1932 he tried radio and divided his time between NBC and CBS until Hollywood moguls, annoyed by his hard-hitting approach, convinced the networks to drop him. They did, in 1939.

Fidler didn't snuggle up to the studios. If a movie was terrible, he said so. If a star was not as bright as painted, he let the world know. In those days studios had press agents who promoted performers as saints. Sin was out of the question in Tinseltown.

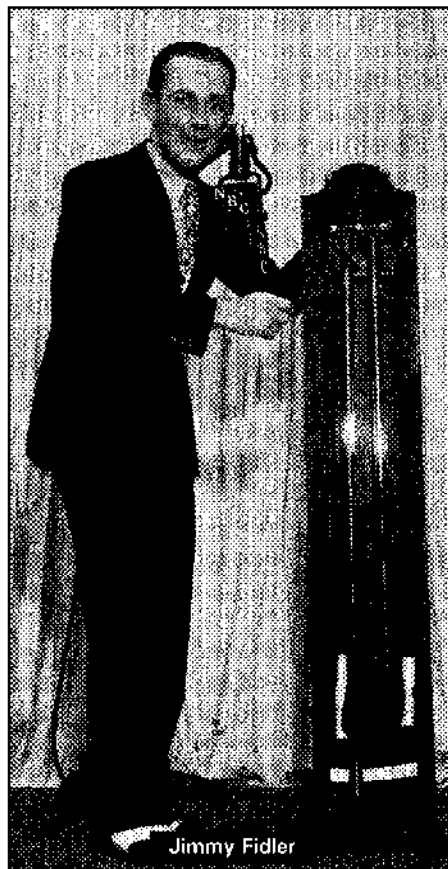
Fidler bounced back on the radio in 1941 and stayed on until 1951, when television stole his audience. He had enjoyed a long run and deserved it. He was one of those rare Hollywood writers who looked their gift horse in the eyes and told the truth. He kept busy with his newspaper columns until the mid-seventies, when he stepped aside. He had tried syndicating his radio show, but failed.

For the most part, these Hollywood gos-

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

---



Jimmy Fidler

sips achieved their greatest success in fifteen minute shows. Fidler's longest run was on ABC during the forties. He later switched to Mutual.

**Hedda Hopper** had tried films and didn't amount to much. Later on, the gossip writer tried soap operas on radio and got lost in the rinse. What came next? She tried a local talk show and finally found a home. That led to her return to network radio. In 1938, on CBS, she launched *The Hedda Hopper Show*. Her ratings were not tremendous, but were high enough to keep her on the airwaves until 1951. Along the



Hedda Hopper

way she did a five-minute chat show with Hollywood's big names. Gossip was in short supply on these broadcasts, but the stars and their films got plugs galore.

Hopper, the mother of actor William Hopper (who achieved fame as Paul Drake on the *Perry Mason* TV show), was famous for her crazy hats.

Hedda was frank when spilling the gossip beans. She did not duck and she stepped on quite a few toes. But, to her credit, it must be admitted she was quick to confess her mistakes, when she made them, and did her best to make amends on the air.

The columnist claimed she dug up her own news and she probably did. She was invited to just about every worthwhile happening, or party, Hollywood had in those days.

Unlike her colleagues, Hedda did not start her gossiping in the newspapers. She started out in radio and was so successful in programs on both CBS and NBC during her airwaves career, she soon was a nationally syndicated newspaper columnist.

**Louella Parsons** had a style all her own. She gushed and came over the radio as



Louella Parsons

sweet as honey. If you listened closely, you could almost hear the stuff dripping. But she was known to drip venom, too.

Louella did try her hand at acting, but she was meant to be a Hollywood gossip. During the town's heydays she was probably the best known film industry chronicler in the land. She worked for the Hearst newspapers.

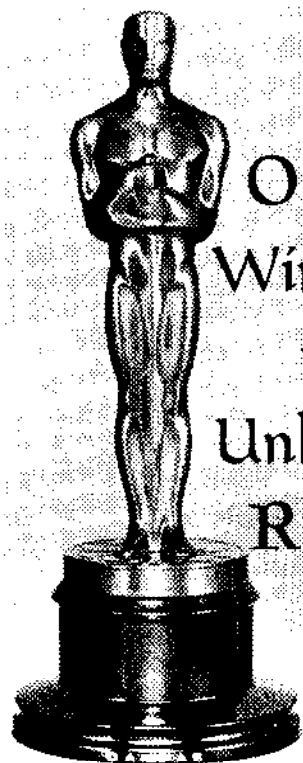
On radio, she was featured on two dramatic series in the 1930s: *Hollywood Hotel*, which was very successful, and *Hollywood Premiere*, which didn't amount to much.

Then she struck gold. In 1945 she was signed by Jergens Lotion to do a fifteen-minute show on Sunday nights, following Walter Winchell on ABC. Jergens also sponsored Winchell, who had spectacular ratings. For seven years, Louella had a steady audience made up of listeners who tuned in to hear Winchell and stayed for Parsons.

The era of those Hollywood radio gossips is gone now and we will probably never see their likes again. ■

*NOTE-- Tune in TWTD April 20 to hear these Hollywood Radio Gossips.*





# Oscar® Winners in Unlikely Roles

PHOTOFEST

BY RANDALL G. MIELKE

Some Oscar winners at the Academy Award ceremonies are not too surprising, like John Wayne winning Best Actor honors for the 1969 western *True Grit* or Liza Minnelli receiving the Best Actress award in 1972 for her role in the musical *Cabaret*. But other actors and actresses have won Oscars for roles that seem a bit unlikely.

A star like James Cagney, for example, will always be remembered for his tough-guy gangster roles in films like *The Public Enemy* (1931) or

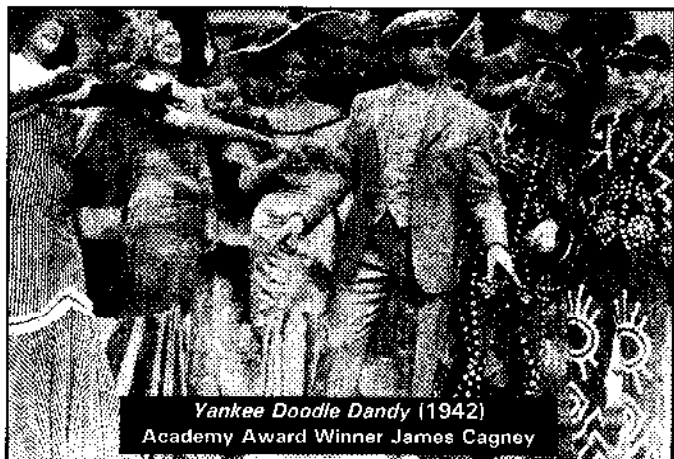
*White Heat* (1949), but he won his only Oscar by portraying song and dance man George M. Cohan in the 1942 film *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.

Cagney's presence on screen had proved perfect for the hot genre of the early 1930s, the gangster movie. As a rising young actor, he worked hard, long hours for Warner Bros. until he finally made his name in *The Public Enemy* with the famous scene in which he shoves a grapefruit into the face of his moll (Mae Clarke).

But despite his appearance in early gangster films, Cagney needed little preparation for the role of George M. Cohan. He had launched his career in vaudeville and appeared in numerous shows on Broadway before breaking into films, so he had a sense of what Cohan was all about. In addition, Cagney was an expert mimic who could easily imitate gestures, dialects, and individual quirks. He remembered Cohan from the stage and viewed a film Cohan had made which gave Cagney something to copy.

The performance was a tour-de-force. As Cohan, Cagney staggered the critics and moviegoers who previously had regarded him as little more than a crude movie gangster type.

Another gangster type who won an Os-



*Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942)  
Academy Award Winner James Cagney

R. MIELKE COLLECTION



*The African Queen* (1951)  
Academy Award Winner Humphrey Bogart with Katharine Hepburn

PHOTOFEST

car for a non-gangster role was Humphrey Bogart. In one of Bogart's early films he portrayed tough-guy Duke Mantee in *The Petrified Forest* (1936). He went on to play gangster types in *Dead End* (1937) and *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938) before he took on good-guy roles in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and *Casablanca* (1942). In 1951 he captured the Best Actor Oscar for his role of Charlie Allnut in *The African Queen*, opposite Katharine Hepburn.

*The African Queen* is set in central Africa during World War I and is the story of an English missionary and spinster, Rose Sayer (Hepburn), who is forced to flee her mission after German troops destroy the village. A Canadian supplier, Charlie Allnut (Bogart), offers to take her down river to civilization in his little river steamer named *The African Queen*. The contrast in their personalities (Rose is a very proper English missionary and Charlie is a scruffy, gin-drinking seaman) is the basis of the film, and Bogart played his part to perfection.

Perfection in dance was something for which Ginger Rogers will forever be remembered, especially when teamed with Fred Astaire in the musical pictures they

made together. Yet Rogers won her only Oscar in a dramatic role as the title character in *Kitty Foyle* (1940).

By 1940, Rogers had been making films for almost ten years, including *Top Hat* (1935) and *Shall We Dance* (1937) with Astaire, and the studio executives at RKO thought of her only in terms of musicals. But she did not want to be

pigeon-holed as only a singing and dancing girl. She wanted to expand her range. She got the chance with *Kitty Foyle*.

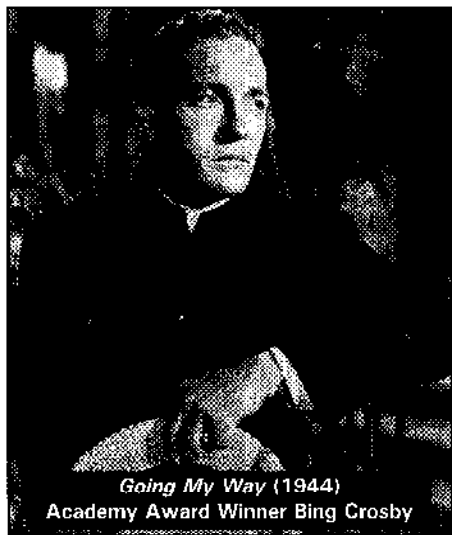
*Kitty Foyle* is the story of a hard-working white-collar girl from a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania low, middle-class family, who meets and falls in love with a young socialite, but his family is against her. Rogers breathed life into the character of the poor Irish working girl, and won an Oscar in the process.

Another musical star who won an Oscar



*Kitty Foyle* (1940)  
Academy Award Winner Ginger Rogers

PHOTOFEST



*Going My Way* (1944)  
Academy Award Winner Bing Crosby

in a non-musical role was Bing Crosby. Better known for films like *Holiday Inn* (1942) or *White Christmas* (1954), Crosby won his only Oscar for his portrayal of a priest in *Going My Way* (1944).

But many Paramount studio executives had doubts about Crosby playing Father Chuck O'Mally in the film. They could not see their singing star in a religious role. Crosby, too, had his doubts, telling director Leo McCarey that the church wouldn't stand for him as a priest since he was a singer. McCarey disagreed and in the end, Crosby played the easy-going priest with the charm and understanding that audiences adored.

At the other end of the spectrum lies Yul Brynner, a non-musical star who won an Oscar for his role in a musical.

Brynner, remembered as the strong, quiet gunslinger in *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), won his only Oscar as the King in the musical *The King and I* (1956). Like Cagney, Brynner was prepared for the film role, since he had already played the part on Broadway for several years.

Brynner made the transition from stage to screen with ease, playing the complex monarch perfectly. Brynner was never

known as a great singer, but he made his way admirably through a couple of meditative songs in the film. Instead, his performance was rooted in his presence: his eloquent fingers punctuated his commands and his controlled movements demanded respect.

Respect is something that Grace Kelly was demanding in her Oscar-winning role in *The Country Girl* (1954). Kelly, who would later in her life become Princess Grace of Monaco, was probably best known for her roles of elegance and sophistication in films such as Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) and Hitchcock's *To Catch a Thief* (1955).

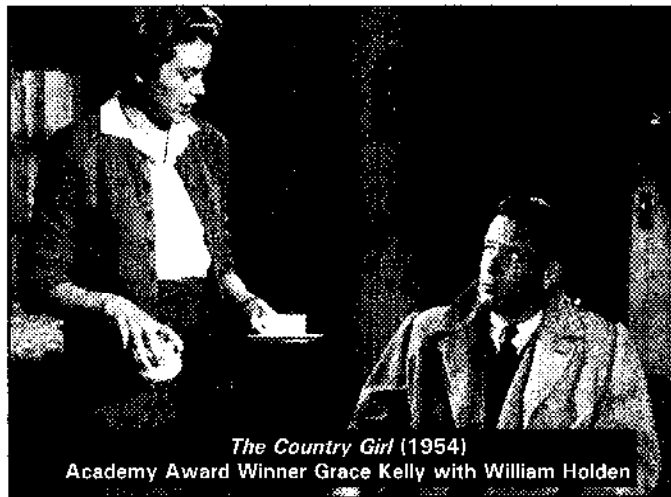
But in 1954 she portrayed Georgie, the drab, unhappy wife of Frank Elgin (Bing Crosby), an alcoholic former matinee idol making a comeback, in Paramount's *The Country Girl*. William Holden plays theatrical director Bernie Dodd who believes Elgin's problems are caused by his wife and tries to get Elgin away from her but, in the process, falls in love with her. In the end, she remains faithful to Elgin.

Kelly knew that Georgie Elgin was the role of a lifetime for her. In other roles she had relied heavily on her beauty to portray



*The King and I* (1956)  
Academy Award Winner Yul Brynner

R. MIELKE COLLECTION



*The Country Girl* (1954)  
Academy Award Winner Grace Kelly with William Holden

PHOTOFEEST

characters in the films. But for this part, Kelly downplayed her looks and turned in an admirable performance, winning an Academy Award for Best Actress in the process.

Another performer who was known for his good looks was Clark Gable. Gable, probably best remembered as Rhett Butler in *Gone With the Wind* (1939), won his only Oscar in the comedic film *It Happened One Night* (1934).

*It Happened One Night* was based on a story called "Night Bus," and director Frank Capra's original choice for the lead role was Robert Montgomery. The multitude of bus scenes may have affected Montgomery's decision not to do the picture. Clark Gable, on loan to Columbia from Louis B. Mayer at MGM, was reluctant to undertake the part for the same reason; riding on buses did not seem to Gable compatible with his

image as a screen heart throb. Still, Gable agreed to do the film and he won his only Oscar along the way.

*It Happened One Night*, about a cynical reporter on the trail of a runaway heiress, was mostly fluff, but Gable seemed to excel. Capra believed that Gable was playing himself more than he did in any other

film. Capra felt that the clowning, boyish, roguish he-man in the film was the real Gable.

As impressive as these stars were in their oft-repeated roles, they won Oscars for characterizations that were far different than the roles they played more frequently. It may be that the fact that they stretched their talent is the very reason that they succeeded. ■

*Randall G. Mielke of Aurora, Illinois is an author and free-lance writer.*



*It Happened One Night* (1934)  
Academy Award Winner Clark Gable with Claudette Colbert

PHOTOFEEST

# A Star for Guy Williams

BY JO LEWINSKI

On August 2, 2001 on Hollywood Boulevard, Guy Williams was awarded a posthumous star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Guy Williams, for many of my generation, is the "real" Zorro. He was our Zorro in 1957 through 1959, an all too short time.

Do you remember Guy Williams? He was Professor Robinson in the TV version of *Lost in Space*. He was the young policeman who shot the werewolf in the movie, *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*. The lead role of the werewolf was played by a very young Michael Landon. But what Guy Williams is best remembered for was the role he seemed born to play.

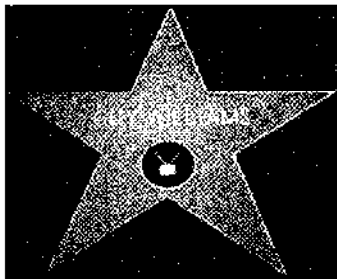
In 1956 the role call went out. Walt Disney was looking for a young unknown actor to recreate a role that had previously been played by Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. and Tyrone Power. Walt Disney was searching for a new Zorro.

Over a hundred young actors tried out for the role, among them Dennis Weaver. The wife of one of the actors who tried out for the role but did not get it said, "Oh, but when you saw Guy, you just knew he was Zorro." And indeed, in 1957 when he first came riding out of the night when the full moon was bright, we all knew he was the real Zorro.

From the top of his dark, wavy haired head, to the thin moustache and dazzling smile, to the broad shoulders, thin waist and 6 foot 3 inch frame, Guy Williams was Zorro. Not only were his dark good looks in his favor, but he could fence and ride a horse.

Born Armando Catalano of Italian parents in 1924, young Armando was taught by his father to fence. It did not take too

*Jo Lewinski is a free-lance writer and Zorro fan from Glen Ellyn, Illinois*



JO LEWINSKI PHOTO

long for the Disney people to make up their minds about this young actor. Thirty-three year old Guy Williams, after years of hard work and bit parts, became an overnight sensation. Children everywhere began carving Zs in midair and unfortunately, sometimes on walls and Guy Williams' own car.

I remember those days of watching Zorro in 1957. My family lived on the third floor in a big apartment building on Ainslie and Broadway in Uptown Chicago.

We had one TV in the living room which we all watched together. The console television was lovingly polished and yes, it did have a long, black ceramic panther perpetually stalking its unseen prey on top of the console. In my family we each had our appointed spots to view the TV. My proper place on Thursday night was on the floor with my knees hugged up to my chest. I fixed my gaze on the black and white screen and waited for that wonderful Zorro theme.

Everyone and everything was in its proper place in those days. There was one phone and that was in the kitchen attached to its cord. No one ever had to look for the phone. To change the heat we turned a little wheel on the old crackled radiators. To change a channel someone got up and turned a knob. But no one changed the channel when Zorro was on. Even my mother, who had little patience for TV,

found something to do in the living room for that half hour when Diego strode by in one of his well-fitted light color suits. I used to think my mother was in love with Zorro's black stallion, Tornado, just as I was at the time.

Things were as they should be when I was a child, but things inevitably change. Families move apart and parents depart. One sleepless night not long ago I rediscovered that old program. In flipping channels with my super-duper palm pilot of a remote control suddenly there was Don Diego smiling at me in black and white. Zorro back from the past. Suddenly I remembered it all. The family back where it was, all of us in our proper places and Tornado once again racing the wind. In this changing, shifting life there was Zorro to the rescue.

I began to wonder where Guy Williams was. I wondered if he was enjoying the fruits of his celebrity, living a rich full life. I wanted to know that there was more to life than what my mother was now going through in the nursing home. Not finding anything in books about him, I taught myself how to travel the Internet and there I found information and lo and behold, other people interested in that 40 year old program and Guy Williams.

These fans formed cyberspace friendships and now many of us have met. In a way we were like a little abstract family, sharing common experiences, remembering, laughing, looking back and looking forward.

We also worked together for a common goal. Along with Guy's two children and his wife, we helped to win Guy Williams the recognition we all felt he deserved, a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

On August 2nd of last year, a crowd gathered around the red carpet that surrounded the covered star. A silken cord held by Guy's son was pulled to reveal the



Guy Williams as Zorro

PHOTO:LSI

shiny star on Hollywood Blvd. Actors who had been in the Zorro series, politicians, photographers and fans from all over the States from Hawaii to Rhode Island and all over the world including France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Argentina gathered around and cheered the unveiling.

Afterwards at a reception, the stars and stuntmen met again, some of them for the first time in 40 years. Everyone there knew that this day was for Guy Williams but what surprised many of the actors who had been in the series was how well we all remembered them. One actor, who is now 80 years old said, with his eyes welling with tears, "I can't believe this. I can't believe that you remember me so well."

We gathered together to remember Guy Williams and all who were a part of his success. We celebrated our memories on a weekend when the full moon was bright.

*Guy Williams died in 1989. After the Zorro series he made two movies and reprised his role as Zorro in many public appearances. He led a quiet, private life filled with the music he loved, good wine and good friends - not entirely unlike Don Diego might have lived.*



Chuck Schaden's

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WDCB • 90.9 FM • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

APRIL 2002

## SATURDAY, APRIL 6

**HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE** (5-26-49) "The Barker" starring Charles Bickford in a story about a familiar slice of American life: the carnival. Cast includes Lurene Tuttle and Gloria Blondell. James Hilton hosts. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (29 min)

**MY FRIEND IRMA** (2-24-52) Marie Wilson stars as Irma Peterson with Cathy Lewis as her roommate Jane Stacy. Irma loses the friendship ring given to her by boyfriend Al. Cast includes Hans Conried, John Brown, Alan Reed. Ennds Chlorophyll Tablets, CBS. (29 min)

**LUX RADIO THEATRE** (10-7-40) "Wings of the Navy" starring George Brent, Olivia deHavilland, and John Payne in a story of pilots being trained for combat as brothers compete for the same girl. Cecil B. De Mille hosts. Cast features Lou Merrill, Gale Gordon, Earle Ross, Wally Maher. Lux Soap, CBS. (22 min & 14 min & 22 min)

**LET GEORGE DO IT** (3-5-51) "The Public Eye" starring Robert Bailey as George Valentine, private detective with Virginia Gregg as his secretary, Brooksie. A woman hires Valentine to protect her husband from a blackmail scheme. Cast: Herb Butterfield, William Conrad. Standard Oil of California, MBS. (30 min)

**LIFEBUOY SHOW** (10-18-38) Al Jolson stars with Parkyakarkus and Martha Raye, plus guests Marie Wilson and Charles Butterworth. Charlie and Marie join Al and Parky in the sketch, "Nightmare on the Yukon." Jolie sings "When Day is Done." Lifebuoy Soap, CBS. (29 min) *Read the article about Parkyakarkus on page 37.*

## SATURDAY, APRIL 13

**STOP THE MUSIC** (3-21-48) Bert Parks stars in the premiere broadcast of the give-away series where listeners are called to identify musical tunes for big money. Songs by Kay Armen, Dick Brown, Harry Salter and the orchestra. *This is the program that caused Fred Allen so much trouble, garnering high ratings and stealing much of his audience.* Sustaining, ABC. (12 min & 15 min & 13 min & 18 min)

**ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET** (1-9-49) Harriet is concerned about David and Ricky's obsession with sports heroes. Ozzie and Harriet Nelson as themselves; Tommy Bernard and Henry Blair as David and Ricky; John Brown as neighbor Thornberry. International Silver Co., NBC. (29 min)

**SUSPENSE** (11-23-50) "Going, Going, Gone" starring Ozzie and Harriet Nelson as a couple who spend \$3 to buy a locked trunk at an auction only to find that it contains valuable jewelry. Supporting cast includes Joe Kearns, Herb Butterfield, Howard McNear. Harlow Wilcox announces. AutoLite, CBS. (30 min)

**TEXACO TOWN** (1-3-37) Eddie Cantor stars with guest Al Jolson plus regulars Deanna Durbin, Harry (Parkyakarkus) Einstein, Sidney Fields, Jaques Renard and the orchestra. An-

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nouncer is Jimmy Wallington. Parky appears in a sketch about "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Cantor and Jolson trade song hits: Eddie sings "My Mammy," and Al sings "Margie." Texaco Oil Co., CBS. (30 min) *Read the article about Parkyakarkus on page 37.*

**MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS** (6-29-48) Margaret Whiting stars as Esther Smith in a preview of a proposed radio series based on the story by Sally Benson, set in St. Louis at the turn of the century. Not many in the Smith household at 5135 Kensington Avenue are happy with daughter Rose's choice of an escort to the dance. Cast: Gale Gordon, Betsy Blair, Norma Jean Nilsson, Bill Johnstone, Robert North. Sustaining, ABC. (29 min)

## SATURDAY, APRIL 20

**MEET CORLISS ARCHER** (9-16-56) Janet Waldo stars as Corliss, with Sam Edwards as Dexter and Fred Shields and Mary Jane Croft as Mr. and Mrs. Archer. Corliss decides that boyfriend Dexter should become a lawyer like her father. Sustaining, CBS. (25 min)

**JIMMY FIDLER** (10-19-47) The Hollywood gossip reporter with items about Loraine Day and Leo Durocher, Marlene Dietrich, Clark Gable, Milton Berle, Robert Mitchum, Mad Man Muntz, Gene Raymond and Jeanette MacDonald, Errol Flynn, Shirley Temple, Gene Kelly, and Fred Astaire. Arrid, MBS. (14 min) *Read the article on Hollywood gossip columnists on page 12.*

★ **MELODY ROUND-UP** (1940s) Lum and Abner star in a special program for military audiences with Louise Massey and the Westerners who present tunes requested by GI listeners. Louise and the Westerners sing "Here Comes the Navy" and "I Walk Alone Where Once We Wandered." Curt Massey, on the fiddle, offers "By Heck." AFRS. (15 min) *Read the article about Louise Massey and the Westerners on page 26.*

**LOUELLA PARSONS** (11-9-47) Broadcasting from New York City, the Hollywood reporter offers news and gossip from both coasts. Featured guest is actress Joan Crawford. Louella's news items concern Frank and Nancy

Sinatra, Lena Horne, Lana Turner and Tyrone Power, Charlie Spivak, and Humphrey Bogart. Woodbury Soap, ABC. (14 min)

**FRED ALLEN SHOW** (10-4-39) Actor Ned Sparks joins Fred in the first show of the 1939-40 season. Cast features Portland Hoffa, Minerva Pious, Charlie Cantor, John Brown, Harry Von Zell. The sponsor has sent a "radio program coordinator" to get Allen's new season under way with a modern show. The Mighty Allen Art Players present a spoof of the film "Stanley and Livingstone" called "Stanley and What's His Name?" Ipana, Sal Hepatica, NBC. (14 min & 17 min & 28 min)

★ **HEDDA HOPPER'S DIARY** (1945) The columnist offers a Hollywood story about Mickey Rooney and his World War II service. Syndicated. (4 min)

★ **HEDDA HOPPER'S DIARY** (1945) The Hollywood columnist presents a feature story about actor Lew Ayers and his service during WW II. Syndicated. (4 min)

**INNER SANCTUM** (11-12-45) "The Wailing Wall" starring Boris Karloff as a man who murders his wife and then seals her up in the wall of his home. Lipton Tea, CBS. (29 min)



## HOW TO REACH US!

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312/629-6030

This phone number operates only on Saturday between 1 and 5 pm, but it's the best way to reach us "in person." No machine here, a real person will answer.

**Nostalgia Digest/TWTD Office**  
847/965-7763

We're often here, but if a machine answers, don't hang up -- leave a message and we'll return your call as soon as possible.

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# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WDCB • 90.9 FM • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

APRIL 2002

## SATURDAY, APRIL 27 32nd ANNIVERSARY BROADCAST "Thanks for Listening"

As we celebrate our thirty-second broadcast anniversary today, we present an afternoon with *Fibber McGee and Molly*, one of radio's best-loved programs:

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (6-5-45) Jim and Marian Jordan star as the McGees of Wistful Vista. Mrs Carstairs (Bea Benaderet) is coming for tea and Molly wants the hall closet cleaned out, just in case she starts to snoop. Arthur Q. Brian is Doc Gamble. Shirley Mitchell is Alice Darling, Marlin Hurt is Beulah, with announcer Harlow Wilcox, King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Script by Don Quinn and Phil Leslie. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (30 min)  
**OLD TIME RADIO CLASSICS** (4-29-90) *Excerpts* from Chuck Schaden's two-hour Sunday evening broadcast featuring guest **Jim Jordan, Jr.**, the son of Marian and Jim Jordan who starred on radio as *Fibber McGee and Molly* from 1935-1959. Mr. Jordan, Jr. was in town to attend the opening of the *Fibber McGee and Molly* exhibit at the Museum of Broadcast Communications. In the excerpts selected, he talks about the exhibit, about growing up as the child of vaudeville and radio performers, tells anecdotes about his parents and the show, and talks with *Fibber*

*McGee* fans. Included is an excerpt from the 10-2-45 *McGee* program. Jim Jordan, Jr. died in 1998 at age 75. WBBM, Chicago. (Total time: 62 minutes, presented throughout the afternoon.)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (1945) Episode # 1 in the *Australian version* of the popular U. S. program. Using the same 6-5-45 script by Quinn and Leslie, with some minor changes in language, *Fibber* cleans out the hall *cupboard* in anticipation of the arrival of Mrs. Carstairs. No cast credits are given, but the Australian announcer is billed as "Reg" Wilcox. Sponsored by Johnson's Wax. (30 min)

**LUX RADIO THEATRE** (2-24-41) "The Whole Town's Talking" starring Jim and Marian Jordan as Wilbur and Jessie Jones. It's a case of mistaken identity when a police officer arrests a timid office worker who is a look-alike for a notorious gangster. Cast includes Paul Guilfoyle, Arthur Q. Brian, Ed Max. Cecil B. DeMille hosts. Announcer is Melville Ruick. Lux Soap, CBS. (60 min in 3 segments)



ART BY JERRY WARSHAW

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# MAY 2002: Lucille Ball Month on TWTD

## SATURDAY, MAY 4 RADIO LOVES LUCY— Part 1

**I LOVE LUCY** (2-27-52) Radio version of the popular TV series. **Lucille Ball**, Desi Arnaz, William Frawley and Vivian Vance play the Ricardos and the Mertzes as Lucy and Ricky try to break their lease. Philip Morris Cigarettes, CBS. (25 min)

**MY FAVORITE HUSBAND** (11-25-50) **Lucille Ball** and Richard Denning star as Liz and George Cooper. "two people who live together and like it." It's Liz' birthday, she's 33, and doesn't want anyone to remind her of it. Gale Gordon and Bea Benaderet appear as Rudolph and Iris Atterbury, with Ruth Perrott as Katie, the maid. AFRS rebroadcast. (25 min)

**SCREEN DIRECTORS' PLAYHOUSE** (3-8-51) "Bachelor Mother" starring **Lucille Ball** and Robert Cummings with Frank Nelson, Herb Vigran, Jim Backus, Herb Butterfield. A department store clerk unwittingly becomes guardian for an abandoned baby. Announcer is Jimmy Wallington. Anacin, RCA Victor, Chesterfield Cigarettes, NBC. (29 min & 27 min)

**SUSPENSE** (10-14-48) "A Little Piece of Rope" starring **Lucille Ball** as an "actress" who earns a living by stealing wallets from the men she meets. Cast includes Berry Kroeger and Hy Averbach. AutoLite, CBS. (30 min)

**READER'S DIGEST RADIO EDITION** (6-9-46) "Ariella" starring **Lucille Ball** in O. Henry's amusing story of the backwoods mountain girl who decides "there's a heap of difference between a courting man and a husband!" Host is Arnold Moss. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (30 min)

## SATURDAY, MAY 11 RADIO LOVES LUCY—Part 2

**SCREEN DIRECTORS' PLAYHOUSE** (5-22-49) "Her Husband's Affairs" starring **Lucille Ball** as the wife of an advertising man who learns not to poke into her husband's business affairs. Elliott Lewis co-stars. Cast includes Hans Conried, Jay Novello, Ken Christie. Frank Barton announces. Sustaining, NBC. (29 min)

**SUSPENSE** (11-17-49) "The Red-Headed Woman" starring **Lucille Ball** and Desi Arnaz. After being jilted by her fiance, a woman steals her company's payroll and runs away to Texas. AutoLite, CBS. (29 min)

**SPEAKING OF STARS** (11-15-97) Writer **Gregg Oppenheimer**, son of writer-producer Jess Oppenheimer who wrote *My Favorite Husband* and created *I Love Lucy* for television, talks about his father's career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded at the Museum of Broadcast Communications, Chicago. Jess Oppenheimer died in 1988 at age 75. (20 min)

**MY FAVORITE HUSBAND** (6-24-49) **Lucille Ball** stars with Richard Denning, Gale Gordon and Bea Benaderet. Liz is constantly changing her mind and the problem is never more evident than when she and George go out to dinner with the Atterburys. Frank Nelson is the waiter in a classic radio scene. AFRS rebroadcast. (24 min)

**SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS** (4-12-42) "Tight Shoes" starring Red Skelton and **Lucille Ball** in the Damon Runyon comedy. Red is a big-shot gambler who has big feet. Roger Pryor hosts. Gulf Oil Co., CBS. (30 min)

**MARTIN AND LEWIS SHOW** (12-21-48) Dean and Jerry star in the pilot show for their radio series. Guest **Lucille Ball** is infatuated with Dean as the boys prepare for their first broadcast. Cast includes singer Eileen Woods, comedienne Flo McMichael, Dick Stabile and the orchestra. Dean, Jerry and Lucille sing "Funny What Money Can Do." NBC. (31 min)

## SATURDAY, MAY 18 RADIO LOVES LUCY—Part 3

**MY FAVORITE HUSBAND** (3-11-49) **Lucille Ball** and Richard Denning as Liz and George Cooper who have agreed, separately, to appear in the big Red Cross Benefit Show. Gale Gordon as Mr. Atterbury, George's boss; Ruth Perrott as Katie, the maid. AFRS rebroadcast. (24 min)

**LUX RADIO THEATRE** (9-10-51) "Fancy Pants" starring Bob Hope and **Lucille Ball** in a radio version of their 1950 film about an American actor who takes a job as a British valet who works for a family of unrefined Westerners from the United States. Cast includes Verna Felton, Tom Tully, Herb Butterfield, Gerald Mohr, Arthur Q. Brian, Ed Max. William Keighley is host. Announcer is John M. Kennedy. Lux Soap, CBS. (17 min & 20 min & 22 min)

★ **GI JOURNAL #85** (3-9-45) Groucho Marx is Editor-in-Chief for this edition of the radio





Chuck Schaden's

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WDCB • 90.9 FM • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

## MAY 2002: Lucille Ball Month

"newspaper" for military audiences. Guest stars include **Lucille Ball**, Johnny Weissmuller, Mel Torme and the Mel Tones, Mel Blanc, Verna Felton, Connie Haines. AFRS. (27 min) **SUSPENSE** (4-12-51) "Early to Death" starring **Lucille Ball** and Desi Arnaz in a story of murder and greed as a young couple steal a large sum of money from a passenger on a private plane. Cast includes Jack Kruschen, Tom Holland, Anthony Barrett. Harlow Wilcox announces. AutoLite. CBS. (29 min) **SPORTS NEWSREEL** (5-24-46) Bill Stern with the 342nd edition of his program of stories, "some true, some hearsay, but all interesting." Guest **Lucille Ball** tells how she was discovered. Colgate. NBC. (15 min)

★ **ABBOTT AND COSTELLO SHOW** (11-11-43) Bud and Lou with guest **Lucille Ball** and regulars Mel Blanc (as Bugs Bunny!), Billy Grey, Connie Haines, Elvia Allman, Ken Niles, Freddie Rich and the orchestra. Searching for hard-to-find nylon stockings for Lou to give to singer Connie Haines, the boys run into **Lucille** who has a pair and won't give them up. Camel Cigarettes. NBC. (22 min)

### SATURDAY, MAY 25 RADIO LOVES LUCY—Part 4

**JIMMY DURANTE SHOW** (10-29-47) The Shnozolla welcomes guest **Lucille Ball** with hopes of co-starring as leading man in her next picture. They discuss the plans at dinner. Cast includes Arthur Treacher, Candy Candido, Alan Reed, Elvia Allman, Sportsmen Quartet, Roy

Bargy and the orchestra. Rexall. NBC. (29 min) **SUSPENSE** (10-25-45) "A Shroud for Sarah" starring **Lucille Ball**, with Elliott Lewis, Wally Maher, Lou Merrill, Wendell Holmes. A woman whose husband has stolen a lot of money turns him in to the police, then runs away with the money he stole. Truman Bradley announces. Roma Wines. CBS. (30 min)

**MY FAVORITE HUSBAND** (11-27-48) **Lucille Ball** and Richard Denning as Liz and George Cooper. Liz borrows the new neighbor's baby to make George look like a family man to a prospective customer of the bank. Cast features Frank Nelson. AFRS rebroadcast. (24 min)

**SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS** (12-4-44) "China Seas" starring Clark Gable, **Lucille Ball**, Douglas Dumbrille, Anna Lee in a stirring romantic tale of the Far East set aboard a ship bound for Singapore. Truman Bradley announces. Lady Esther Products. CBS. (30 min)

**TWENTY QUESTIONS** (6-1-46) Moderator Bill Slater presides over this panel show with regulars Fred Van Deventer, Florence Rinard, Bobby McGuire, Herb Polesie and guest **Lucille Ball**. The panelists try to guess the subject—"animal, vegetable or mineral"—in twenty questions or less. Subjects include Leo, the MGM lion, Desi Arnaz, and the Statue of Liberty. AFRS rebroadcast. (30 min)

**SCREEN DIRECTORS' PLAYHOUSE** (5-19-50) "Miss Grant Takes Richmond" starring **Lucille Ball** as a secretary innocently involved with crooks. Cast includes Steven Dunn, Frank Nelson, Arthur Q. Brian, Herb Vigran, Jeanne Bates. RCA Victor. NBC. (31 min)

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

**SATURDAY SWING SHIFT**-- Bruce Oscar is host for this two-hour show featuring swing music on record performed by the big bands, pop singers and small groups. WDCB, 90.9 FM, Saturday, 11 am-1 pm.

**MIDWEST BALLROOM**-- John Russell hosts a big band program featuring Chicago area orchestras and dance bands. WDCB, 90.9 FM, Saturday, 5-6 pm.

## "When Radio Was" -- WBBM-AM 780 Monday thru Friday Midnight to 1 a.m. Host Stan Freberg

### April, 2002 Schedule

MON/4-1 Have Gun, Will Travel 1-4-59 *Helen of Adajinian*; Martin & Lewis 4-10-49 Pt 1  
TUES/4-2 Martin & Lewis Pt 2; Dangerous Assignment 7-9-49 *Relief Supplies* Brian Donlevy  
WED/4-3 Tales of Texas Rangers 8-19-50 *Fool's Gold*; Phil Harris & Alice Faye 11 13 49 Pt 1  
THU/4-4 Phil Harris & Alice Faye *The Electrician* Pt 2; The Clock 12-22-46 *Hunter and the Hunted*  
FRI/4-5 Escape 4-15-54 *Affair at Mandrake*; Baby Snooks & Daddy 1940s Fanny Brice

MON/4-8 Boston Blackie 4-25-45 *Wentworth Diamonds*; Fibber McGee 5-5-42 Pt 1  
TUES/4-9 Fibber McGee Pt 2; Big Town 1940 *Death Rides the Highway* Edward G. Robinson  
WED/4-10 Tarzan 1-11-51 *Black Ivory*; Life With Luigi 1-17-50 *Cold Season* J. Carroll Naish Pt 1  
THU/4-11 Life With Luigi Pt 2; Screen Guild Players 5-5-47 *Pardon My Past* John Hodiak  
FRI/4-12 The Shadow 3-2-41 *Death Rides a Broomstick*; Calling All Detectives

MON/4-15 Black Museum 1952 *The Jacket*; Burns & Allen 2-1-44 Guest William Powell Pt 1  
TUES/4-16 Burns & Allen Pt 2; Pat Novak for Hire 2-27-49 *Marcia Halpern* Jack Webb  
WED/4-17 Gunsmoke 8-27-55 *Doc Quits*; Jack Benny 4-6-41 *Quiz Kids vs Jell-O Kids* Pt 1  
THU/4-18 Jack Benny Pt 2; Box Thirteen 6-28-48 *Look Pleasant, Please* Alan Ladd  
FRI/4-19 Suspense 9-16-42 *The Kettler Method*; Sgt. Preston 9-11-43 *A Swill 'o Gunpowder*

MON/4-22 Dragnet 4-26-53 *The Big Scrapbook*; Great Gildersleeve 6-14-42 *Town's Play* Pt 1  
TUE/4-23 Great Gildersleeve Pt 2; Third Man 1952 *Cigarettes* Orson Welles  
WED/4-24 Lone Ranger 7-12-54 *The Show Wagons*; Stan Freberg Show 8-4-57 Program 4 Pt 1  
THU/4-25 Stan Freberg Show Pt 2; Gangbusters 1930s *Rumbold Vault Robbery*  
FRI/4-26 The Shadow 10-13-46 *Valley of the Living Terror*; Strange Dr. Weird 1-2-45 *Tiger Cat*

MON/4-29 Philip Marlowe 2-12-49 *Lonesome Reunion*; Duffy's Tavern 2-9-49 Pt 1  
TUE/4-30 Duffy's Tavern Pt 2; Frontier Gentleman 2-9-58 *Shelton Brothers* John Dehner

### May, 2002 Schedule

WED/5-1 First Nighter 4-27-52 *Refresher Course*; Jack Benny 2-28-42 *Kit Carson Benny* Pt 1  
THU/5-2 Jack Benny Pt 2; I Was A Communist for the FBI 6-11-52 *American Kremlin* D. Andrews  
FRI/5-3 Suspense 7-6-44 *Search for Henry LeFevre*; Johnny Dollar *McCormick Matter* Pt 1/5

MON/5-6 Green Hornet 5-16-44 *Paroled for Revenge*; Fred Allen 1-20-46 George Jessel Pt 1  
TUE/5-7 Fred Allen Pt 2; Stars Over Hollywood 11-15-47 *Ask Thyself* Brenda Joyce  
WED/5-8 Lone Ranger 7-14-54 *Boots and the Rodeo*; Red Skelton 9-25-50 Pt 1  
THU/5-9 Red Skelton Pt 2; Philo Vance, Detective 11-29-49 *Thundering Murder Case* J. Beck  
FRI/5-10 The Shadow 7-10-38 *White God*; Johnny Dollar 10-4-55 *McCormick Matter* Pt 2/5

MON/5-13 Dragnet 5-10-53 *The Big Joke*; Fibber McGee 4-13-43 *Uncle Sycamore on Radio* Pt 1  
TUE/5-14 Fibber McGee Pt 2; Have Gun, Will Travel 8-9-59 *Finn Alley* John Dehner  
WED/5-15 Mysterious Traveler 5-23-50 *Lady in Red*; Stan Freberg Show 8-11-57 Pgm 5 Pt 1  
THU/5-16 Stan Freberg Show Pt 2; Tales of Texas Rangers 5-13-51 *Paid in Full* Joel McCrea  
FRI/5-17 Suspense 9-23-42 *Passage to Benares*; Johnny Dollar 10-5-55 *McCormick Matter* 3/5

MON/5-20 The Saint 11-12-50 *Return of Harry Morgan*; Life of Riley 12-8-45 *Promotion* Pt 1  
TUE/5-21 Life of Riley Pt 2; The Whistler 10-16-60 *Smart Boy* Bill Forman  
WED/5-22 Escape 7-21-47 *Diamond as Big as the Ritz*; Burns & Allen 2-8-44 Adolphe Menjou Pt 1  
THU/5-23 Burns & Allen Pt 2; The Fat Man 1-21-46 *19th Pearl* J. Scott Smart (First show)  
FRI/5-24 The Shadow 1-30-38 *Poison Death*; Johnny Dollar 10-6-55 *McCormick Matter* Pt 4/5

MON/5-27 Gunsmoke 6-18-55 *Reed Survives*; Abbott & Costello 12-9-43 Arthur Treacher Pt 1  
TUE/5-28 Abbott & Costello Pt 2; Ellery Queen 11-7-45 *Message in Red*  
WED/5-29 Box Thirteen 9-20-48 *Hare and Hounds*; Great Gildersleeve 9-2-45 *Grass Lake* Pt 1  
THU/5-30 Great Gildersleeve Pt 2; The Falcon 8-30-50 *Case of the Disappearing Doll* Les Damon  
FRI/5-31 Suspense 1-4-45 *I Had an Alibi*; Johnny Dollar 10-7-55 *McCormick Matter* Pt 5/5 Concl.



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# They Put the West in Country-Western Music

## LOUISE MASSEY AND THE WESTERNERS

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BY WAYNE W. DANIEL

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In 1928, the musical Massey Family, residents of New Mexico with roots in Texas, embarked on a career as country-western music entertainers in a field that was tailor-made for their talents and background. The Masseys arrived on the scene just as Americans were becoming involved in a passionate love affair with the American West. The West that had been popularized and romanticized by early twentieth-century writers like Owen Wister and Zane Grey and stage productions such as William "Buffalo Bill" Cody's late-nineteenth-century Wild West Show.

Just five years ahead lay Gene Autry's debut appearance in the Ken Maynard motion picture, *In Old Santa Fe*, an event that ushered in the era of the singing cowboy, an icon that would become immortalized in hundreds of low-budget western films. During the next twenty years countless Americans would flock to small-town and suburban movie houses on Saturdays to see the latest horse opera in which such stars as Autry, Roy Rogers, and Tex Ritter took time out from mixing it up with the bad guys to strum guitars and

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sing songs about tumbling tumbleweeds, little dogies, and wide open spaces.

The immense popularity of singing-cowboy movies invigorated other commercial enterprises devoted to Western themes. After watching a cowboy movie, one could drop by the newsstand at the corner drug store and pick up the latest issue of a favorite pulp magazine such as *Exciting Western, Texas Rangers, Masked Rider Western, or Ranch Romances*. At home, devotees of things western could tune their radios to programs featuring the adventures of the *Lone Ranger, Red Ryder, Tom Mix*, and other cowboy heroes. And no home record collection of the 1920s, '30s, and '40s was complete without the 78 rpm discs of cowboy singers like Jules Verne Allen, Carl T. Sprague, The Sons of the Pioneers, Jimmy Wakely, and Tex Williams, in addition to those of Autry, Rogers, and Ritter.

The Massey family was one of the most authentic of the numerous western music acts that helped meet the public's demand for Western-oriented entertainment. During their twenty-year career as popular stars of radio, stage, film, and records, the Masseys left their considerable mark on the entertainment genre that evolved into what is now known as country music. In the early days of their professional career this family of musicians was known variously as the Musical Masscys, the Massey Five, The Massey Family, and the



*Louise Massey and the Westerners (1933)*  
Milt, Larry, Louise, Curt, Allen

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Westerners. At the peak of their popularity, however, they were known as Louise Massey and the Westerners. This was the group whose members composed and/or helped popularize such '30s and '40s country-western favorites as "When the White Azalcas Start Blooming," "I Only Want a Buddy Not a Sweetheart," "The Honey Song (Honey, I'm in Love With You)," "Draggin' the Bow," "South of the Border," "Ridin' Down that Old Texas Trail," and the cross-over hit "My Adobe Hacienda." Their emphasis on eye-catching costumes, tight musical arrangements, and a studied stage presence set a standard worthy of emulation by their performing peers.

Louise Massey and the Westerners consisted of Louise Massey Mabie, her husband Milt Mabie, her brothers Curt and Allen Massey, and a non-family member, Larry Wellington.

Unlike some latter-day drugstore and rhinestone cowboys, Louise Massey and the Westerners were the real thing. From first-hand experience they knew about horses, cattle roundups, bunkhouses, chuck wagons and other aspects of the cowboy's life about which they sang. The patriarch of the Massey clan, Henry Austin Massey, was born in Arkansas on July 16,

1866, but was living in Texas when the three of his children who would become professional musicians were born. Victoria Louise was born August 10, 1902, on a ranch in Hunt County, Texas, some fifty miles northeast of Dallas. By the time Allen, born December 3, 1908, and Curt, born May 3,

1910, came along, the Masseys were living in the Midland, Texas, area in the western part of the state about fifty miles from the New Mexico state line.

In 1914, Henry, familiarly known as Dad Massey, moved his family to New Mexico where he bought a ranch in the Hondo Valley region of that state, some 35 miles west of Roswell. At their new home the Masseys engaged in farming, ranching, and making music on the side. Louise, the only girl among seven brothers, learned to shoot, ride horses, and rope cattle, along with the boys. At the tender age of seven, she started playing piano at the local skating rink, and by the time she was a teenager she was working at a Roswell theater playing piano accompaniment to silent movies. In 1919 Louise married Milton Jay (Milt) Mabie, who had been born June 27, 1900, in Independence, Iowa, but had later moved with his family to Roswell.

Dad Massey, who was an old-time fiddler, encouraged and cultivated the musical talents of his children. After they became proficient on several instruments and built up a repertoire of songs and tunes, he organized them into a musical ensemble that also included Louise's husband, Milt, who played upright bass

with the group. The Massey family band played for local dances, school functions, and other social events. They soon became much in demand and built a reputation for providing good music that spread into neighboring communities. "Dad would never let us play professionally because we were so young," Louise once explained. "He thought we'd need about twenty-five years experience before we could be called professionals. So we really didn't go into it professionally for quite a while, but we'd play for the different clubs. It gave us a lot of wonderful experience." While still in their teens, Allen and Curt began playing banjo and violin, respectively, in a local dance band called the Night Owls, headed by Roswell resident Gus Lemp.

Charles F. Horner, agent for the Redpath Lyceum Bureau, an organization that booked entertainment and cultural attractions into the auditoriums and theaters of towns and cities across the United States and Canada, discovered the Masseys during a stopover in Roswell. Louise often told the story about that first meeting between Horner and her family. "Mr. Horner was in town, and I thought maybe if he heard us, he might like us. So I went down to the tent where the show was playing, and I walked up to him and said, 'Would you like to come up to my house? My family is there, and we have a family band and would you come listen to it?' He came to the house, and I introduced him to my father and my mother and my two brothers, Allen and Curt, and my husband. When he started to leave [after having heard the Masseys perform], he said, 'Consider yourself under contract.' In April he sent for us and we went to Kansas City."

Charles Horner recalled his first meeting with the Massey Family in a book that he wrote years later. "I was once

invited to a modest little home in Roswell, New Mexico," he wrote, "and was asked to listen to the music of the family father, daughter, two sons and the daughter's husband. ... I brought them to Kansas City, had them trained and coached for a few weeks, and they got along so well that they became famous in radio and stage shows. ... I think no one ever knew more lovable and gentle people than they are."

Louise described those weeks in Kansas City, as a time of "grooming and [learning about] stage presence. We had about three weeks of hard training, day and night, and then we started on the road." In the summer of 1928, according to Louise, the Massey Family toured in "pretty near every state in the Union" as part of Horner's chautauqua circuit. During a typical show Dad Massey played old-time fiddle tunes and Louise and her husband and brothers played mostly pop music. "But when we came to Dad's part," she explained, "we went right in and did what was best for him. He dressed in his tuxedo, and he made a wonderful sight. He played his violin, and he stopped every show." The Mabie's daughter, Joy, who traveled with the family, remembers the Massey's stage presentations. "Daddy did a real cowboy number," she says, "spinning lariats, singing, and jumping through loops. It was truly a variety show. When they were in the South they closed with 'Dixie'; when in the West with 'The Eyes of Texas.' They even closed the act on the stage of the Paramount in New York with that, and it always brought whoops and hollers from audiences." Following the United States tour the Masseys went on the road in Canada.

When Dad Massey grew tired of traveling, he advised his children to get a job on radio, the relatively new medium that was rapidly making entertainment

dinosaurs of vaudeville and the chautauqua. While the elder Massey returned home to New Mexico, Louise, Milt, Curt, and Allen took a job at WIBW in Topeka, Kansas, where they performed under the name of The Musical Masseys. Shortly thereafter they moved to Kansas City and a job at KMBC, the city's CBS affiliate.

Here the Masseys stayed busy with a full schedule of radio programs. In his spare time Curt served as leader of the dance orchestra at the Pla-Mor, Kansas City's largest ballroom, and studied music at the Horner Conservatory, owned by Charles F. Horner.

It was during their stint at KMBC that the Masseys added a new member to their ensemble, accordionist Larry Wellington, born February 15, 1903, in Oxnard, California. A former band leader and music teacher, Larry had come to KMBC to manage a harmonica band and perform other musical chores for the station.

During the Masseys' five-year stay in Kansas City they attracted the attention of George Biggar who was employed by the Sears Roebuck Agricultural Foundation to establish farm programs at KMBC. After returning to his home base at the Sears Roebuck-owned WLS in Chicago, Biggar offered the Masseys a job at the Windy City station. By the time they made the move to WLS, the station had been purchased by the *Prairie Farmer*, one of the nation's most prestigious farm newspapers. At WLS the Masseys became

a featured attraction on the *National Barn Dance* which, at the time, was the premiere showcase for country, western, and other down-home music styles. In September of 1933, the month that the *Barn Dance* became a regular Saturday night feature of the NBC radio network, the Westerners made their debut as the newest members of



Louise Massey

W. DANIEL COLLECTION

the WLS family of entertainers.

After the Westerners had been at WLS a year and a half, the station's publicity department reported that "the group has become one of the most distinctive and popular acts in radio. Their songs have the ring of truth and the 'saddle swing' of the western plains where they learned them from the cowboys."

According to a newspaper article, the Westerners, soon after their arrival at WLS, broke the record for fan mail at the station by pulling in more than 200,000 letters in a single month.

During the Westerners' stay at WLS, feature articles on Allen and Curt appeared in *Standby!*, the station's fan magazine. "Allen is featured with the Westerners in both solo and ensemble work besides his instrumental contributions," readers were told. "His voice seems to be particularly suited to the old-time cowboy ballads and when he sings such old range songs as 'Little Joe the Wrangler,' and 'Strawberry Roan,' he knows what he's singing about. For he's had years of experience in horse wrangling and in breaking bad broncs."

Although he was proficient on several instruments, Allen usually played guitar

and with the family group. Curt, sometimes called Dott, was described as "a capable composer as well as a musician. He has written singly, or in collaboration, a score or more of tuneful numbers, ranging from the sweet ballad type to the prancing rhythms of such selections as 'Mexican Jumping Bean,' and the Westerners' famed whirlwind number, 'Benjamin's Nest.'" Curt usually played fiddle with the group, but on occasion held forth on the trumpet, adding a pop flavor to the Westerners' sound.

The Westerners were heard on WLS, off and on, for about ten years. They appeared on various programs during the day and on the *Barn Dance* on Saturday nights. They left the Chicago station from time to time to work on network radio. In the fall of 1935 they joined the New York cast of NBC's highly popular *Show Boat* variety program sponsored by Maxwell House Coffee. According to one newspaper writer the Westerners "clicked in a big way" on their first *Show Boat* appearance.

The Massey's success on *Show Boat* was followed by an invitation by NBC to star in their own show. Titled *Log Cabin Dude Ranch* and sponsored by the makers of Log Cabin syrup, the program went on the air on Tuesday evening September 29, 1936. The show was heard in the East from 8:00 to 8:30 local time and was rebroadcast from 11:30 to midnight, Eastern time, for listeners in the Rocky Mountain and Pacific Coast areas. The program was conceived as a musical narrative with dramatizations of romantic stories of the old West. Louise played the part of the proprietress of the dude ranch, located, according to a contemporary press release, "in the Valley O' the Moon, a romantic spot glorified by Jack London in one of his celebrated novels." The supporting cast included character actor John Milton in the role of Jim Babcock, a

story-telling cowhand, who related the romantic and adventurous yarns that served as vehicles for the delivery of western music and songs by Louise and the Westerners.

The next major network show starring Louise Massey and the Westerners was NBC's *Plantation Party*, hosted by Whitey Ford, also known as the Duke of Paducah. The show was broadcast from the Chicago Merchandise Mart and sponsored by American Tobacco Company. At one time or another, Red Foley, Irvin S. Cobb, the Doring Sisters, and the male trio, Tom, Dick, and Harry, were featured attractions on the program. The Westerners' tour of duty on *Plantation Party* lasted from around 1939 to the early '40s. Another network program on which the Westerners were the main attraction was *Reveille Roundup*. The show debuted on 85 stations of the NBC-Red network on October 6, 1941. Heard Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings from 7:45 to 8:00, the program was sponsored by Bromo Quinine cold tablets. Louise Massey and the Westerners were heard on the program until around 1945.

The Westerners never lacked for opportunities to appear on radio. In October 1942 *Billboard* magazine announced that "Louise Massey and Westerners are celebrating their 14th anniversary on the air, and never without a sponsor." Among their many other radio shows was one titled Louise Massey and the Westerners, heard in 1936, that featured Louise as emcee. From an article in the December 19, 1942, issue of *Billboard*, readers learned that "A new half-hour Sunday afternoon show featuring music by Louise Massey and the Westerners and drama by prominent Chicago radio actors will take the air via WGN December 20 under sponsorship of the Loyal Order of the Moose. Show, to be

heard from 5:30 to 6 p.m. will be picked up by WCAE, Pittsburgh."

The Westerners did not limit their performing to radio. Between on-air commitments they made personal appearances at clubs, theaters, state fairs, and other venues where western music would attract an audience.

Like other singers and musicians who achieved popularity on stage and radio, the Masseys were courted by phonograph recording companies. The Westerners' first commercial recording session was held on October 13, 1933, in the Chicago studios of the Columbia Record Company. At that first session they recorded three songs with the western flavor that would become the hallmark of their future record, stage, and radio repertoires. "The Cowboy's Dream," "Trail to Mexico," and "The Big Corral." During the next ten years the Westerners recorded some 150 songs of which about a fourth were based on western themes. Their other recorded material included old-time breakdowns, other types of instrumentals, romantic ballads, and a couple of sacred songs.

Several of the songs recorded by the Westerners during their career were composed by members of the group. First among these was "Ridin' Down That Old Texas Trail," written by Milt Mabie and Curt Massey and recorded in 1934. "Draggin' the Bow," a fiddle tune composed by Curt and recorded by the Masseys in 1935, has become a favorite among bluegrass and old-time fiddlers. Among Larry Wellington's original tunes



Maxwell House Showboat, NBC (1936)  
Curt, Milt, Louise, Larry, Allen

W. DANIEL COLLECTION

recorded by the Westerners were "Rock and Rye Polka," "Beer and Skittles," and "Army Rookie Polka."

The best known of the Massey compositions is "My Adobe Hacienda," written by Louise Massey and Lee Penny. Louise always maintained that there would be no round-the-world cruises for her when she retired from professional life. Instead, she dreamed of building an adobe house on a New Mexico ranch where she and Milt could live quietly for the rest of their lives. Louise found the ranch she was looking for in her beloved Hondo Valley and she and Milt bought it, stocked it with sheep and horses, and planted several acres in fruit trees. "It had a three-room rock house that had been put there in 1896," Louise once said. "We wanted an adobe, but knew we couldn't tear the rock building down, so we just built around it."

While she and Milt were overseeing the construction of their adobe hacienda Louise was inspired to write the song that helped establish her as a significant figure in the history of country/western music. She engaged song writer Lee Penny to put the song in "publishable form" for her in exchange for half of her royalties. The

final version of the song bore both their names as co-composers.

"My Adobe Hacienda," which tells of western hills, evening breezes, and cacti blooming on the patio, spent 13 weeks as one of America's top ten popular songs. A hit with fans of urban music as well as those who preferred country-western fare, the song was recorded by such pop artists as Eddy Howard, the Dinning Sisters, the Billy Williams Quartet, and Kenny Baker. In 1948 *Billboard* magazine published a list of what it called "all the important song hits, year for year, of the last half century." Louise Massey's "My Adobe Hacienda" appeared on the list for the year 1947.

Other songs and tunes composed and recorded by the Westerners include "Bunkhouse Jamboree" (Louise and Allen), "Dude Cowboy" (Allen, Curt, and Larry), "The Honey Song," also known as "Honey, I'm In Love With You," (Curt Massey and Arbie Gibson), "Waltz Time Melody" (Larry Wellington), and "Song of the Lariat" (Milt Mabie). According to *Billboard* magazine, "The Honey Song" record sold more than a half million copies within the first six months of its release.

Louise Massey and the Westerners had their turn in Hollywood. In 1938 they appeared in the Monogram feature-length movie *Where the Buffalo Roam* starring Tex Ritter with whom they had worked in New York. The Westerners' other film credits include short-subject films for Paramount Studios, including *Twilight on the Trail* and *The Hills of Wyoming*.

In the mid-1940s, while at the peak of their career, Louise Massey Mabie and her husband Milt turned their backs on the footlights, microphones, glamorous costumes, and the travel that had been such a large part of their lives for almost twenty years. "My husband decided, after a long and successful career, it was time for us to enjoy our own life," Louise explained in

later years. "Our daughter, Joy, had graduated [from the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts], and we decided to retire to our 'Adobe Hacienda.' We had a NBC network show at the time we decided to stop. We felt that the group were plenty capable to carry on without us. We gave our notice and returned to New Mexico." There Louise and Milt farmed, operated a curio shop and fruit stand, and entertained their many show business friends who liked to drop by for a few days of rest and relaxation at the Mabie's "guest ranch" named El Rancho del Padre in honor of the old padre who first lived on the land.

For a short time, Allen and Curt Massey and Larry Wellington did carry on. In 1946 the NBC radio program that had once starred Louise Massey and the Westerners featured a female vocalist named Betty Bennett backed by a band called the Home Towners that included the Massey Brothers and Larry Wellington.

Louise and Milt found that retiring was not as simple as they thought it would be. The popularity they had worked so hard to achieve could not be so easily cast aside. They were still in demand by their fans, and there were music moguls aplenty eager to capitalize on the Westerners' fame. "A short time later," she wrote, "they called us and said the program was not going as well as it had. Would we come back to Chicago and make one year of transcriptions? Naturally we felt obligated and returned to Chicago and made one year of transcriptions. This took close to two months. Then we did quit for good. We went to our ranch, and I never looked back once! All the past was completely out of my mind." In the meantime, the Westerners' weekly transcribed radio show was enjoying broadcast time in 95 markets.

After the breakup of the Westerners, accordionist Larry Wellington remained

in Chicago where for several more years he enjoyed considerable success writing commercial jingles, composing music for motion pictures, and heading up the Home Towners as well as another of his acts called the Funk Srenaders. Larry died on May 5, 1973.

In 1946 Allen Massey moved to California where he

worked in radio, toured with the Hoosier Hot Shots, and appeared in at least one movie, *Laramie*, starring Charles Starrett as the Durango Kid, Smiley Burnette, and yodeler Elton Britt. Allen made a couple of records with Curt for the Coast label that were released in 1948. Credits on these discs were Curt Massey with Allen Massey's Orchestra ("Riding In a Sleigh" backed by "This Christmas Night") and the Massey Brothers ("Piney Woods" and "Lonesome Train"). Allen Massey died in Gilroy, California, on March 3, 1983.

Curt Massey continued to work in radio and television and to record as a solo act. He also appeared on radio and records with Martha Tilton. In the 1960s he wrote and performed the theme music for the *Petticoat Junction* television series and provided the background music for the *Beverly Hillbillies* TV show. He died on October 20, 1991.

As Milt Mabie's health began to decline, he and Louise sold their ranch and the adobie hacienda and moved to Roswell, New Mexico. Milt died September 29, 1973. While in retirement Louise, from time to time, made personal appearances at special events and fund raisers for local causes. In 1947 she received a citation of



WLS, Chicago (1943)  
Louise, Curt, Milt, Allen, Larry

W. DANIEL COLLECTION

achievement from Broadcast Music, Inc., in recognition of the national popularity attained by "My Adobe Hacienda." She was inducted into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1982. Louise Massey Mabie died on June 22, 1983.

In 1954 Rex Allen starred in the last of the singing cowboy movies, *The Phantom Stallion*. A short time later the music industry dropped the word western from the phrase country-western, the term that for so long had served as a reminder of the contributions of cowboy ballads and hearty yodels to the sound that had come to be recognized as America's national music. Like the legendary western hero, a large part of our country's musical heritage appeared to have ridden off into the sunset. But, as they say, what goes around comes around, and maybe someday some future generation will again dream of adobe haciendas, take imaginary horseback rides down old Texas trails, and thrill to the tales of the old West as recounted in the songs of Gene, Roy, Tex, and Louise Massey and the Westerners. ■

NOTE-- Tune in TWTD April 20 to hear Louise Massey and the Westerners.

# A CRITICAL EYE ON COMEDIANS

BY DANIEL RIEDSTRA

Jack Benny, Bob Hope, Fibber McGee and Molly, Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, and Fred Allen. Their names read like a whose-who of old-time radio comedy. We sure enjoy listening to them now: some of us hearing and laughing at them for the first time, while others listen with renewed fondness for the sounds of a time from their past. These performers came to the airwaves from many different paths, all in an attempt to make us laugh and win our listening loyalty.

But what were the reactions to these comedians during their first weeks or months on the air? Were they embraced by "Mr. and Mrs. North America" and what did radio critics have to say during those initial visits through the ether?

Did it take them time to perfect their show formats and broadcasting styles to earn the love and loyalty of industry and the average listener? Or were they a hit from the very first time they graced a microphone? Let's use original quotes from Variety, the show business newspaper, and program Hooper ratings to see for ourselves.

We begin with **Jack Benny** who hit the airwaves with his own show on May 2, 1932 sponsored by Canada Dry. Variety had a mixed review of that first broadcast.

*Daniel Riedstra is a free-lance writer and old time radio researcher from Chicago.*



Jack Benny



Bob Hope

They felt that "the comedian, usually so naturally at ease on the stage, appeared to suffer from that common ailment, mike fright. Another stumbling block which he should be able to hurdle in time is Benny's disaptitude at reading from a manuscript. That slowed him down a good deal. Particularly interesting was that Benny's sole solid laugh occurred when he rushed into an ad lib; at least it sounded like one."

While the critic had less than glowing words for Jack at the beginning of the review, he nonetheless left the reader with some encouraging words about the performer, "...there's no reason why a clever, intimate comedian of Benny's type shouldn't hit over the air.

Essentially has everything it takes, from an excellent speaking voice to the right kind of delivery." As we all know Jack did "hit over the air" and while no Hooper rating exists for his first broadcast or even his first year on the air, by his second year Jack's rating stood at a respectable 25.3. That placed him in the top five of all on-air comedians, sharing the spotlight with the phenomenal Eddie Cantor with a whopping 50.2 Hooper; the new comedic rage Joe Penner at 35.2; Ed Wynn at 31.6; and another fan favorite, Burns and Allen at 30.2.

**Bob Hope** first appeared on radio as headliner in 1934 on a forgettable fifteen-

minute show sponsored by Bromo-Seltzer. The Variety critics were not kind to Bob during that ill-fated run: "Hope is intermittently very funny. At other times either his material falters or his delivery is a bit too lackadaisical. In general Hope should avoid too much nonchalance." As I read those words I couldn't help but thinking how much Bob must have honed his comedic style from "too lackadaisical" to that machine-gun style delivery of jokes we most associate with Bob during his run on radio.

Variety continued the review: "He must work to put himself and his stuff over as the poker-faced mugging that means so much on the rostrum doesn't percolate through the cosmos. Hope is easy to take, but hard to remember. His problem therefore is one of emphasis." Bob certainly overcame those early barbs and became a radio dynamo. While no rating exists for the Bromo-Seltzer run, it appears that Bob's Hooper continued to hit bottom as his next show, sponsored by Atlantic Oil, only achieved a paltry 7.0 rating, being crushed by the other on-air comedians. It wasn't until Bob's radio show for long-time sponsor Pepsodent, which began in 1938, that his Hooper began to climb steadily and finally achieved an all-time high of 40.9 during his broadcasts from military installations during the 1942-43 season.

Jim and Marion Jordan, in the guise of **Fibber McGee and Molly**, made their radio debut April 16, 1935. Variety's critics were there in those early days to dispense their thoughts on this new comedy vehicle.

The show "...stacked up more as shod musical hour than a refreshing to-earth comedy serial. Dialogue weak with continuity broken up by orchestrations and rural atmospheric sounds. Marian and Jim Jordan play the leading characters, a combo of hen-pecked husband and wise-cracking wife. Femme's brogue is decidedly Irish and husband relays in a hinterland twang...no special reason given for this varied assortment of tongues."

Again, it's hard to believe this would become the same show that raced neck and neck with Jack Benny and Bob Hope throughout the 1940s for top comedy spot on the dial. To continue, "nary a real out and out laugh in the lot, excepting just once in a while, a carefully prepared gag would be managed to be timed correctly. The script limitations hampered the duo from ever getting underway." Marian and Jim were still perfecting the characters that ultimately became the Fibber and Molly we have come to know and love, so it is no wonder that the series was panned initially by the critics.

The public, too, seemed to be expecting greater things from the pair as the McGee rating that first year was a dismal 6.6. The growing pains for the show seemed to be over by the following season as the rating almost doubled to 13.0 and continued an incredible rise to the top in the 1942-43 season when at the peak of their popularity garnered a 37.3 finishing second only to Bob Hope!

The *Chase and Sanborn Hour* had begun its long radio run back in 1929, so it



Fibber McGee & Molly



Bergen & McCarthy

was a comedy-variety staple by the time **Edgar Bergen** and his sidekick **Charlie McCarthy** were added to the already star-studded cast on May 9, 1937.

Bergen and McCarthy had done numerous well-received guest appearances on radio prior to this starring vehicle, and so the Variety critics expected big things from them.

Here is Variety's perception of that first outing: "Bergen, who has had meteoric zoom in radio since he broke broadcast ground on Vallee's period last December, didn't have particularly good material for so auspicious an occasion as his first network stardom. His act continues a swell air novelty, but he'll have to keep his grip via material." The only mention of Charlie is in a blurb relating to another cast member, W.C. Fields who "...had Don Ameche straightening for him as well as Bergen's dummy Charlie McCarthy, and ran off with the show."

The concern about Bergen's material apparently was only in the minds of the critics for Edgar's Hooper that first year was an amazing 39.4, making it the Number One comedy-variety program on the air, ahead of even Jack Benny! And in case you're wondering how much Bergen and McCarthy added to the Chase and Sanborn show's popularity one only needs to look to the 1939-40 season when the show was shortened to a half-hour format and Don Ameche and W.C. Fields were no longer part of the line-up. The show's Hooper scored a 34.6, again making it the Number One comedy-variety show on the air...and once again edging out Jack Benny for top honors!

Finally we take a look at the initial outing of **Fred Allen**. Fred hit the airwaves

with his own show on October 23, 1932, less than six months after his friend Jack Benny had debuted on his own program. Fred's vehicle was called the *Limit Bath Club Revue* and is a far cry from the "Allen's Alley" format he would have in place a decade later.

Fred endeared himself to the Variety critics right from the start, and here is what they wrote: "Fred Allen seems destined for the next ether comedy sensation honors. He has a refreshingly humorous style and already they're talking about him."

Allen's comedy, fresh and crisp as it is, seems patently of his own authorship but at the same time it creates the concern as to how

long he can keep it up? As longtime old time radio listeners know Fred was able to keep up writing his own brand of material well into the late 1940s. Variety continued with more glowing words in the write-up: "The lines were sure-fire and were a succession of laughs. Coming just after Eddie Cantor's mike return an odious comparison arose. For Allen's funning eclipsed Cantor's."

While no rating exists for Fred's first season on the air, this was a mighty powerful endorsement for Fred since it must be noted that during the 1932-33 season Eddie Cantor was the true "King of Comedy" achieving an astronomical Hooper of 58, a number that was approached by *Amos 'n' Andy* during their heyday in the 1930-31 season, but never equaled again in radio history!

It apparently didn't matter whether these radio comedians struck out or hit a homerun during their radio debuts because they all ultimately found their way to radio stardom and provided hours of listening enjoyment then and now. ■



Fred Allen

## CELEBbio

## Parkyakarkus

Parkyakarkus [Harry Einstein] accidentally became a comedian when he was running an advertising agency in Boston, Mass. Parky had sold one of his clients the idea of a radio comedy show. He auditioned some 20 comedians but none of them pleased the client. As time grew short, and still no funny man, the client suggested that Parky try it. He did and the show not only pleased the client but also the listening audience. Thus Parky was launched on his professional comedy career.

A native of Boston, Parky was educated in the local schools. He organized and directed the dramatic group at English High, and it was at this time that he started to string words. He wrote many of the plays which the group presented and was always sure to write in a good comedy role for himself. Even as a kid, he got great pleasure out of making people laugh.

While at school, Parky didn't only spend his time emoting. He was captain of the high school football squad and was also a member of the varsity basketball team.

*This biography of Parkyakarkus was issued by press agent Maury Foladare on August 20, 1947. Harry (Parkyakarkus) Einstein died in 1958 at the age of 50.*

Parky's father, Charles Einstein, was in the importing business, and it was his desire to have his son as a partner. But Parky had other plans. He had, he felt, two commodities to sell. One was his ability to be comical, and the other was his ideas for exploitation. As no member of his family had ever been even remotely connected with show business, he put aside the comedy angle in favor of exploitation.

Parky organized his advertising agency in Boston and it wasn't long before his ideas were paying off. The business grew in leaps and bounds. Soon it was one of the most successful agencies in New England.

For a hobby, Parky continued to dabble with dialects. His Greek character was his favorite. The manager of one of the first radio stations in Boston persuaded Parky to do his comedy character on the air. In the search for a name for his character, Parky remembered a childhood phrase he always used when asking someone to sit down. The phrase was "Park your carcass." Thus was born the now-famous "Parkyakarkus."

The big turning point in Parky's life occurred when one of the clients of his advertising agency urged him to put Park-





yakarkus on his show. Parky did. The rest is history. He was an immediate hit. Evidence of his huge audience is given in the following incident: During the 1932 election period, Parky ran for Mayor of Boston as part of a radio gag campaign. Over 2,500 Bostonians wrote Parky's name in on the official ballot.

In 1934, Eddie Cantor heard Parky's show and signed him for his NBC coast-to-coast radio program. For the next nine years Parky was a radio hit on both the Cantor show and the Al Jolson show. In addition, Parky made several pictures both on his own and with Eddie Cantor.

In 1943, Parky got his own radio show, appropriately titled *Meet Me at Parky's*. The show caught on and for four years the Greek dialectician has been one of America's favorite comedians.

Parky authors the scripts for his shows. He often combines comedy with pleas for humanitarian causes. Last year he championed the cause of higher wages for school teachers; for greater public appreciation of the work of postal carriers and employees; emphasized the activities of America's policemen to preserve life, law and order; and made an inspiring plea for greater church attendance. Parky feels that the occasional mixing of a serious message now and then with comedy is a very effective means of conveying important thoughts to the people.

Parky was married to Thelma Leeds in 1937. The couple has three children — Clifford Jay, age 8, Stewart Robert, age 5, and Albert Laurence, born July, 1947. Parky's residence in Beverly Hills is one of the most attractive homes in the town.

This year America will meet at Parky's over the Mutual Broadcasting System. ■

*NOTE— Tune in TWTD April 6 and 13 to hear Parkyakarkus with Al Jolson and Eddie Cantor.*



## WE GET MAIL

**CHICAGO--** We were enjoying your holiday programming when in the middle of Bing Crosby's narration of "The Small One," the transmission went silent. When it did not return after several seconds, we checked each other's radios and both had the same problem. A third radio in the house was also without transmission of your station. Was/is there a problem with the station or -- heaven forbid-- have we for some reason lost the signal at our house? We live around Belmont and Pulaski and never have had a problem picking up your program since the day you moved to the new station. If you could shed some light on our dilemma, we would appreciate it. --**BARBARA MURTHA**

**CHICAGO--** We were listening to 90.9 and suddenly the station became so faint we could not hear the program. We are avid fans and miss your program. --**ELVIRA & SCOTT CASTILLO**

**MUNDELEIN, IL--** It was in the middle of your 12-22 show that we lost all reception of WDCB and have been unable to hear it since. I've tried every radio in my home and in my car with the same result. All I've been able to get at 90.9 FM are signals from stations on adjacent frequencies. --**DEAN R. FRANSON**

**HOMEWOOD, IL--** We were enjoying your show when all of a sudden the signal vanished. We later found out about WDCB's antenna going down and being out for five days. However, when we have tried to tune in since they went back on the air, the signal is not as good as it was before. --**WAYNE & PAMELA THOMPSON**

**CHICAGO--** Have been without the show since you went off the air in December. We're on the North Side --Irving Park and the Lake-- and could get the signal up to that horrible moment on the Christmas show when you just weren't there anymore. Been listening for 21 years, so it's hard to stop! --**ROGER WRIGHT & MARIA CANCELLA**

**DES PLAINES, IL--** I have been a listener for

at least 20 years and to be deprived of my Saturday listening was devastating. I have had a hard enough time adjusting to the loss of WNIB and to lose your program, too, would have been awful. Then while riding in the car near North Avenue and Thatcher I was able to pick up a little of your program and think I heard that a new transmitter would be ready sometime in February. Is this correct? I sure hope so because Saturday afternoons are just not the same without *TWTD*. I hope the new transmitter will be just as strong or stronger.

--**ROSEMARK DRESEN**

**E-MAIL--** One of the joys of the holiday season has been listening to the Christmas shows you play each week in December. Invariably I put aside whatever I am doing to make certain I am near a radio to add to my holiday enjoyment with *TWTD*. This is particularly true on the Saturday before Christmas when you do the show I anticipate all year. So you can imagine how disappointed I was, like so many of your loyal listeners must have been, when the station went off the air in the middle of the Christmas show. It put a damper on my Christmas fun this year. Obviously this was not your fault, but I just wanted you to know how much the shows you do, particularly at the holidays, add to the joy of Christmas. It would be wonderful if that Christmas show which was not heard due to the technical difficulty, could be repeated in the coming weeks. I have been a listener for years. --**JEFF KWIT**

**CHICAGO--** The WDCB signal that I had been receiving loud and clear all last year has, for the most part, vanished. I heard the signal clearly at one point, but it quickly faded in a wash of static. So, is this permanent and should I run for the nearest Radio Shack to buy one of those amplifying antennas I learned about last year? --**GREG PORTER**

**DEERFIELD, IL--** About halfway through the Christmas program I lost signal at 90.9. I live in southern Lake County and have never had a problem receiving *TWTD*. I know I failed to pledge during the recent drive, but I had no idea that you could seek out deadbeats and terminate their service. I promise to pledge. --**CLINT CASE**  
**(ED. NOTE--** We understand that the new

antenna tower is going to cost in the neighborhood of \$250,000, so WDCB will surely need your financial support! We'd like to thank everyone who called, wrote and e-mailed us expressing concern (and frustration) about the station's tower problem. It's been frustrating for us, too, but be sure to read our comments on Page 1 of this issue. As far as the Christmas show is concerned, we're planning a "Christmas In July" program for later this year during which we'll repeat our complete program from December 22, 2001.)

**LIBERTYVILLE, IL--** I was so upset today when, after being out of town for a couple of weeks for the holidays, I found that WDCB would not come in on home or car radio here in Libertyville! Thank goodness that I called the station to find out if there was a problem. I am delighted to see you back on the web. I would have gone nuts if I was forced to miss Jack Benny Month! --**K. GLATZ**

**COMMERCE, GEORGIA--** I am delighted to be back among the listeners of *TWTD*! The cold snap down here in Georgia was less noticeable this afternoon listening to WDCB via the Internet. Being a former tower climber I was very saddened to hear of the wind-induced collapse of the WDCB antenna, and was happy to hear that no people were injured. --**LINDSAY CLEVELAND**

**SOUTH HOLLAND, IL--** While we are sad for you at the loss of your tower, we are thrilled that its demise resulted in use of the Internet to broadcast the station's programs. We have been devout --and I stress devout-- listeners of *TWTD* for many, many years. My husband bought me a special transmitter thing that allows the programs we listen to through the Internet to go to every room in our house. --**ANNE BLANK**

**RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA--** Now that WDCB has Internet streaming, I can listen to you again after over 20 years! I don't know why everyone is concerned about the tower falling down. I can hear you fine in Rapid City! --**MIKE TRYKOSKI**

**E-MAIL--** Sorry to hear about your antenna, but glad to hear about audio streaming at your station. I'm receiving you loud and clear on Cape Cod. --**DAVE WILLIAMSON**



## MORE MAIL

**E-MAIL--** Glad to hear that *TWTD* is streaming out on the Internet. I'm receiving it in a spot 300 miles directly north of Chicago in Florence County, Wisconsin, the North Woods, you might say. I was a long-time listener when we lived in Brookfield, IL and you were on WNIB. --**JOHN WILLARD**

**TACOMA, WASHINGTON--**I've checked every week since you left the Internet and was thrilled to see the "Listen Online Now" button today! And just in time for my favorite: "Jack Benny Month." You're coming in loud and clear, without interruptions. I've listened to a lot of OTR on the radio and on the Internet, but nobody does it as well as you. --**MIKE FINGER**

**KENOSHA, WISCONSIN--** It's wonderful to hear your voice again. One whole year and now I have you back. I'll be with you every Saturday. --**BARBARA BUTTERA**

**EUSTIS, FLORIDA--** I've been a fan for many years and am so glad you are back on the net. I was able to hear the whole program today. --**KATHY SMITH**

**TUCSON, ARIZONA--** It's a real relief to hear your voice today, though the miracle of the Internet. I hadn't been able to hear you since we moved from Elmhurst on September 11th. --**NORM SCHICKEDANZ**

**RACINE, WISCONSIN--** YO Chuck! you're coming in loud and clear -- on my DELL PC! Getting you just as clearly as I used to on your former station's web cast. We can't get your new station in at all using an ordinary FM radio. But the web cast works out very well. --**NEIL LETTSOME**

**E-MAIL--** I enjoy Saturday afternoons with you and Ken Alexander immensely and look forward to listening to *TWTD*. That's a great segment when Ken shares the memorabilia from his basement. My late father collected articles, magazines, newspapers covering major events, etc. Also the player piano is a segment I enjoy. --**JOE WEISS**

**AURORA, IL--**Please keep up the part of your show where Mr. Alexander talks about the past from newspaper articles. Every time you ask him about the papers I laugh. "Well, Ken, is it dusty in that old basement?" or "Do you have these papers in date order, Ken?" I have visions of Mr. Alexander lighting a candle and taking the long walk to the "Alexander Archives" somewhat as Jack Benny did when he would go and visit his money. --**TOM NAWOSKI**  
(ED. NOTE-- Yes, but Mr. Alexander does not keep money in his basement. He keeps his money in his mattress: The Bank of Seely Posturepedic.)

**GLEN ELLYN, IL--** Today (Jan. 11) is my 60th birthday and, upon reflection, I realized that I have spent over half my life listening to *TWTD*. No other radio or television show can beat that record. I guess that says something pretty special about the entertainment value and staying power of your show. --**GEORGE LITTLEFIELD**  
(ED. NOTE-- Half of your life? You've been listening longer than I have! Happy Birthday.)

**WARRENVILLE, IL--** Enjoyed the article on Jay Andres (Feb-March, 2002). I remember returning home late at night in the '50s and listening to *Music 'Til Dawn*. Jay's soothing voice and the fine music he played were certainly a relief from the noise pollution we experienced even back then. --**CHUCK HUCK**

### NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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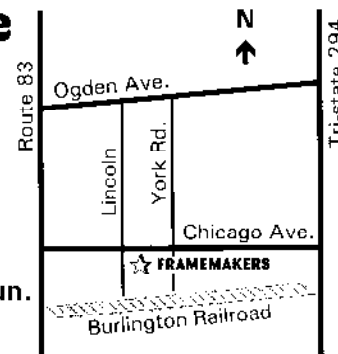
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← WHAT HAPPENED to the WDCB signal last December?  
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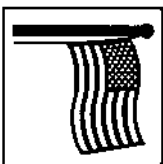
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