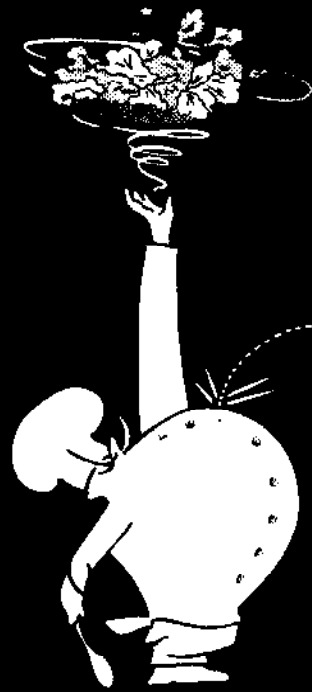


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## CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

BOOK TWENTY-NINE

CHAPTER ONE

DECEMBER 2002/JANUARY 2003

### *The Year Christmas Came Early*

BY JED SKILLMAN

Without a doubt, the toughest job any kid can tackle is managing a whole month of good behavior between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Back when I was a sprout in the early 1950s, parents wielded a mighty big carrot and stick during the month of December. The carrot, on the one hand, was the Christmas tree and all the presents underneath that Santa Claus would bring. The stick, on the other, was the much-fabled lump of coal in the stocking. We were offered our choice. I was not different from millions of my fellows; I sought the one and avoided the other. Although none of us had actually met anyone who'd gotten a lump of coal, persistent rumors existed and the mere possibility of receiving one was too horrible to contemplate.

My family lived in a white frame Cape Cod in the middle of a pleasant block in an Anywhere, USA neighborhood: 28 Plumwood Road in good old Dayton, Ohio, the Birthplace of Aviation. Ours was the first residential street south of where the National Cash Register Company's main factory used to be, just a few blocks from the campus of the University of Dayton.

Our neighborhood swarmed with kids. Pete Hershey, Mike Gruder, Jim

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*Jed Skillman is a Nostalgia Digest subscriber from Brookfield, Illinois.*

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Hobstetter – they were a few of the big kids I recall. They did the really neat things: went camping, played with firecrackers, built model airplanes. They also shunned us like lepers. Then there were the big sisters (ugh) exemplified by Patsy Gruder and Linda Mahrt. They were the “enforcers” of the neighborhood. Our mothers were convinced that without constant female supervision we little kids would get into trouble. If we were not within direct eyesight of one of the neighborhood mothers, somebody's big sister was called in to watch us. As you can imagine, this was a system fraught with the abuse of power.

My own cadre included Tommy Gruder, Molly Hobstetter, and my pal Ricky Mahrt. Ricky and his sisters lived next door to the Wallaces, across the alley from us.

Ricky Mahrt. Now there was a guy who had it tough. I thought I had it bad with my one pesky little brother, but Ricky was all alone against four sisters. He and I were to be the principle players in the little drama that was about to unfold.

By about the age of five we had a handle on the whole Christmas thing. It was a case of “quid pro quo” at its most basic. We'd be well-behaved and Santa would handsomely reward us. The whole arrangement was as simple as that. Consequently, from Thanksgiving on, we

were at our best. We were careful not to slam the doors, didn't track slush into our houses and ceased raiding Molly Hobstetter's tea parties. During the evening my own behavior could only be described as exemplary. I cleaned my plate, minded my Mom and Pop, and promptly, at 8:00, washed my face and went straight to bed with no complaints. I even forswore violent retaliation when my little brother, Lafe, infringed upon my person or property. I'd take care of him in January.

The Christmas Season moved forward at a steady pace, with each passing day ratcheting up the anticipation another notch. By mid-December Christmas music poured from the radio. Bowls of nuts and exotic fruits such as tangerines and dates began to appear on our dining table. Ricky and I, of course, were each taken by our parents to see Santa Claus at Rike's Department Store. My little brother was not quite old enough to be up to speed with everything, but he knew something big was on the way. I, on the other hand, was "in the know".

Dayton, Ohio had, and *still* has, a terrific system of old-fashioned electric trolley busses. At Christmastime the traffic downtown was nearly impossible and parking was almost non-existent. So, when the Saturday came to make the pilgrimage to see Santa, Pop and Mom herded my brother and me the block and a half up to Brown Street, where we caught the Number 5.

When we got off at Second and Main I was as wide-eyed as my brother at the immensity of the seasonal display. The bustling streets of downtown Dayton had been transformed into a wonderland. The sidewalks were jam-packed with shoppers in heavy coats and mufflers, carrying packages and leading other little kids around by the hands. Salvation

Army bell ringers were on every corner. Buildings were strung with lights. Department store windows were filled with colorful scenes depicting hard-working elves at the North Pole. I could glimpse above the heads of the adults a life-sized, ho-ho-ing Santa waving to us from his sleigh, as a full team of reindeer pulled him up and around the corner of Rike's Department Store. A Star of Bethlehem and a host of trumpet-playing angels were festooned along the upper floors of the City Building, and the annual Nativity scene had been erected on the Court House lawn, lest we forget what the season was really about.

My brother and I had a few minutes to meet Santa, himself, to discuss what we hoped he'd be able to bring. Then we strolled with Pop and Mom through the Trim-a-Tree Shop over to the Toy Department, where I pointed out the nifty Flexible Flyer I had told Santa about.

"That's a pretty big sled, Son." Pop said. "Think you can handle it?"

Back home that night, my brother and I were so jazzed we couldn't sleep. The five-story Christmas tree in front of the NCR corporate office, several blocks away, blazed so brightly in the sky that it cast a glow through our upstairs bedroom window. I slipped out from under the covers to take a peek. A moment later Lafe followed me and I stood him on the chair next to me so he could see.

It was quite a panorama. Memorable. Several of the houses across the park were decorated with lights or had trees glowing in their windows. The ruddy smear, as Dickens called it, of Christmas lights from beyond the factory buildings added an edge of magical color to the stark, bare trees against the winter night sky. It was well worth the risk of placement on the "naughty" list to sneak



out of bed for this. We drank it in with gusto until our eyelids got heavy with sleep.

As the Big Day inched closer Ricky and I reached high-gear, running back and forth across the alley discussing what we hoped to find under the tree and whispering about what we were going to get our parents. I had just that summer begun receiving an allowance of ten cents a week. This would be the first year I'd get to pick out presents for my parents on my own. I had sixty-five cents saved up.

All true tragedy is said to be self-inflicted. But given the utmost care with which we deported ourselves, how could we have blundered into the fix in which we were soon embroiled?

It was a cold, gray Ohio December day, just before Christmas, when Ricky and I came in through the Mahrt front door. It was late afternoon and except for the sound of a Mixmaster whirring away in the kitchen, the house was strangely silent. No one seemed to be around. Ricky's Dad was finishing up at the office, his big sisters were gone, Elizabeth was probably conked out in her crib. It appeared we had the place to ourselves.

As we threw our hats and coats over

the back of a chair, I looked around. Guests were expected that evening. The house was all freshly put in order. The pillows on the sofa were nicely fluffed. Christmas cards had been arranged around a mirror. Fresh firewood was stacked in the fireplace and pine boughs and tall, thick candles were ready on the mantle. At the piano was a book of carols from which I

had watched one of Ricky's sisters, Sally, practice a few days earlier. Across the room was a serving table stacked with little plates, silverware, napkins and cups and saucers. We each helped ourselves to the chocolate candy that was displayed in a polished silver tray. And then, best of all, I saw through the glass-paned doors, out in the sunroom, a giant, beautifully decorated Christmas tree.

It was customary in our house that Santa brought the tree along with all the presents on Christmas Eve. But in the Mahrt home not only was the tree up and decorated, but as gifts from uncles and aunts arrived in the mail they were placed under the tree. Ricky's family was a large one and already there was a tidy pile. I was awestruck as we walked out to the sunroom for a peek.

To this day the smell of a balsam fir tree is like perfume to me. On that December afternoon the atmosphere in the sunroom was heavy with it.

It was my idea to plug in the tree lights. I remember this because as my little fingers shoved the plug into the outlet I got a jolt of live 110-volt current from a bare wire. I know now that I should have heeded this as an omen, but I was undeterred. We stood back to admire the tree shimmering in beauty

and casting a soft glow on the presents spread below.

You know how it is with kids: One thing leads to another and pretty soon things get out of hand. That's the way it was with us.

"I got an idea! Let's play like it's already Christmas!" one of us said. "We can open all the presents!"

Okay. I might as well own up. The whole thing was my idea, but Ricky didn't try to stop me. We looked at each other for a second — that instant when you can still turn back, still put temptation behind you. But we didn't. We said "Yeah!" and we dived in.

There was an ecstatic scramble over the presents, Ricky on one side of the tree, I on the other. We were foxes loose in a hen house. There were so many beautiful presents, where could we start? Ricky grabbed a package and ripped through the ribbons and colored tissue. In seconds he'd opened a box to find inside a real, honest-to-gosh official Hopalong Cassidy shirt.

"Wow! Neat-o!" Ricky exclaimed.

Feeling a twinge of envy at my pal's good fortune, I probed through the pile for an attractive package and tore off the wrappings. Inside was a long, narrow box. Trembling with excitement I opened it and peeled back a layer of tissue paper to find — a wide, brown and turquoise necktie. A necktie? What could I do with that? I was just getting the hang of tying my shoes.

Ricky crawled under the tree looking at nametags, then tore into another package. This time he got a neat pair of cowboy boots. I knew that spelled trouble for me. With his nifty shirt and boots Ricky would be the one who gets to rescue Molly Hobstetter while I'd get stuck playing the cattle rustler for the rest of my life.

My prospects didn't improve with my next present: a pair of white angora mittens with a cutesy little hat to match. Girl's stuff!

It was years later before I realized what was happening. Other than being able to recognize our own names in print, neither Ricky nor I had yet learned to read. Ricky, having home-field advantage, naturally found lots of packages tagged with his name. But, for me, names such as Lou, Millie, Karen, Uncle Al and Aunt Marci, etc. may as well have been written in Greek. I couldn't find a single present marked "To Jed." Therefore, I was forced to plunder whatever I could lay my hands on.

Hence, as we tore onward Ricky got a football, a cap gun and a View-Master (complete with packets of reels showing Grand Canyon, Old Faithful and Marineland, all in eye-popping 3-D.) I got a set of dishtowels, a pink chenille bathrobe, a backscratcher, and a book with no pictures in it. With four girls and two adults in Ricky's family, the odds were stacked heavily against my finding anything of interest. But, I plunged onward in a determined search. There had to be something, anything, worth opening. Ribbon and wrapping paper flew everywhere.

Ricky was doing a war whoop in his new cowboy boots and I was sitting waist deep in clutter taking a few imaginary puffs from a briar pipe when the room seemed to go silent. We felt eyes were upon us. We looked up.

We'd been stone-cold busted.

Standing in the doorway, crisply dressed and wiping her hands on her apron, was Ricky's mom. She wasn't smiling.

"Just what do you boys think you're doing?" she asked.

Mrs. Mahrt was a handsome woman of



Here's Ricky (Hopalong) Mahrt

mature patrician beauty and not much got past her.

We stammered trying to think up an explanation that might make the whole thing go away. The best Ricky could come up with was "Umm, ah... Nothing."

I did no better. "Yeah. Nothing. We were just 'playing Christmas'."

Imagine what it felt like, just days before Santa's arrival, to lose control of yourself, to stumble so recklessly, so foolishly, so badly and to get caught red handed. My face flushed, my head swam.

I'll say this for Mrs. Mahrt: with a houseful of guests about to arrive and a mess to clean up, she kept her cool. In fact, I don't recall one time she ever lost her temper with us.

"Ricky. Go upstairs to your room, young man!"

Ricky, his head down, trudged across the living room without looking back.

"Jed, I think it's time for you to go home."

I raced for my coat and hat and careened out the door and into the brisk

evening air.

It was a long, cold walk home. A light flurry of snowflakes wafted by. Christmas lights were beginning to glow in the twilight. Colonel Wallace and his wife turned into the alley and drove slowly past, a pine tree lashed to the top of their Buick. But, for me, these things no longer held joy.

My feet felt like lead. My stomach had shrunk to the size of a golf ball. Ricky's Mom was probably on the phone to my Mom at that very moment. My Mom would tell Pop and he'd blow a fuse. Then there was Santa. He'd find out. The entire Christmas Season began unraveling.

Like a condemned man going to the gallows, I weakly climbed our back steps. In this sorry state of mind I opened the back door and stepped into our kitchen. It was warm and brightly lit and smelled of fresh-baked Christmas cookies. My parents were laughing about something. I could tell I had surprised them — caught them in one of those private moments parents have when the kids are not around. Pop had probably just given Mom a kiss or done something mushy like that. He stood next to her, his back to the sink, with a half-eaten cookie in his hand as Mom rolled out dough.

Pop looked at me merrily, full of cookies and the Christmas Spirit and said, "What did you do over at Ricky's, son?"

"Oh, nothing." I replied.

That evening I surprised my parents by going to bed early. Mrs. Mahrt had not yet telephoned. Probably with all the guests she was too busy. As I lay under the covers and awaited the fateful phone call I reflected on what had brought me to my current lowly state. I had greedily jumped to the head of the line and

opened a bunch of presents that didn't belong to me. I was no better than a common thief. If my behavior didn't fit Santa's profile of "naughty," what did? And what did my crime profit me? A pink bathrobe and some fuzzy mittens. It was true: "The weed of crime bears bitter fruit." I drifted off to sleep in a state of utter gloom. At the age of five, I was all washed up.



The world of kids: down one minute, happy the next. I awoke in the morning somewhat refreshed. There were no repercussions at the breakfast table. Mrs. Mahrt still hadn't called. Pop went off to work. Mom did a load of wash. My little brother continued to drive me nuts. Everything seemed normal. They didn't know. It seemed possible that even Santa didn't know. I clung to a shred of hope. Maybe, just maybe, he hadn't found me out.

Christmas morning arrived, cold and crisp, with only a hint of snow. Funny, I never wondered how Santa Claus drove his sleigh if there was no snow. My brother and I were up at the crack of 5 a.m. clamoring to go downstairs and unwrap presents. I knew this much: Santa had been to our house, for the

smell of balsam drifted tantalizingly up the stairway.

As I watched Mom help my brother into his robe and slippers I pondered briefly a situation in which I'd find a lump of coal with my name on it and everyone else got presents. Just in case, I prepared myself to smooth things over with

him in hopes he'd share some of his stuff.

I needn't have given it a thought. Santa brought us a beautiful tree that year, and a bounty of gifts. I got a Flexible Flyer. My brother got a wagon. Mom got a new Kitchen Aid. And, Pop... what did Pop get? I can't remember. But Santa must have been good to him too, because I recall that as he sat on the floor next to the tree he looked as though he was having the best time handing out our presents.

I have often wondered why Mrs. Mahrt didn't call. To this day I have no idea. But she kept my secret, for a while anyway. And that's what counted.

It wasn't until Mom met her at the grocery store some time later that she spilled the beans. And then laughed. ■

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# THE RADIO SLEUTH: Murder and Mayhem On the Air

BY JIM COX

During radio's Golden Age—between the late 1920s and early 1960s—private investigators (PIs) achieved a noticeably larger conquest than solely providing American cars with gratifying amusement. Such heroes also contributed to the nation's moral fiber, passing on precepts on which ethical cultures are founded.



As radio historiographer J. Fred MacDonald put it, "The essence of those [programs'] messages lay in the fact that within each drama the villain never won and the hero never lost. Whether . . . a program openly declared that 'crime does not pay,' this was the message expounded in all broadcasts." Any

*Jim Cox is the author of "Radio Crime Fighters," a complete, unabridged encyclopedia of spine-tingling aural hero thrillers featuring more than 300 shows about radio detectives, police dramas and federal agents, westerns and juvenile adventure series. It will be released this fall in a hardcover book with photos for \$45 by McFarland & Company. To order, call 800/253-2187.*

who attempted to gain private property outside the socially accepted channels—whether it was life, currency or possessions—were reformed, imprisoned or executed "so that the society of the propertied might be secure and enduring."

Such radio dramatizations, and their central characters, "championed the simple pattern of Good over Evil, Truth over Lie, and Civilization over Anarchy." Programs were "secular allegories of the middle class; . . . their heroes were agents of bourgeois America, there to tell criminals and citizens alike . . . that good was always victorious."

The radio sleuth stemmed from a tradition whose gestation may be traced more than two centuries. Out of the broad category of mystery or crime fiction, dispar-

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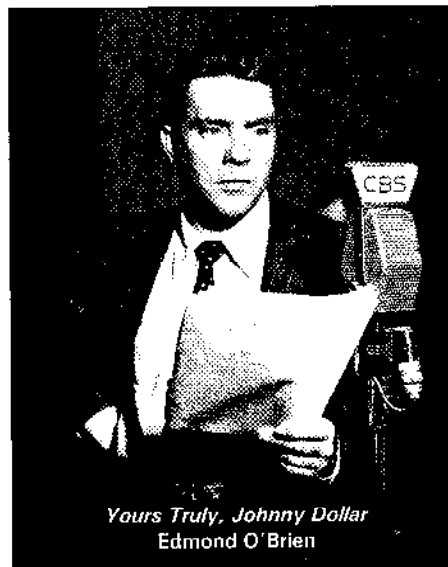
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ate patterns emerged. Among them was the detective story and from it the private investigator surfaced as one of mystery's foremost figures.

American poet-editor-critic-author Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) is commonly mentioned as a chief architect of the detective story—primarily through a series of tales he published in 1841, 1842 and 1844 that focused on a fictional hero named C. Auguste Dupin. Yet there is documented evidence that forerunners existed in the strain that preceded a venerated Poe. Allen J. Hubin, a devout student of crime fiction and an author and former mystery fanzine publisher, suggests that William Godwin's 1794 story "Things As They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams" is often accepted as "the first novel of crime and detection."

As technology advanced, the mystery yarn stretched beyond the confines of the printed page, infiltrating both film and broadcasting. In regard to the latter, *Empire Builders* is sometimes cited as the first thriller drama on the ether, premiering over the NBC Blue chain in 1928. That sequence set a precedent for dramatic adventure, expelling any notions of limited horizons that may have survived earlier.

The precise origins of the radio detective, on the other hand, may be attributed to a fabled tale that featured a wily terrorist of the twentieth century, Fu Manchu. This despot unleashed his wicked venom on earth's denizens for the first time near the close of the 1920s. The diabolical schemer was to be held in check, however, by Scotland Yard's Sir Dennis Nayland Smith. Detective Smith invariably thwarted the little man's insidious plotting, offering a constructive role model to counterbalance the malevolence. *Fu Manchu* (aka *The Shadow of Fu Manchu*) debuted in serialized form in 1929 as part of an ongoing *Collier Hour* on the NBC Blue



*Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar*  
Edmond O'Brien

network. It was re-launched as a separate series over CBS on September 26, 1932, and continued in varied formats through 1940.

Radio analysts Christopher Sterling and John Kittross maintain that aural crimefighting took a new twist via NBC on October 20, 1930 with the advent of *Sherlock Holmes*. For the first time, listeners encountered an independent investigator who wasn't linked directly to any law enforcement agency. Augmented by a devoted assistant, Dr. John H. Watson, Holmes valiantly unraveled some stupendously puzzling cases, at least so to the common man. Dubbed "the most universally recognized fictional character in history," Holmes on the ether was patterned after an 1887 supersleuth who was concocted for print by novelist Arthur Conan Doyle. Although intermittently beset by gaps in broadcast continuity, Holmes performed his startling intellectual feats on radio across 26 years. One wag fittingly opined that he was "the most revived major character of the airwaves."

Since those humble beginnings, the detective drama has become one of the most

gripping and celebrated forms of creative expression in American popular culture. The species achieved wide-ranging success in literature, film, on radio and—several decades later—on television. In terms of entertainment, the radio sleuth—reaching far greater audiences than cinema ever could—allowed listeners the opportunity to mix the deductive process of intellect with the emotional intensity of fantasy.

For years the genre delivered some of the most consistently intriguing characters on the air every week. Possessing socially enviable traits and engaging in laudable endeavors, they were often personable and debonair. Some of them sketched current predicaments for their listeners in rich, colorful detail. A handful were widely acclaimed for consistently distinctive performances virtually every time out.

One of radio history's most astute and admired observers, John Dunning, cites *The Shadow* as "perhaps radio's most famous fictitious crimefighter." The revered author terms the series "a synonym for 'oldtime radio' . . . [and] the epitome of radio crime drama." Sterling and Kittross label *The Shadow* (who, when not incognito, was "wealthy young man about town" Lamont Cranston) "the classic crime drama." Writer Gerald Nachman refers to the series as "a total aural experience" and dubs it "the ultimate radio show."

The infamous "private insurance investigator with the action-packed expense account," [*Yours Truly*] *Johnny Dollar*, became an icon of the vintage radio hero-worshippers. In a series duly marked by both quality and longevity, *Dollar* still reigns virtually unchallenged among celebrated audio sleuths. Without doubt, that show was a radio watershed: It held the dubious honor of featuring the very last aural-only detective on the ether: A 13-year veteran who swam upstream against an ebbing tide, it pressed for nearly two

years beyond the medium's well documented "day radio drama died" (November 25, 1960), when nearly all other dramatic fare simultaneously departed the airwaves.

In the opinion of a coterie of critics (one calling him "the most striking detective on the air," another branding him the "archetype" of the breed), Sam Spade was the epitome of a group of case-hardened, cynical radio private eyes. His charismatic appeal, repeatedly flaunted in absorbing exploits, earned for him a strong following with audiences. John Dunning avers: "The show was loved in its time and still is . . . [It] had a style and class that the others all envied . . . The wit and charm of the show has weathered decades, and *The Adventures of Sam Spade* remains today the pinnacle of radio private eye broadcasts."

Among PIs, a few of their number—a very few percentage-wise—were of the tender gender. While their series were generally brief, some of those heroines were just as tenacious as their male colleagues. They included Ann Scotland, Candy Matson, Kitty Keene, Carolyn Day and a few others.

Women were just as important to the successes of a handful of married couple detective series as were the masculine leads, including *The Abbott Mysteries*, *The Adventures of the Thin Man* and *Mr. and Mrs. North*. On numerous occasions the distaff members contributed angles that genuinely enhanced what might have been otherwise drab yarns.

There were many more radio sleuths who offered comparable quality, most of them cherished by their admiring fans. The dynamic guardians of integrity became colossal members of an airwaves coterie, some remaining for many years. In a published analysis of 308 American crimefighting dramas carried over network radio between the late 1920s and the early



*Adventures of Sam Spade*  
Howard Duff

1960s, 58 series were found with private eyes as their central characters—each one functioning independently of public law enforcement officials, even though they may have teamed up with those detectives at times. Beyond them, there were 84 additional radio programs featuring amateur or part-time sleuths whose livelihoods were derived largely by unrelated professions, if indeed they were gainfully employed at all.

The full time career-oriented PIs combined with those of the avocational strains offered radio audiences at least 142 separate opportunities to tune into series with private detectives at their core. By sheer numbers alone, therefore, the radio sleuth saturated the ether during the golden age, providing almost unlimited chances to hear one or several private eye narratives daily.

Not only did airing the PI dramas translate into some rather large and faithful audiences, it also made a strong positive impact on the networks' bottom lines. A factor that simply cannot be denied is that such fare was comparatively inexpensive to produce, yet regularly drew substantial numbers of listeners to the national chains. For

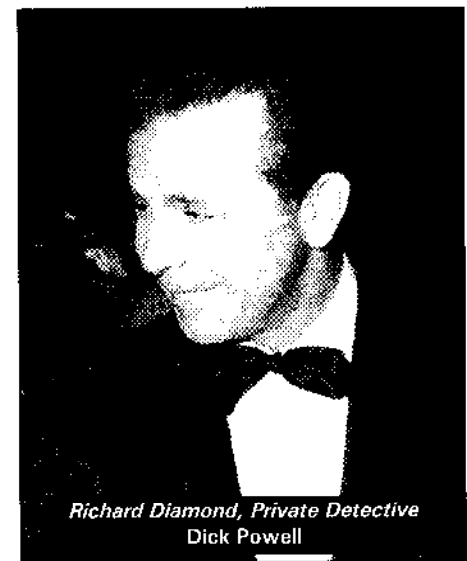
example, star-studded series like *The Jack Benny Program* and *The Bing Crosby Show*—fostering large casts, live orchestras and guest celebrities—were budgeted at \$40,000 per week in 1950. A PI drama at that same juncture, however, normally could be produced at between \$4,000 and \$7,000 per week.

Admittedly, the PIs seldom acquired the incredibly lofty numbers that the Nielsen or Hooper ratings systems logged for the renowned music and comedy series. Yet those dramas delivered more listeners per advertising dollar than the shows claiming far more eminent prestige. According to the trade publication *Variety*, in 1950 the average evening mystery program attracted 267 households per advertising dollar. Meanwhile, musical-variety programs drew only 215 households while general dramas pulled just 187. Comedy-variety shows garnered 163 households and concert music features settled for a mere 123.

Talent-wise, with few exceptions (Joan Blondell, Jeff Chandler, Glenn Ford, Van Heflin, Edmund O'Brien, Dick Powell, Basil Rathbone and Frank Sinatra come to mind), high-paid stars with legendary status weren't essential to the efficacy of PI



*The Thin Man*  
Les Damon



*Richard Diamond, Private Detective*  
Dick Powell

dramas. All that was needed was "a clear and distinctive voice and an ability to read fluidly and to inject emotion into the performance," a pundit noted. There was a myriad of talented radio thespians, experienced, eager and available, from which advertising agencies and producers could select their heroes and support players. The actors usually received little, if any, notoriety and small recompense for their sterling efforts. But the networks airing them and the agencies producing them enjoyed an entirely different result. The PI and similar mystery dramas netted some of the prime revenues that the chains and agencies received. Without any doubt, they were rolling in the big bucks!

Charles Hull Wolfe directed the radio and television-testing bureau of Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborne advertising agency in the 1940s. Near the close of that decade, he released some discerning findings comparing 16 diverse types of sponsored series airing in 1946 on the national radio hookups. Wolfe made the following discoveries: *Variety* series starring "name" comedians (Fred Allen, Jack Benny, Bob Hope, Red Skelton, et al) achieved the



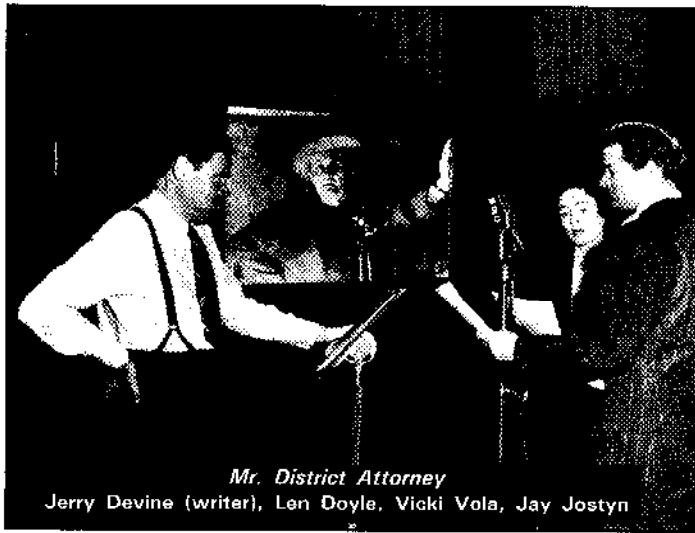
highest ratings (audience size) among the 16 types reviewed, each show averaging 20.5 points; variety topped by "name" vocalists (Bing Crosby, Dinah Shore, et al) were runnerups at 13.4 points. Mystery-detective-horror dramas, including PIs, ranked sixth at 11.3 points. (One source claims that, in 1945, 10 million listeners concentrated on 31 broadcast mystery shows of varied persuasions.)

Talent costs typically ranged between \$15,250 for name comedians and \$2,211 for women's daytime serials, in sixteenth place. At \$4,347, mystery-detective-horror dramas were twelfth.

In the all-important, often defining cost-per-ratings-point comparison—reflecting what advertisers ultimately paid for their listeners—classical music concerts were the most expensively produced genre at \$3,156.43 per point. Mystery-detective-horror programs placed fifteenth or next-to-last (which were again women's daytime serials), meanwhile, costing a mere \$397.21 per point to produce.

Translated, the research reveals that the typical PI drama drew fairly sizable audiences at low talent fees, delivering more listeners per advertising dollar than all but one programming category. Other studies have disclosed similar results. Bargain basement rates obviously gave the sponsors more bang for their bucks than nearly any other commercial network fare.

Broadcast PI narratives were often predictable and even repetitious. The atten-



*Mr. District Attorney*  
Jerry Devine (writer), Len Doyle, Vicki Vola, Jay Jostyn

tion of their fans seldom waned despite that fact. Fred MacDonald observes that, at the start of a new tale, "The hero was usually found peacefully and calmly uninvolved. With the introduction of other characters, he inexorably found himself enmeshed in trouble and was physically and intellectually challenged." He accepted the new reality and eventually solved the dilemma, ending the adventure "with a sense of self-confidence and achievement."

Writer R. Austin Freeman simplified the detective story into a mere four-step pattern that is repeatedly displayed in such mystery series: Initially, a crime is committed; clues are gathered; the crime is solved; and the solution is validated.

Ellery Queen, Sherlock Holmes, the *Eno Crime Club* "Manhunter" Spencer Dean and cohort Danny Cassidy were private investigators that pursued this technique, along with a barrage of professional law enforcement agents (in dramas like *Gangbusters*, *Counterspy*, *Mr. District Attorney* and *The FBI in Peace and War*).

Once the forgoing type was firmly established, a second category appeared, whom MacDonald labeled the glamorous detective. The leading character's behav-

ior dominated the action. Frequently adventurous, the figure—usually male—was often paired with an aide who could be anything from a near equal to a virtual neophyte adding little more than verbal exchange. Although a vigilant pursuit of criminals was still essential, the traits of the investigator eclipsed those quests. Familiar heroes exuded much more than mere intellect; audiences were favorably impressed by their vibrant charisma and animated repartee. Any or all of these conditions abounded: "Trivial conversations between the hero and the people he encountered, loquacious descriptions, comedic relationships between the hero and his partner, and even sexual tensions between male and female characters."

The private investigator was in his element in this classification, including a wide range of career and avocational gumshoes like Lamont Cranston (aka *The Shadow*), Mr. and Mrs. North, Richard Diamond, Sam Spade, Johnny Dollar, Mr. Keen, Michael Shayne, Michael Waring (aka *The Falcon*) and plenty of others.

By the late 1940s listeners were introduced to yet a more earthy style of crimefighter, one MacDonald tags as the neo-realistic detective. He claims such individuals helped "expose imperfections within the American system" in series that turned into "positive cultural achievements with intimate ties to progressive realities." The protagonists were characteristically "disillusioned, embittered men" who grudgingly performed their duties, typically addressing clients, culprits, law officers and spectators in an "abusive tone." Declares MacDonald: "They also articulated a general disdain for most of the positive symbols of civilization and social order." Their dramas emphasized law-breaking activity as an indicator of hidden social illnesses. He typifies their central figures as "brutalized" detectives



*Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons*  
Bennett Kilpack

in a "depressingly grim environment." Minus love interests and flirting secretaries, they gained reputations as an unappealingly tough, hard-boiled lot.

The group included Pat Novak, Johnny Madero and Jeff Regan among PIs and lots of cops (Sergeant Joe Friday of *Dagnet*, Captain Frank Kennedy and staff of the *Twenty-First Precinct*, Lieutenant Ben Guthrie and cohorts of *The Line-Up*, Danny Clover of *Broadway Is My Beat*, et al).

The radio sleuth introduced satisfying suspense to American ears daily or weekly through fictionalized drama that—along with the intrigue—offered some of the airwaves' most compelling heroes. These private eyes of the air, whose inception coincided with a stepped-up war against crime in a real world, brought to the nation's living rooms some of the most popular cultural idols of that epoch.

Nowhere in the pages of history can one find greater champions of justice. Their style of amusement was an art, and it struck a note with vast audiences for ages, holding them virtually spellbound by their radios. After all, in the theater of the mind, possibly no other form could have been as uniquely germane. ■



# Do You Hear What I Hear?

BY WAYNE KLATT

The highest-rated morning show in New York City last Christmas Day was simply a tape of seasonal songs playing against a backdrop of a Yule log burning in a fireplace. On that first holiday season since the terrorist attacks, far more New Yorkers tuned in to the 35-year-old tape than they did *Good Morning America*. After the unspeakable horror, they needed to feel a link with the past.

There is something special about an American Christmas that we take for granted. It's that white Christmases, chestnuts roasting on an open fire, and being home for Christmas remind us of the things we have lost or given up. So let me take you back to the stories behind some of the modern carols that we welcome every year like a returning friend.

That most wistful of American carols, "White Christmas," had its origin in tragedy. Although Irving Berlin's family was Jewish, as a child he loved sharing Christmas with his New York neighbors, the O'Haras. But at 5 a.m. December 25, 1926, his three-and-a-half-week-old son, Irving Junior, was found dead in his bassinet from what would now be called Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Berlin may have been an agnostic but he maintained the appearance of holiday cheer for his children. In truth, he dreaded every December 25 because of the memory of his son. So each Christmas Eve, Berlin



White Christmas (1942)  
Bing Crosby

and his wife would tell their young daughters they had some last-minute preparations to do. Then the couple would visit the cemetery and lay flowers on the grave of the baby brother the girls did not realize they had.

Berlin's Oscar-winning song "White Christmas" debuted in the Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire film *Holiday Inn* in 1942. This was something new, a Christmas song without religion and yet intimate. GIs fighting in the snowless Pacific made it an even bigger hit. For them, the song meant everything good back home even though for its composer it meant a past he could never recapture.

Twelve years later, in 1954, Bing sang it on the screen again in the film *White Christmas*, along with co-stars Danny Kaye, Rosemary Clooney and Vera-Ellen.

*Wayne Klatt is an editor at the City News Service of the Chicago Tribune and a free-lance writer.*

Fellow New Yorkers James Gannon and Walter Kent wrote "I'll Be Home for Christmas," another Bing Crosby hit in 1943. The tag line, "I'll be home for Christmas — if only in my dreams," today sounds sad. But for thousands of soldiers and sailors from Greenland to Guadalcanal in World War II it brought hope that when they returned, everything would be as it was before.

Any worthwhile Christmas song has personal stories attached to it, but let me tell you just one: what "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" from *Meet Me in St. Louis* in 1944 meant years later to a teenage girl in Minnesota. The song nowadays is often sung without feeling, but watch and hear the way Judy Garland sings it to cheer Margaret O'Brien up after their father announces he is going to uproot the family and move to New York. With glistening eyes, the little girl hears Judy sing, "Next year, all our troubles will be miles away..."

Now we move to Northfield, Minnesota, in 1965. The world of 16-year-old Kristine Holmgren had just fallen apart when her father announced that he was divorcing her mother and walking out on them both. Kristine had to find a job to help support the family, and she lost her faith in mankind. As she told a newspaper years later, she was riding a bus when a well-dressed older man sat next to her with some Christmas gifts and mentioned that she looked sad. Kristine didn't speak to him, but he left one of his packages with her and wouldn't take it back. The girl went home and had her mother open the gift. Inside was a music box that played "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." Kristine was so touched by a random act of kindness that she later became a Presbyterian minister.

Let's go back to a song that was

written in 1941 but didn't catch on for more than a decade. Katherine Davis, a composer of numerous choral works in Boston, used elements from Spanish and French folk melodies and her own imagination to write a song about a little drummer boy. The idea no doubt was adopted from a French story, "The Juggler and the Lady." To hide her authorship (as violinist Fritz Kreisler was doing with his own little pieces), Davis claimed she had discovered "a Czech carol freely transcribed by C. R. W. Robertson."

The Trapp Family Singers performed the "Czech carol" without drawing much interest. But then arranger Harry Simeone made a few changes, called it "The Little Drummer Boy," and the song rose to first or second place on the Christmas song charts for seven years in a row. The popularity was spurred by the 1958 puppet film on television, to Davis's dismay. She hated what she called the "cutcy-cute" new name and complained up to the time she passed



Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas (1944)  
Margaret O'Brien and Judy Garland

PHOTOFEST

away in 1980 that her creation was being done to death.

Davis was not the only composer surprised by the success of a Christmas song. Take Jay Livingston and Ray Evans, contract composers for Paramount Pictures. They went wherever the studio sent them, and in 1951 they were sent to the set of *The Lemon Drop Kid*. You may know it as one of Bob Hope's better movies, but at

the time the film was in trouble. Hope saw the rough cut and refused to let Paramount release it for Christmas. He knew it needed more jokes and a little more heart. Cartoon specialist Frank Tashlin was hired to provide the yuks, and Jay and Ray, who had won an Academy Award for Bob's "Buttons and Bows" in 1948, came up with a sweet yet funny urban Christmas song, "Silver Bells." Lyrics such as "Santa's big scene" show that it was written for someone playing a two-bit racetrack tout. Like so many others, "Silver Bells" did not catch on until years later, and eventually Bob was expected to sing it at every Christmas special on television.

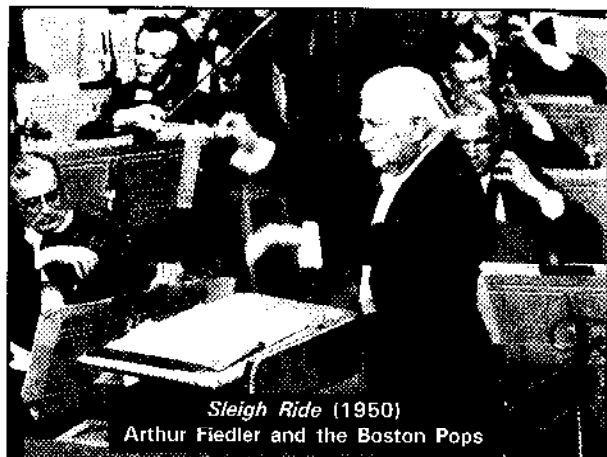
But then, some holiday songs were instant hits. Arthur Fiedler, the ever-popular conductor of the Boston Pops, often asked

his arranger, L e R o y Anderson, to write little "extras" for a concert. A few of these e n c o r e pieces are beautiful, l i k e "Saraband,"

others are funny, like "Syncopated Clock" and "The Typewriter," but nothing was a bigger success than the two-minute-and-forty-eight-second bit of energy called "Sleigh Ride," which first neighed and cracked its whip in 1950. Oh, to have been in that first audience!

Let's not forget poor Rudolph, although his story is well known. In 1939, the management at Montgomery Ward's in Chicago wanted a holiday story for a giveaway promotion, and copywriter (advertising writer) Robert May, a thin young man with a wide grin, came up with a reindeer that had a glow-in-the-dark nose. Copies of the prose story were given to millions of visitors in the toy department over the next seven years.

When the store gave May the copyright to his story, he had it printed as a little book and handed a copy to his brother-in-law, songwriter Johnny Marks. Marks put the story into verse and wrote a version of the tune in 1947 but regarded it as "easily one of the worst songs ever written." But a year later—for the only time in his long life of 900 songs—a new melody for the lyrics came to him not at the piano but as he was walking down a street. He persuaded Gene Autry to record it in 1949, and since then the song has sold at least 100 million records.



*Sleigh Ride* (1950)  
Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops

PHOTOEST



*Silver Bells* (1951)  
Bob Hope

May lived out the rest of his life in Skokie, Illinois, satisfied that his creation was still making children happy. And the profits let him send his six children through college. Marks went on to write "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" in 1956, as well as "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" (1960), and Burl Ives' "A Holly-Jolly Christmas" (1963).

This brings us to Mel Tormé. He might have gone even further in show business than he did if he had not been so versatile. He was a restaurant singer in Chicago at age four, a drummer, band leader, minor actor, biographer of Judy Garland, TV writer (some episodes of *The Virginian*) and a modern-jazz singer with a "velvet voice," what there was of it. Like Irving Berlin, he was raised in a Jewish family but had fond memories of past Christmases. One day in 1946 he and a friend, Bob Wells, decided to write a holiday song and talked about physical things the season meant to them. Soon after the two made a mental list of such favorites as chestnuts roasting on an open fire, Tormé wrote the melody for "The Christmas Song." Like all good seasonal songs, it never sounds dated.

The holidays are such that they can be celebrated with such divergent songs as the Appalachian-inspired "I Wonder as I Wander" by John Jacob Niles and the cheery "We Need a Little Christmas," which Jerry Herman wrote for the scene in *Mame* in

which Auntie Mame decorates Agnes Gooch with a string of lights, as if her dowdy secretary were a balsam pine.

There is one other modern Christmas carol that lingers in our mind, Regney and Shayne's "Do You Hear What I Hear?," a



*Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* (1947)  
Gene Autry

Johnny Mathis favorite from 1962, and then a frost settled on the composing of holiday music.

Rock-and-roll was just part of a trend in which young people broke away from the traditions of their families. But as the years went on, some of those 1960s liberals, this writer among them, came to feel that something was missing. If we take Christmas from our lives, what is there to replace it? And so the old carols come back to us, not so much the Frostys (1950) and Suzy Snowflakes (1951) but songs that speak to different aspects of ourselves.

They make us think about the best of the past. ■



*The Christmas Song* (1946)  
Mel Tormé

PHOTOEST

Frank Lovejoy has catapulted to screen stardom after gaining a reputation as one of the most brilliant actors in radio.

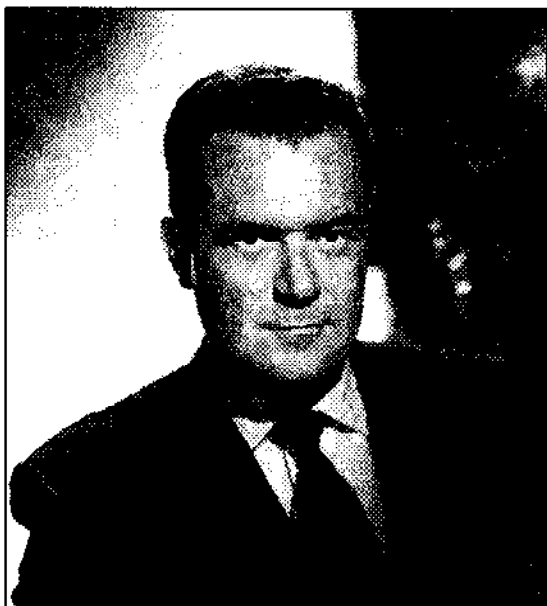
Warner Bros.' *Goodbye, My Fancy*, which he recently completed, will add further lustre to his screen reputation. He plays a magazine photographer in that film, in which he co-stars with Joan Crawford and Robert Young.

Lovejoy was signed to a Warner Bros. contract after his memorable performance as a newspaperman in *Three Secrets*, produced by United States Pictures, Inc. for Warner Bros. distribution.

His first film under his new contract was *Breakthrough*, in which he co-starred with David Brian and John Agar as a tough Army sergeant. It marked the second role of its kind for Lovejoy, who made his movie debut as the hard-bitten Sergeant Mingo in *Home of the Brave*.

Lovejoy also starred as the FBI informer in Warner Bros.' *I was a Communist for the FBI*, from the Saturday Evening Post

*This is the official Warner Bros. studio biography for Frank Lovejoy, issued on February 22, 1951. Frank Lovejoy died October 2, 1962 at age 50.*



series by Matt Cvetic as told to Pete Martin.

Frank Lovejoy was born in New York, the son of Frank Lovejoy, Sr. and Mrs. Dora Garvey Lovejoy. His father was a salesman for Pathe films. Frank started earning a living at an early age. At 15 he was a runner for a Wall Street firm and, as with many others from Wall Street, 1929 was a turning point in his life.

Young Lovejoy turned to acting. There wasn't much money in it for him but he kept at it. He served as apprenticeship at the Theatre Mart in Brooklyn and in other little theatre activities.

His first major role came in Elmer Rice's *Judgment Day* in 1934, his Broadway debut. Next season, however, saw him at the Barter Theatre in Virginia, after which he toured in *The Pursuit of Happiness*. The tour closed in Cincinnati. On an off chance, Frank applied for a job at radio station WLW in that city. He was accepted and became part of the staff. It was here that he learned radio technique as an announcer and a dramatic actor. It was a technique that was valuable not only in radio but in subsequent work on the stage and now in pictures.

Lovejoy eventually returned to New York

to continue his radio work. Before long he was on so many network shows and was so much in demand that he was rated as one of the most highly paid actors on the air. He played regularly in *Gangbusters*, *This is Your FBI*, *Mr. District Attorney*, *Boston Blackie*, *Philo Vance*, *Philip Morris Playhouse*, *The Kate Smith Hour* and many others. Lovejoy estimates that he's done over 4,000 separate network shows.

Regardless of his success in radio, Lovejoy still had the theatre in his blood. In 1940 he went into a Broadway show, *The Snark Was a Boojum*, which lasted about as long as its title makes sense. Although it was a flop, the play was important to Lovejoy for in the cast was Joan Banks, also a stage and radio player. They were married shortly after they met and now have two children, Judith, 8, and Stephen, 5.

The failure of *The Snark* didn't deter Frank from seeking another Broadway role and he played one of the leads in Harry Brown's *Sound of Hunting*, a play which also listed Burt Lancaster in the cast.

Lovejoy's next Broadway appearance was in a play by Bella and Samuel Spewack called *Woman Bites Dog*, and here he rubbed elbows with an unknown named Kirk Douglas. Here Lovejoy was seen by a young entrepreneur named Stanley Kramer, who signed him for a newly-formed organization called Story Productions, in which Kramer was a partner.

Several years later, Kramer emerged as the producer of two movie hits that ran almost concurrently, *The Champion*, starring Kirk Douglas, and *Home of the Brave*, in which Frank Lovejoy played such a memorable part.

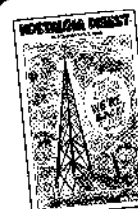
Story Productions was formed by Kramer and two associates to produce *This Side of Innocence*. Lovejoy put his name on a contract which excluded him from all other activity for a year and was paid a high salary to sit in Hollywood and

await the picture.

At the end of the year *This Side of Innocence* still hadn't been started and Frank was off the Story Productions payroll and free to do as he wished. By now he was well established in California and soon was duplicating his New York radio career. Before long Kramer formed Screen Plays and Lovejoy got the job of Sergeant Mingo in *Home of the Brave*. But this time he stayed in radio, too. He is currently Randy Stone, the newspaperman in *Nightbeat*, a network show.

Lovejoy is six feet tall, dark-haired and hazel-eyed. He has a crisp manner of speaking with an earnest dry quality. He approaches each role intelligently, analyzes the character, situation and the emotional conflicts inherent in the role. The fact that he seems to take everything simply, easily and naturally is a tribute to his own ability as a performer. He does all his struggling with the character and has mastered it before he gets to the camera or microphone. ■

NOTE-- Tune in TWTD January 18 for a four-hour salute to Frank Lovejoy.



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## DECEMBER 2002

★ INDICATES A WORLD WAR II BROADCAST OF SPECIAL INTEREST

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7 RADIO TO PLAN YOUR CHRISTMAS LIST BY

**THIS IS YOUR FBI** (12-24-48) "The Return of St. Nick" featuring Stacy Harris. A settlement house Santa disappears and is accused of a crime. Equitable Life Assurance Society, ABC. (30 min)

**JIMMY DURANTE SHOW** (12-24-47) The Schnozzola himself welcomes guest 11-year-old Margaret O'Brien for some tree-trimming and Christmas fun. Rexall, NBC. (29 min)

**ADVENTURES OF NERO WOLFE** (12-22-50) "Case of the Slaughtered Santas" starring Sidney Greenstreet as the chair-bound detective, with Larry Dobkin as Archie Goodwin, his assistant and legman, investigating a murder cover-up. Sustaining, NBC. (30 min)

**JACK BENNY PROGRAM** (12-8-46) Jack is doing his Christmas shopping in a Beverly Hills

department store and can't make up his mind about the purchase of shoelaces — metal tips or plastic tips. *This is the first of the historic and hilarious Benny Christmas shopping shows and is related to the Benny broadcast scheduled for next week on TWTD.* Mel Blanc as the sales clerk; Frank Nelson as the floor-walker; Veola Vonn as the lingerie clerk; Elliott Lewis as the perfume clerk. Plus the regulars: Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Dennis Day, Don Wilson, Artie Auerbach as Mr. Kitzel. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (28 min)

**RICHARD DIAMOND, PRIVATE DETECTIVE** (12-19-51) Dick Powell stars as the detective who tells his favorite Christmas story, "A Christmas Carol" starring regular cast members, in character, as the various characters in the Charles Dickens story. Participating are Virginia Gregg, Alan Reed, Arthur Q. Brian, Barney Phillips, Jack Kruschen. Camel Cigarettes, ABC. (27 min)

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14 RADIO TO ADDRESS CHRISTMAS CARDS BY

**JACK BENNY PROGRAM** (12-15-46) After addressing his Christmas cards and going to rehearsal, Jack and Mary's sister Babe go to the department store to exchange the shoelaces he bought last week. *Second of two consecutive and related Christmas shopping broadcasts.* Featured are Phil Harris, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Dennis Day, Don Wilson, Mel Blanc, Peter Leeds, Sara Berner, Elvia Allman. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (27 min)

**TWO HOURS OF STARS** (12-25-48) An all-star Christmas Day program, the seventh in the series of December holiday specials presented by the sponsor, Elgin Watch Company of Elgin, Illinois. Host Don Ameche presents Lauritz Melchior, Al Jolson, Danny Thomas,

Edgar Bergen, Charlie McCarthy and Mortimer Snerd, Jo Stafford with Red Ingle and the Natural Seven, violinist Sonda Bakova, Cass Daley, Ozzie and Harriet Nelson, Jack Kirkwood and others. Ameche narrates a dramatization of the Henry Van Dyke Christmas classic, "The Other Wise Man." Elgin Watch Co., NBC. (33 min & 36 min & 32 min & 21 min)

**BOB HOPE SHOW** (12-28-48) "By transcription," it's Bob's Christmas Day show from Berlin, Germany as presented for the troops of the Berlin Airlift. Guests are General Jimmy Doolittle, songwriter Irving Berlin, actress Jinx Falkenberg, singers Bill Farrell and Jane Harvey, comedienne Irene Ryan. Irving Berlin sings "Operation Vittles," a special song he wrote for the Airlift. Swan Soap, NBC. (29 min)

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21 RADIO TO WRAP, BAKE AND DECORATE BY

**HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE** (12-23-48) "Silent Night," the story of the origin of the beloved Christmas carol and how it came to be written "130 years ago" in 1818. James Hilton is host and narrator. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (28 min)

★ **COMMAND PERFORMANCE** (12-24-42) An all-star program sending Christmas greetings to our fighting men during WW II. Providing holiday cheer are Bob Hope, the Andrews Sisters, Red Skelton, Spike Jones and his City Slickers, Ginny Simms, Bing Crosby, Ethel Waters. Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Charles Laughton, Kay Kyser, Dinah Shore, Jack Benny, and Fred Allen. In addition to its military audience around the world, this special edition of the program is also being broadcast stateside to the audience on the home front. AFRS/All networks. (31 min & 28 min)

**ONE MAN'S FAMILY** (12-25-49) "Christmas Morning with the Barbour's" is an isolated episode of the long-running series. Henry and Fanny Barbour reflect upon their life together; Henry makes a resolution for the coming New Year; the family gathers for Christmas breakfast and a phone call from England. J. Anthony Smythe as Henry Barbour; Minetta Ellen as Fanny Barbour; Michael Raffetto as Paul. Written and created by Carlton E. Morse. Sustaining, NBC. (29 min)

★ **TREASURY STAR PARADE** (1943) "A Modern Scrooge" starring Lionel Barrymore as a man who thinks War Bonds are Humbug! U.S. Treasury Department. (14 min)

**SUSPENSE** (12-17-61) "Yuletide Miracle" is the story of a man on parole who is moved by the spirit of Christmas. Cast includes Larry Haines, Santos Ortega, Joe DiSantis, Rosemary Rice, Katharine Raht, Bill Lipton. Sustaining, CBS. (24 min)

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28 SEASON'S GREETINGS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

*Repeating program material from our December 29, 2001 broadcast.*

**ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET** (1-2-49) New Year resolutions are in the air as Ozzie wants to compete with Harriet to show that men are superior to women. Announcer is Vern Smith. International Silver Co., NBC. (29 min)

★ **FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (12-30-41) Fibber has installed the door chimes they received as a Christmas gift. Mrs. Uppington (Isabel Randolph) invites the McGees to her New Year's Eve party while Mayor LaTrivia (Gale Gordon) needs Fibber for some War Bond work. Jim and Marian Jordan star. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (30 min)

**GUEST STAR** (1940s) Joan Leslie appears with Barton Yarborough in a New Year's sketch "Time is Sacred." U.S. Treasury Department. (14 min)

**SWEENEY AND MARCH** (12-31-47) Bob Sweeney and Hal March star with Hans Conried, Hy Averbach, Jane Morgan, Florence Hallop, Tommy Bernard. As they make plans for a New Year's Eve block party, Sweeney and March are selected to give the 12 Midnight signal to the town. Sustaining, CBS. (30 min)

**SUSPENSE** (12-31-61) "The Old Man" stars Leon Janney with Lawson Zerbe, Larry Haines, Ralph Camargo, Rita Lloyd. An old man is being forced to retire and he doesn't want to give up his job. Sustaining, CBS. (25 min)

**MEL BLANC SHOW** (12-31-46) Mel Blanc stars with Hans Conried, Joe Kearns, Mary Jane Croft, Earle Ross, the Sportsmen, Victor Miller and the orchestra. Mel is going to play all the characters in "The Pageant of 1946," a New Year's play presented for the Loyal Order of Benevolent Zebras. Colgate Tooth Powder, CBS. (23 min)

★ **JACK BENNY PROGRAM** (12-28-41) Jack and the gang present their annual New Year's play, "The New Tenant." Jack is the Old Year, Mary Livingstone is Columbia, Phil Harris is Uncle Sam, Don Wilson is Texas. Jell-O, NBC. (23 min)

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**JANUARY 2003**

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 4**

**THE SHADOW** (1-11-48) "The Bones of the Dragon" stars Bret Morrison as Lamont Cranston with Grace Matthews as the lovely Margo Lane. An evil Chinese bone polisher is involved in Tong War activities. Andre Baruch announces. Blue Coal, MBS. (29 min)

**MY FRIEND IRMA** (4-11-47) *First program in the series.* Marie Wilson stars as Irma Peterson with Cathy Lewis as Jane Stacy. Irma and Jane meet for the first time. Sustaining, CBS. (29 min)

**DIMENSION X** (10-29-50) "No Contact" starring Luis Van Rooten with Cameron Prud'homme. Space expeditions to the planet Volta have encountered a galactic reef which has not permitted explorers to penetrate or return to Earth. Sustaining, NBC. (29 min)

**MR. DISTRICT ATTORNEY** (5-19-48) "Spring Fever" starring Jay Jostyn as Mr. District Attorney, Len Doyle as Harrington, Vicki Volz as Miss Miller. The DA, in search of a murderer, calls out the riot squad. Ipana, Sal Hepatica, NBC. (28 min)

**PHIL HARRIS--ALICE FAYE SHOW** (3-20-49) Phil is determined to be a thoughtful husband and buy Alice a birthday gift, even though it's two days after her birthday. Elliott Lewis as Frankie Remley, Rexall, NBC. (29 min)

**INNER SANCTUM** (4-24-45) "Song of the Slasher" starring Arnold Moss. A musician is suspected of being a murderer because of the strange tune he whistles. Host is Raymond Edward Johnson. Lipton Tea and Soup, CBS. (29 min)

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 11**

**'TILL DEATH DO US PART IN SEVEN PARTS**

*Repeating program material from our January 12, 2002 broadcast, seven different stories with the same title:*

★ **SUSPENSE** (12-15-42) "Till Death Do Us Part" starring Peter Lorre as a jealous husband who plans the perfect murder. Cast includes Mercedes McCambridge, Alice Frost and David Gothard. The story is set in England in late December 1941, following the U.S. declaration of war. Sustaining, CBS. (30 min)

**THE WHISTLER** (4-14-48) "Till Death Do Us Part." In a bar, a down-on-his-luck man meets a woman who offers him a drink and a \$5,000 proposal. CBS. (25 min)

**THEATRE FIVE** (4-6-65) "Till Death Do Us" starring Elspeth Eric, Bill Mason, Hal Burdick. A married woman and her golf pro boyfriend have plans to be together forever. Fred Foy announces. Syndicated, ABC. (20 min)

**THE SHADOW** (3-6-49) "Unto Death Do Us Part" stars Bret Morrison as Lamont Cranston with Grace Matthews as the lovely Margo Lane. A woman fears her husband is plan-

ning to have her killed — just as he had his first wife killed. Sustaining, MBS. (28 min)

**LET GEORGE DO IT** (1-24-49) "Till Death Do Us Part." Bob Bailey stars as George Valentine, free-lance detective ("Danger is my stock-in-trade") with Frances Robinson as his secretary, Brooksie. Valentine is asked to investigate a suspected marriage-for-money between "a 42-year-old spinster and a 30-year-old ballroom dancer." Cast includes Georgia Backus, Lurene Tuttle. Standard Oil, MBS. (29 min)

**SUSPENSE** (11-5-61) "Till Death Do Us Part" starring Sam Gray with Bill Lipton, Elaine Rost, Herb Duncan, Carl Frank, Jim Boles. A man decides his wife should die because she keeps getting on his nerves. Sustaining, CBS. (23 min)

**INNER SANCTUM** (10-16-45) "Till Death Do Us Part" starring Ann Shepherd and Larry Haines with Jackson Beck. On their wedding night, a newlywed couple witness a murder. Paul McGrath is the host, who opens the creaking door of the Inner Sanctum. Lipton Tea and Soup, CBS. (30 min)

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 18**  
**REMEMBERING FRANK LOVEJOY**

**MURDER AND MR. MALONE** (5-24-48) Frank Lovejoy stars as John J. Malone, famous criminal lawyer, who defends a gambler involved in the murder of a Chicago citizen. Cast includes Hans Conried, Jack Webb. Guild Wine, ABC. (29 min)

**SUSPENSE** (4-20-53) "Public Defender" starring Frank Lovejoy as a man who committed a murder and got away with it— for a while. Cast includes Herb Butterfield, Paula Winslowe, Lou Krugman, Joseph Kearns, Charles Calvert. Harlow Wilcox announces. Auto-Lite, CBS. (28 min)

**(LUX) RADIO THEATRE** (11-16-54) "Mother Didn't Tell Me" starring Dorothy McGuire and Frank Lovejoy. Romantic comedy about a patient who falls in love with her doctor, a busy and dedicated man. Cast features Barbara Fuller, Bill Johnstone, Carlton Young, Jerry Hausner. Irving Cummings is host. AFRS rebroadcast. (18 min & 19 min & 19 min)

**HERE COMES MC BRIDE** (5-19-49) *First program in the series.* Frank Lovejoy stars as detective Rex McBride, who finds a dead man in his room. Sustaining, NBC. (27 min)

**NIGHTBEAT** (7-31-50) "City at your Fingertips" stars Frank Lovejoy as Randy Stone, reporter covering the nightbeat for the Chicago Star. A mis-dialed phone number results in a big problem for Stone, who learns that a woman's life is in danger. Cast includes Lurene Tuttle, Peter Leeds, Jay Novello. Wheaties, NBC. (29 min)

*Read the article about Frank Lovejoy on page 18.*

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 25**  
**EDGAR BERGEN CENTENNIAL**  
**1903 — 2003**

★ **CHARLIE MC CARTHY SHOW** (6-21-42) Edgar Bergen stars with Charlie, Mortimer Snerd, Judy Garland, Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, Ray Noble and the orchestra. Judy and Charlie go shopping for a gift for Bergen on Father's Day; Bud and Lou do a farm routine. Chase and Sanborn Coffee, NBC. (30 min)

**CHARLIE MC CARTHY SHOW** (2-20-44) *Excerpt.* A classic confrontation between Charlie and W. C. Fields in the barbershop. Don Ameche, Verna Felton. (10 min)

**THIS IS YOUR LIFE** (3-8-50) Ralph Edwards stars with help from Edgar Bergen to spotlight

the life of Charlie McCarthy. People from Charlie's past, including Maureen O'Sullivan and Miss Kennedy, Bergen's Northwestern University speech instructor, turn up to salute our wooden friend. *First of two consecutive and related programs.* Phillip Morris Cigarettes, NBC. (27 min)

**CHARLIE MC CARTHY SHOW** (11-2-47) *Excerpt.* When Charlie has a toothache, Edgar Bergen and Ray Noble persuade him to go to the dentist, where he gets gas to put him to sleep for the removal of a tooth. While under, Charlie dreams he has gone to "heck," where he meets the Devil, Fred Allen. (17 min)

**CHARLIE MC CARTHY SHOW** (1952) *Excerpt.* It's the Wedding of the Century as Charlie is about to wed Marilyn Monroe. (10 min)

**THIS IS YOUR LIFE** (3-15-50) Ralph Edwards is back for another week of tributes to Edgar Bergen's little friend, Charlie McCarthy. Guests include Cary Grant, Elsa Maxwell, Rudy Vallee, Dorothy Lamour, Mortimer Snerd, William Boyd. Phillip Morris Cigarettes, NBC. (27 min)

**CHARLIE MC CARTHY SHOW** (12-7-47) Edgar Bergen stars with Charlie McCarthy, Mortimer Snerd, and guests Roy Rogers and the Sons of the Pioneers. Bergen tries to tutor Charlie; Roy Rogers gives advice on being a movie cowboy. Royal Puddings, Chase and Sanborn Coffee, NBC. (30 min)

*Read the cover story about Edgar Bergen on page 31.*



**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**-- Stan Freberg hosts an hour of vintage radio programs from the golden age. *WBBM-AM, 780 AM, Monday thru Friday, Midnight-1 a.m.*

*Complete program schedule and streaming audio for the "When Radio Was" series may be found on the Internet at [www.RadioSpirits.com](http://www.RadioSpirits.com) Click on "On the Radio" for the daily and monthly broadcast schedules and archived programs.*

# CHRISTMAS ON STATE STREET

BY ROBERT P. LEDERMANN

Most Americans, no matter what their ethnic background or heritage may be, celebrate the holidays, and still in our ever-changing world, throngs of nostalgic-minded people young and old alike come back to Chicago's State Street at Christmas time. These traditions are kept in a small corner of our hearts, in a place that is filled with warm, sweet memories. State Street's appeal keeps people coming back year after year to honor a holiday tradition unique to Chicago's long and proud history.

Let's go back to Christmas 1946: The air outside is cold and crisp and creates a feeling of Christmas excitement. Each building has its own architectural details, but all individually contribute to the charm that is Chicago's State Street.

As we journey back to visit some of the great stores that were, and in some cases remain, located on State Street, I hope I will mention a favorite of yours. Christmas was a magical time of year, and in the days surrounding the holidays State Street came to life. Those days were wonderful.

Starting at the south end of the Loop and heading north on State Street, every store window was alive with the holiday season.

\* \* \*

Editor's note: Here the author takes us on

*Robert P. Ledermann is a lifelong Chicago resident and Chicago nostalgia buff. He is an authority on Uncle Mistletoe and extensive collector of Christmas memorabilia. This article is an excerpt from his new book, Christmas on State Street, published by Arcadia and reprinted with permission. Ordering information follows the article on page 30.*



The author with Santa on State Street, some years ago.

ROBERT LEDERMANN COLLECTION

*a word-and-picture stroll visiting, first, the Sears store, located at the southwest corner of State and Van Buren, with a stop across the street at Goldblatt's. Then we're on to Walgreens, Lytton's and Rothschild's, to Woolworth's, Bond's, Benson-Rixon, Baskins, and The Fair. Next we visit Montgomery Ward (and learn about the creation of Rudolph, the Red-nosed Reindeer), the Palmer House, Broadstreet's and Peacock's. We make stops at Carson, Pirie, Scott, and the Boston Store, plus Mandel Brothers and Wieboldt's (to check out the ToyTeria and the Cinnamon Bear).*

\* \* \*

Finally we arrive at the crown jewel of State Street, Marshall Field's, located on one entire square block bounded by Washington, State, Randolph and Wabash. As people scurry up and down the snow-laden streets of the Loop, we find ourselves an-

ticipating the coming holiday season. Look around and notice about you all the wonders of Christmas. Even the streetlights have an appearance all their own. See the happy smiling faces of the people passing carrying brightly wrapped gift packages. Everyone seems to be getting ready, each in his own way.

Field's current store, as we see it today, was opened to the public on September 30, 1907. If you can imagine, in that first week some 300,000 visitors entered through its welcoming doorways. It's hard to comprehend that Marshall Field (The Merchant Prince), who founded this store, had arrived in Chicago from Massachusetts at the young age of 22 way back in 1856. His incredible idea to start an empire selling merchandise had its meager beginnings on the muddy streets of Chicago.

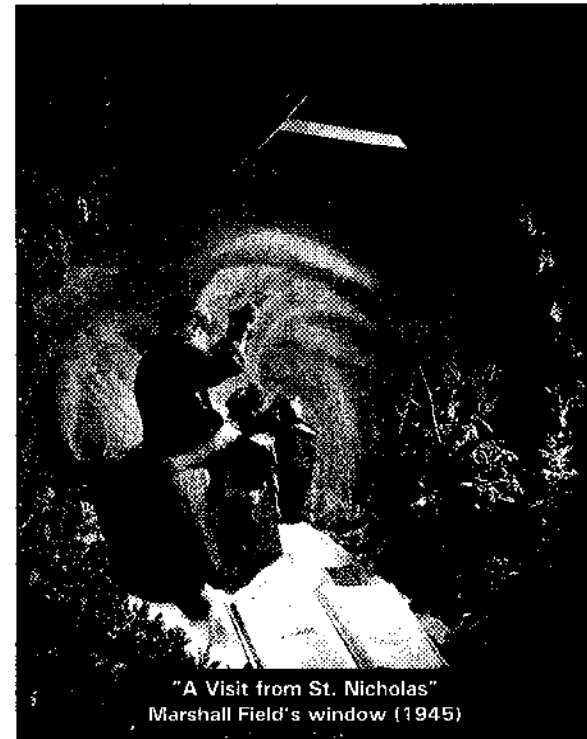
Of foremost importance to Marshall Field's is the creation each year of the famous Field's windows.

Generally, early in January a theme is created and formed, colors and materials are thought out, and many times a scale model of each window is presented for the executives' final approval or changes. After they give their approval, the window display staff get the task of replicating these models to life-size proportions in the windows. From Labor Day on, the window staff will work full time to complete each of the windows. There were 13 original windows with months of planning and work going into each one before it is unveiled to the public in the weeks before Thanksgiving. The finest materials and meticulous workmanship go into these windows, including such items

as real pewter pieces or an antique miniature piece of furniture.

Before entering the store, we stop to admire the large granite columns that effectively make a mark by just being there. Their imposing beauty echoes the gigantic vista of the Main entrance on State Street. These columns are believed to be the largest monoliths in the nation—They are 48 feet 9 inches high and 3 feet 6 inches in diameter.

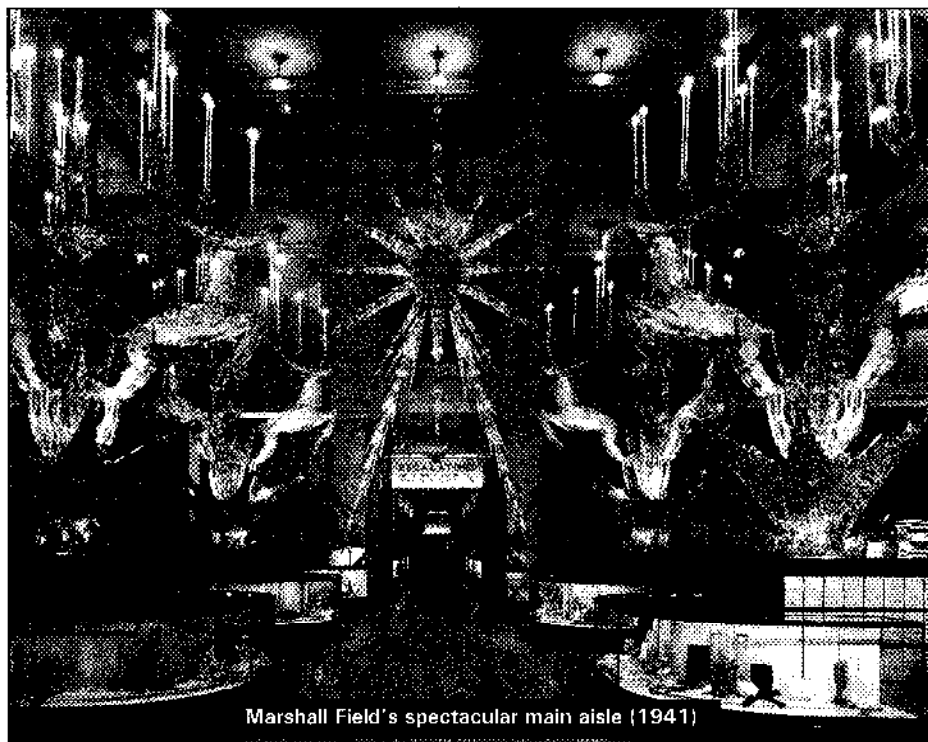
Passing through the revolving doors at Field's, we are transported into a place of wonderment: the main aisles. Over our heads, silver, white, and gold snowflakes are cascading down, dangling as if from the incredible mosaic of the Tiffany dome. The dome has about 1.6 million pieces of glass. It is said to be the finest example of its kind. It took 50 artisans a year and a half to install. At the time of the dome's commissioning, the then president of



"A Visit from St. Nicholas"  
Marshall Field's window (1945)

MARSHALL FIELD'S COLLECTION





Marshall Field's spectacular main aisle (1941)

MARSHALL FIELD'S COLLECTION

Marshall Field's, Mr. John Shedd, founder of Chicago's famous Shedd Aquarium, helped Louis Comfort Tiffany with every phase of the dome—from planning the curving of the multi-colored Favrite glass structure through to its completion, when it became the highlight of the vast 385-foot aisle. The dome was unveiled to the public on the first day of the formal opening of the completed retail store.

\* \* \*

There is a feeling of anticipation as we journey up to the Walnut Room restaurant. We could either use the gleaming stainless steel escalators, which were first installed in 1933 to commemorate Chicago's Century of Progress Exposition, or cruise up the elevators to the 7th floor, where more delightful things await us. We decide to take the elevators, which have an interesting story to tell on their own. One of the Field's elevator operators was Dorothy Lamour,

who wasn't an actress at the time, but gained her entry in to show business by singing at an audition in Chicago. She was in such a hurry to get to the audition on time that she still was wearing her elevator uniform.

The elevator door opens wide and we step into the elegant setting of the Walnut Room restaurant. Surrounding us are Circassian walnut paneling and crystal chandelier sconces that enhance the beauty of the natural wood. There are square oak tables covered with white linen cloths, silver plate service sets of utensils, silver plated condiment sets, cold beakers of fresh water, and a vase of fresh flowers.

In the center of this beautiful setting stands the great tree. This tradition began in 1907. The tree itself stands a towering 45 feet high from base to top. During the days when Field's had a fresh Christmas tree, the procedure would be that in late

autumn, team members would head out for either Lake Superior County in Minnesota or the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to select the tree with the aid of a professional timber expert.

The fresh evergreen trees that were first introduced created somewhat of a problem. A Chicago fireman would always keep a visual watch guarding against a fire. Just think of the destruction, let alone the panic and confusion a disaster such as this might cause. Because of this danger, a change to an artificial tree was made to ease the minds of all concerned. In the early 1960s Field's negotiated a commission for the creation of such a tree with Charles Cohen and his partner Gus Mittlemark of the Colonial Decorative Display Company of New York. The original artificial tree they made still stands today.

"Some of the larger branches are as long as 15 feet and can weigh as much as 50 pounds each," Mr. Cohen told me in 1980, on one of his trips to Field's to personally supervise the tree's setup. He was a fine man who took personal pride in his work.

Before the artificial tree is trimmed, scaffolding is built around it enabling the tree trimmers to decorate it. A basic theme is chosen each year. The trimmers climb high up on the scaffolding and guarantee that each of the ornaments is secured and perfectly placed on the tree. These ornaments were usually all handmade throughout the year by Field's employees. Using a master chart designed by the Interior Display department, ornaments of three various sizes would be hung on the tree accordingly: small for the top branches, medium sized for the middle section, and larger ones at the bottom.



Fresh tree in the Walnut Room (1951)

MARSHALL FIELD'S COLLECTION

In years past you could look up to the very top and would find that Uncle Mistletoe had flown to his favorite spot, at the top of the tree, where he observed all that was happening below.

\* \* \*

One might ask, "How did Uncle Mistletoe come to be?" Not in the cold snowy winter but on an extremely warm spring evening in 1946, in the Williams Bay, Wisconsin, summer home of Johanna Osborne, a Marshall Field's employee. Her boss John Moss, Director of Design, had approached her a few weeks earlier with a new project. He had told her of all the past windows and how they now wanted something completely different that would be Field's alone. Now at her summer home, Johanna's thoughts turned to her favorite uncle, Uncle



Ola, who lived in Oslo, Norway. Her fondness for Charles Dickens and his characters, and another favorite of hers, *The Arabian Nights*, all combined into a single thought. This was going to be her idea behind Uncle Mistletoe. She remembered her uncle as being somewhat stout, with white hair, a very jolly person, and one who loved children.

Johanna told her husband, Addis Osborne, about her project and he developed some marvelous little sketches that captured Uncle Mistletoe for the first time on paper. Addis' background in art and drawing was just what was needed to depict this whimsical new character. Addis was an associate lecturer in charge of the children's classes for the Raymond Fund at the Chicago Art Institute.

When she brought her ideas and Addis' drawings of Uncle Mistletoe to the attention of John Moss and Lawrence Sizer, vice-president of finance, they immediately became enthusiastic. Mr. Sizer was at that time also director of public relations. Little did they know then how overwhelming the success of Uncle Mistletoe would become. During this meeting it was determined that something was needed to accompany the character, such as a story-poem in the windows.

\* \* \*

Helen McKinna and Johanna created the first set of new windows for Field's with Uncle Mistletoe in 1946: "A Christmas Dream." It was their combined thoughts and love for this little character that made

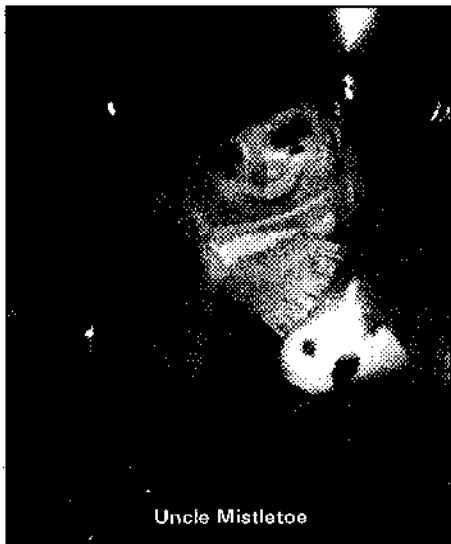
these and future Christmas windows such a success. Their simple idea of Christmas as being a time of giving and sharing with others was a strong theme in developing the character's personality. Special treatment and care were provided in every detail. The windows were such a triumph they were repeated in 1947.

In these windows, Uncle Mistletoe is seen using a flying carpet. This concept as a method of transportation was taken from the classic story *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*, by Sir Richard Burton, one of Johanna's favorites.

The two youngsters, Jim-Jam and Joann, were patterned after her own niece and nephew. Naming Uncle Mistletoe, however, was a different story. Johanna wanted to use the name Marshall for Marshall Field, but after much discussion, it was decided to call him Uncle Mistletoe. "The

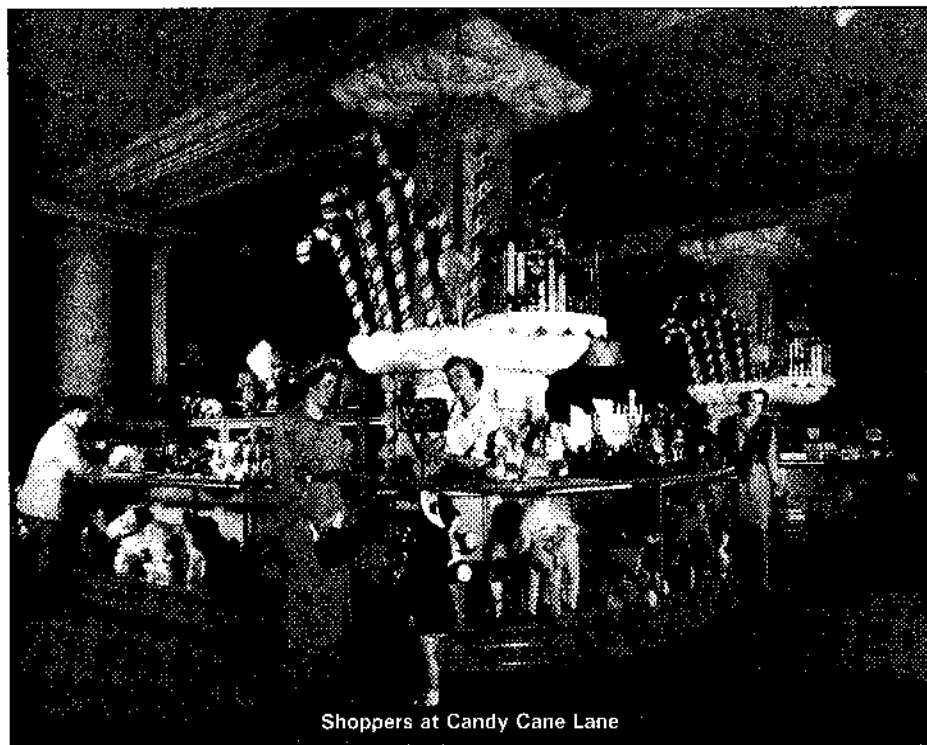
Spirit of Christmas."

Just as Bob Cratchit needed Mrs. Cratchit and Mr. Fezziwig surely needed Mrs. Fezziwig, so did Uncle Mistletoe need a partner, a friend, a wife. Aunt Holly was all of these and more. She was affectionate and sweet, and she would take her place next to Uncle Mistletoe in the 1948 Christmas windows entitled "A Christmas Surprise." White-haired Aunt Holly is always seen wearing a white apron over her red dress and matching red cape. She wears a cameo pin and her hair is pinned up in a bun. She wears reading spectacles to help her correctly read all those cookie recipes.



Uncle Mistletoe

ROBERT LEDERMANN COLLECTION



Shoppers at Candy Cane Lane

MARSHALL FIELD'S COLLECTION

It's not surprising that her favorite hobbies are baking cookies and sewing new clothes for Uncle Mistletoe. So together, starting in 1948, they were both recognized as permanent residents of "Cozy Cloud Cottage." Live Aunt Holly and Uncle Mistletoe characters greeted the children. Cozy Cloud Cottage was on Field's 8th floor. Each year, the wooden cottage would be all decked out and freshly painted. Youngsters waited up to two hours in long lines to finally have a visit with Santa Claus and to see a real live Uncle Mistletoe and Aunt Holly greet them, passing out "Official Kindness Club" buttons or perhaps a photo of themselves. Some years you even could have a 3-D picture taken with Uncle Mistletoe, in color, with a holder that folded into an envelope for mailing off to Grandma, all for \$1.65.

\* \* \*

A day at Marshall Field's wouldn't be complete without a stop at the toy depart-

ment, Candy Cane Lane, on the 4th floor. The toy department had giant candy canes hovering above you and below, the counters were filled with fine-quality toys from all over the world. Imaginative and fantastic toys; there were hand painted lead soldiers from England and hand-carved wooden toys and dolls with real hair from Germany. There were stuffed animals, electric trains, and games. Of course, in 1948 you could purchase your very own original 15 1/2 inch-high Uncle Mistletoe doll with removable hat and coat made of felt for \$8.95, or a hand puppet for \$2.95. A record sold for 79 cents and many other items dealing with Uncle Mistletoe could be purchased at the Gift Court Boutique, located on the 2nd floor.

Newspaper ads began with the traditional Thanksgiving Day papers and ran through the Christmas Day editions. The first series of printed ads would show Field's col-

orful gift boxes, and the second series was connected with the opening day of the traditional State Street windows. The third series of ads were the gift certificates, and the fourth showed a nostalgic scene called Christmas Time. In the grand finale Uncle Mistletoe appears in all the traditional holiday ads, saying to all his new friends, "Merry Christmas to everybody." Famous artists such as Rainey Bennett and Francis Foley drew the ads. In their drawings they had Uncle Mistletoe doing all the favorite things we all do during the holiday season, while pointing out that "Christmas isn't Christmas without a day at Field's."

As an assistant to Santa, never a rival, Uncle Mistletoe grew in popularity as more and more promotions developed his character and the basic theme of kindness. Due to the popularity of Uncle Mistletoe, in the fall of 1948 Field's developed a television show that debuted on November 15th. Children could now enjoy *The Adventures of Uncle Mistletoe*, which aired Monday through Friday from 5:45 to 6 p.m. on WENR, Channel 7 (now WLS). The show was produced by Steve Hatos and directed by Ed Skotch. Music was by Porter Heaps at first and later by Adele Scott. Sam Singer, a former Walt Disney illustrator, did all the animation and Ray Chan did the script writing. Sam Singer can be remembered for the creation of the popular Dopey character from *Snow White and the Seven*

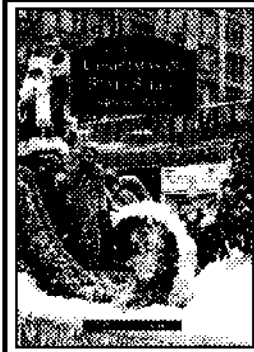
*Dwarfs*. Ray Chan, for old radio buffs, was the originator of *First Nighter* and *Grand Hotel*.

Uncle Mistletoe appeared as a hand puppet about one and one half feet high on the TV show, where he shared the stage with Jennifer Holt, the actress, as Aunt Judy. Jennifer Holt, the daughter of the late Jack Holt and sister to Tim Holt (both cowboy actors), appeared in over fifty motion pictures. As Aunt Judy, she would lead the children into adventures in wonderland with Uncle Mistletoe. Warren Best manipulated all the puppets. The voice of Uncle Mistletoe was that of the late Johnny Coons, a veteran Chicago radio and TV performer. He appeared at times on the radio show *Ma Perkins* and during 1942 was Rush on the *Vic and Sade* show. He can also be remembered for other programs on television such as *Noon Time Comics* and *King Calico*, another puppet show for children.

\* \* \*

Christmas is still a time of wonder for the child in all of us. In this day and time, filled with life's uncertainties, let's hope and wish that each of us, young and old alike, can keep that wonder alive in our hearts, and may we always act with kindness and stay happy within ourselves.

Thank you for letting me share with you the wonderful excitement and magical memories of State Street at Christmas time. ■



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By Robert P. Ledermann

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**COVER STORY**

**CHARLIE'S PAL, EDGAR**

BY GARDNER KISSACK

He must have marveled, flying his daughter in his newest plane over and around California in the late 1940s and early '50s, how far he'd come, how much he had achieved. He had come from a family of humble, hard-working Swedish dairy farmers. He had come to fame and fortune and now, thanks to his wife Frances and their little girl, utter happiness and true joy.

His fortune came mainly from his investment of thirty-five dollars some thirty years earlier. That was the fee a Chicago wood



Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen

carver had extracted from Edgar Bergen in 1919 to whittle a figure based on a drawing that Bergen had made of a brassy, red-haired Michigan newsboy. Oh, how he —  
*Gardner Kissack of Chicago Heights, Illinois is a volunteer tour guide for the Museum of Broadcast Communications, a member of the Those Were The Days support staff and a collector of vintage radio and television receivers.*

and they— soared. On the ground, life was good, too. There were those parties, especially the birthday parties for his daughter and the children of their friends and neighbors— the Ray Millands, the Jimmy Stewarts, the Dick Powells, the Randolph Scotts, the Ira Gershwins, the Ronald Reagans— and often the parents brought their kids and stayed. Life in the early 1950s was ecstasy.

Indeed, it was a long way from the jobs he had after he turned sixteen: stoking the furnace in a Chicago silent-movie house, operating the player piano and sometimes running the projector. Five years before, when he was eleven, he had found that he could throw his voice, well enough and far enough to get his mother to answer the door after hearing what she thought were visitors outside calling to her. Sometimes even her pies in the oven seemed to talk! He loved doing that, and although she eventually seemed to tire of the games, he never did. He loved fooling

her and playing tricks on other people, too.

Edgar John Berggen was born in St. Luke's Hospital on South Michigan Avenue in Chicago on February 16, 1903, almost one hundred years ago. He attended Lake View and Lane Tech high schools before enrolling at Northwestern University as a pre-med student. He had spent much of his youth, especially the summers when times were tough before and during World War I, on the family's Decatur, Michigan farm. This worked out well for him, in the long run, for the nearby city of Colon, Michigan, was known as the Magic Capital, and so magic became a major interest for the young Berggen (who later dropped the extra g) and it was magic that helped the shy (and some say moody) Bergen to bloom socially.

He was in high school when he realized he could get away with saying things through his "dummy" that he would not have otherwise said aloud. Although he was usually a polite boy, he and his dummy spared few targets: classmates (who loved it), teachers, school life in general. He began appearing at amateur nights in Chicago as a "Voice Illusionist." It took a while — years — to perfect, but his skill was



Charlie and wardrobe

so well-honed that he could change voice in mid-sentence or mid-thought (sometimes, mid-word) from a stern Bergen to a naughty Charlie (as he was now named), who did not always mind Bergen and who never minded criticizing Bergen if he missed a word, fluffed a line, or moved his lips noticeably. Charlie, who did not make mistakes, relished such moments!

Charlie McCarthy, Bergen's carved little friend, had a head of pine and a hickory spine. He weighed forty pounds, was a size four and wore 2aaa shoes. Bergen, accompanied by Charlie, usually charged five dollars to provide an evening's worth of magic and ventriloquism. While he was attending Northwestern, after transferring from pre-med to the School of Speech, a gig at a downtown Chicago hotel or prom in the 1920s was five dollars *plus* "transportation" (taxi or bus fare or a ride) to and from the Evanston campus. He enjoyed performing so much, and he was so good, that he decided to leave school and try his hand in show business, performing in

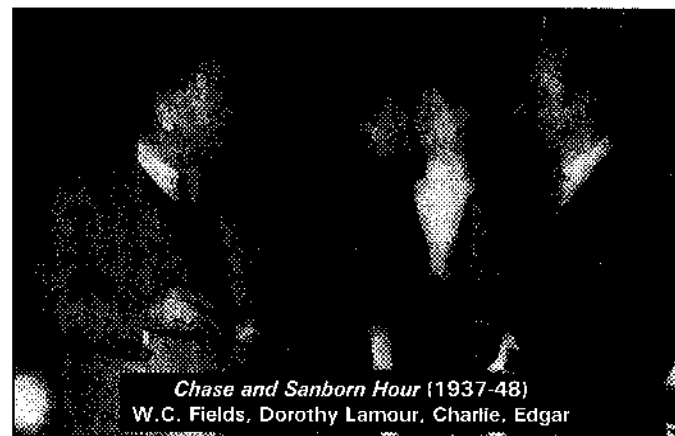
clubs, in vaudeville, or, as he called it, "the sawdust trail."

After having performed on the fading vaudeville circuit for a decade or more, experiencing some rather lean years in the early 1930s, Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy appeared at Chicago's chic nightclub, The Chez Parcc. His appearance there was noted years later in a 1944 Time Magazine article and the event was re-told by daughter Candice Bergen in her 1984 autobiography, "Knock Wood."

Here's what happened: The pair came on stage at 3 a.m. for the last show to a nearly empty room. Charlie turned on Bergen and asked him, "Who (the hell) ever told you you were a good ventriloquist?"



Edgar and Charlie and Charlie!



Chase and Sanborn Hour (1937-48)  
W.C. Fields, Dorothy Lamour, Charlie, Edgar

He told Bergen to go back to the farm. Bergen blushed and tried to cover Charlie's mouth. "Don't shush me. I'll mow-w-w you down! I'll get by, but you're all through, brother, all through!" Charlie then turned to the stunned customers and told them that they were a disgrace to civilization. The club owners were aghast, but the audience hooted and pounded on the tables, howling, guffawing, and mightily enjoying themselves.

Bergen and McCarthy had turned a corner and there was no going back, so more of the same followed. The pair's reputation grew. However sharp the humor, however saucy the repartee, there was an underlying and overwhelming good feeling about it: malice without malice — a combination that worked.

Socialite Elsa Maxwell invited Edgar and Charlie to entertain at one of her parties. Noel Coward was there and was so impressed with the duo that he recommended them to the management of Manhattan's Rainbow Room, high above Rockefeller Center, where they became a smash in their swank top hats and tails. They were getting up in the world.

A cross-country tour followed, and then a December 1936 guest appearance on Rudy Vallee's radio show went so well that they stayed for three months. By May 1937

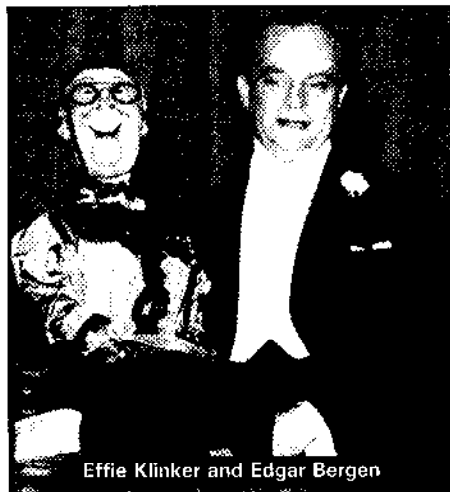


GARDNER KISSACK COLLECTION

Bergen had a radio show of his own, the *Chase and Sanborn Hour*. The show shot to the top of the Hooper ratings, where it remained for two and one half years and was still in the top five a decade later.

The question "Who would do a ventriloquist act on the radio?" was quickly answered because here, clearly, was something and someone very special. Over the years Bergen presented his radio listeners with some wonderful and outrageous guests and regulars including Nelson Eddy, W. C. Fields, Dorothy Lamour, Mae West, Ray Noble, Don Ameche and Frances Langford, and a dazzling array of movie stars including Marilyn Monroe, Roy Rogers and Gary Cooper. In 1940 Edgar introduced Mortimer Snerd, the unintentionally hilarious rube who, in his plaid suit and pork-pie hat, was loved by listeners for his dim-witted, lackadaisical conversation and demeanor. In 1944 Edgar presented Effie Klinker, the prim and proper spinster eager to scrap it all if she could just find the right man as she claimed, "Anyone will do."

Such was the fame of *The Charlie McCarthy Show*. There were Charlie McCarthy games, Charlie McCarthy hand puppets, bars of soap, coloring books, a Char-



Effie Klinker and Edgar Bergen



Mortimer Snerd and Edgar Bergen

lie McCarthy toy automobile, Charlie McCarthy masks, dolls, birthday cards, an official collectors' spoon, even a Charlie McCarthy Majestic radio that sold for under ten dollars.

When Edgar Bergen was studying at Northwestern, he hadn't exactly been a Big Man On Campus, but the institution, knowing a good thing when it saw one, finally took notice of their star drop-out and saw fit to award Charlie the honorary degree of "Master of Innuendo and Snappy Comebacks," which reads, in part,

*Mr. McCarthy has been a student in absentia for many years following a similarly distinguished career in grade and high schools during his youth. He is possessed of a capacity for research surpassed only by his ability to speak for himself; he is known for his wit and wisdom, not to mention his willingness to borrow all his ideas from the person nearest him...*

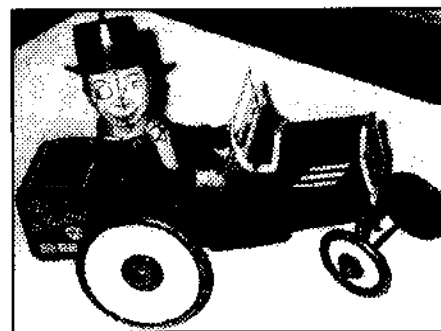
The original degree is displayed at the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago, as are original figures of Charlie McCarthy, Mortimer Snerd and Effie Klinker and other Bergen and McCarthy memorabilia.

Bergen was on radio until the mid-1950s, a long run by any measure. Over the years, he appeared in a number of movies with his wooden friends, and in 1956 he emceed, along with Charlie and Mortimer, the television show *Do You Trust Your Wife?* Then he (they) began a decade of guest appearances on TV variety shows.

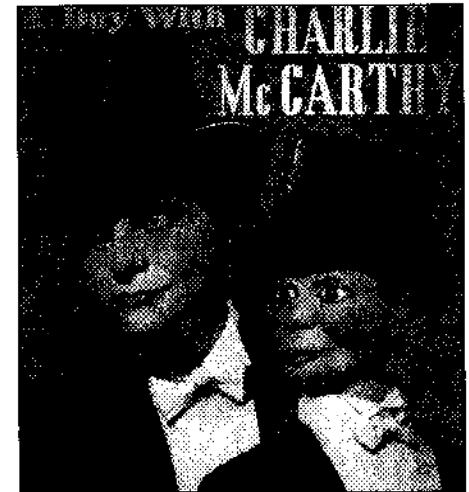
In the late 1930s Bergen had purchased Bella Vista, a white-washed Spanish-style home high in Beverly Hills, not far from the estates of John Barrymore and King Vidor and the home where Katharine Hepburn lived. He invested a large part of his enormous radio salary in California land, and his earnings were far more than what he might have made in medicine. He learned to fly. He bought a plane, the first of several he would own, one at a time, over the years.

He was single, never married. But that changed one Sunday night in 1944 when he noticed, sitting in his radio studio audience, a tall, beautiful girl to whom he was promptly introduced. She was Frances Westerman, a model who, within the next year, would appear on billboards across the country and in magazines as "The Ipana Girl." During that year, Edgar courted her and they were married in 1945. Despite their 20-year age difference, they lived happily ever after. The couple had two children, Candice, born in 1956, and Kris, born in 1961.

By the middle 1970s, Edgar Bergen was



GARDNER KISSACK COLLECTION



GARDNER KISSACK COLLECTION

experiencing some health problems, and so he announced his retirement in the summer of 1978 while appearing at the Brown Derby in Beverly Hills. His last act was to be a three-week run at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas in September.

Opening night was packed, and a star-studded audience included Frances, Candice and Kris, all of whom were concerned about the master's timing, his recently-failing memory, and most of all, his well-being. The routine that first night was perfect, "flawless," and had the audience bellowing with laughter and applauding their favorite lines. Edgar and Charlie were flying! Bergen ended the performance with, "Every act has to have an opening and a close..." The orchestra played "September Song" as he walked off. The emotion in the room and back stage was intense and very sweet.

He did a second performance the next night and it was a flawless repeat. But that second Caesar's Palace show was to be his last.

Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy died in their sleep on October 1, 1978. ■

*TUNE INTWTD January 25 for a celebration of Edgar Bergen's Centennial.*

# Auld Lang Syne

BY RICHARD W. O'DONNELL

Exactly when did Guy Lombardo make "Auld Lang Syne" the official theme song of his Royal Canadians?

This question annually inspires some interesting answers at the turn of the year.

The orchestra leader, who died November 5, 1977, always receives a fair share of publicity at the end of an old year and the start of a new one. He was, after all, known as Mr. New Year's Eve.

The Royal Canadians' New Years shows started at New York's Roosevelt Grill back in 1929, moved over to the Waldorf Astoria in 1962, and ended when he died. In the early thirties, they went out over the radio airwaves nationally and went on television in the late forties. Lombardo and New Year's Eve became a part of our way of life.

On both radio and TV, Lombardo and his orchestra always announced the end of the old year by playing the beloved Scottish song "Auld Lang Syne." Once the New Year arrived, they would switch back to old favorites and the popular songs of the day.

According to a televised salute to Lombardo and his musicians, presented on PBS during the holiday season a while ago, it began when Guy, who was only in his teens, led a three-piece group that "played at neighborhood strawberry festivals and ladies' luncheons" in his native Canada.

The youth, who was the trio's violinist, fell in love with the song back then, and started playing it at the end of each performance. Admittedly, Lombardo may have played the tune for his audiences—it cer-

tainly was a well-known tune—but he did not make it his theme at the time.

PBS also claimed that the Royal Canadians played the tune on New Year's Eve while switching from CBS to NBC, back in 1929. It was supposed to serve as a musical bridge from one network to another.

To a degree, this may have been true. It must be remembered that in 1929 the show was basically aimed at a local audience. Both CBS and NBC were in their formative stages in those days and it is possible some CBS stations in nearby cities may have picked up the program. Later on, some NBC stations, within limited broadcast range, may have latched on to the show to keep the New Year's celebration going on their airwaves during the wee small hours.

Lombardo no doubt played "Auld Lang Syne" during that first show. After all, it was the ideal song for New Year's Eve and had been sung at year's end for centuries, long before Lombardo came along. But the tune was not the orchestra's theme at that time. It was only another song on the radio show.

So when did Lombardo adopt "Auld Lang Syne" as his theme song?

According to a syndicated news story printed by many papers nationally at the end of 1995, Lombardo, impressed by the audience's response to the tune during that first New Year's program, decided the next day to make it his theme song.

But that version of the story is not true. Lombardo, it should be noted, did New Year's shows with a limited audience. It was not until 1932 that the program began



Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians

to spread across the nation. In truth, that is when he really became Mr. New Year's Eve.

That news story, written by an author who will remain anonymous, also indicated that "Auld Lang Syne" wasn't that well-known until Lombardo came along. This is an error. The Scottish song had been around, as near as can be determined, since 1788. A lot of people must have sung it along the way for it to have arrived in the twentieth century. Simply stated, "Auld Lang Syne" wasn't a dusty old tune on yellowed paper when Lombardo picked up his baton to play it.

Another thing: In this same article, it was indicated that nobody knew for sure what "Auld Lang Syne" meant. In other words, when you used the term you did not know what you were saying. But according to the Random House Dictionary, "Auld Lang Syne" is a term that originated in Scotland and Northern England and means: "1. old

times, especially those fondly remembered; 2. old or long friendships, and old long ago days."

This would seem to indicate that there are a few definitions available for "Auld Lang Syne." And all of them seem to make sense. Can you name a better song to sing on New Year's Eve? It is a salute to an old friend; a year about to fade away.

For the record, "Auld Lang Syne" was the name of a poem written by Robert Burns, generally regarded as the greatest of the Scottish poets.

The final lines of his original poem read:

*We twa hae pail'd in the burn,*

*Frae morning sun till dine;*

*But seas between us braid hae roar'd  
Sin Auld Lang Syne.*

The words have changed a bit over the years, but the message is still there.

So, how did "Auld Lang Syne" become Guy Lombardo's theme song? That's the question we asked in the first place. The answer may surprise you.

Lombardo did not make the song his theme when he was a lad or after a New Year's show. It happened in 1932, when he was doing a radio series sponsored by Robert Burns' Panetella, a cigar company.

Since Robby Burns, the poet, had written "Auld Lang Syne," the sponsor suggested it would be nice if Lombardo played the song as a sign-off for the program every week. And Lombardo did just that.

There was a favorable response from the audience out there in Radioland, and the orchestra leader became quite fond of the tune. So he made it his theme song.

It was as simple as that. ■



## OUR READERS/LISTENERS WRITE

# WE GET MAIL

**LYONS, IL--** I just wanted to drop a quick note to say how happy I was to tune into the show last week and find that the station signal was back to full power. I've been listening to *TWTD* just about every week since 1985, which is half my lifetime. I was devastated when the station was on reduced power. Welcome back and thank you for being there every week.  
--SHARON KRIHA

**CHICAGO--** Welcome back to my radio. What a pleasure to once again hear you and your program. Absence may not have made my heart grow fonder, but it sure created a void in my pleasure. Hopefully you will remain loud and clear for a long time.  
--BOB MOREEN

**DARIEN, IL--** Hallelujah! Since you moved to WDCB I had been very disappointed because the only radio that was able to pick up your signal was in the car away from my house. And even then you would fade or be covered by the station at Olivet-Nazarene



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University in Bourbonnais. They apparently broadcast on the same frequency or very close. That is until last Saturday when I was dialing around at home and, BANG!, there you were, loud and clear. What a joy! I sure missed the old-time-radio. WDCB, thank you for fixing the antenna. Now I can also listen to the other programs on WDCB with pleasure, too. --ROMAN WOJCIK

**ANTIOCH, IL--** It's SO good to hear *TWTD* again. I'm way up here on the Wisconsin border. In fact, my north property line IS the State Line. I have two hi-gain very directional antennae stacked and wired together on a mast. They feed the signal to a grand old Grundig Majestic radio with real vacuum tubes. That is the only one that I've tried that really works well. None of the modern radios are worth a hoot. Maybe our beloved material of yesteryear's airwaves only likes to come in through vacuum tubes! I'm still subject to the vagaries of the ethers, being on the fringe of reception, but 90 per cent of the time you come in okay, better than before the tower blew down. Thank you WDCB.

Love to hear you and Ken going through the old newspapers. You are a rare pair. You and I are exactly the same age, Chuck, so I often say aloud, "Oh, yes!" to many of your comments. --DARRELL MAY

**MUNSTER, INDIANA--** Just wanted to thank both you and station WDCB for making it possible once again to enjoy listening to your great Saturday afternoon program. You're coming in LOUD and CLEAR here in Munster. We look forward to spending the upcoming cold winter months in your company. --MILAN MATUSKA

**ST. JOHN, INDIANA--** How nice it is to once again hear you on Saturday afternoons. We have been listeners for up to 25 years. We were saddened when WNIB was sold because when you broadcast from that station we could turn on several radios so we would not miss a sound as we walked from room to room in our house. Now our reception here in St. John is limited to our

Grundig radio with the antenna turned just the right way. We are very happy to hear your programs again because Saturday just isn't Saturday without *Those Were The Days*. Thanks, and we won't change that dial. --JERRY AND MARY ELLEN STEFFE

**DARIEN, IL--** I am very pleased to say that the [audio] quality has improved greatly with the new tower. My seven-year-old daughter Celeste really enjoys listening to Jack Benny and the broadcast of *Mr. President*. She is extremely interested in the U.S. presidents and hearing them on your show is a real treat for her. --JOHN AGUZINO

**ORLAND PARK, IL--** When the antenna collapsed [last Dec. 22] during the *Bing Crosby* show, my six-year-old son and I were making Christmas decorations. Since you had moved to WDCB we had a lot of trouble with reception. My son and I were going from radio to radio in the house trying to pick up the signal again. Robert Feder's column [in the Sun-Times] helped explain it later that week. Being somewhat of a tape bug, I thought we could ride it out for a few weeks by listening to some old tapes I had recorded from previous Jack Benny Months. I hoped with all my heart that things would be back to normal by the beginning of February.

We listened to a couple of tapes, which were marked only "Chuck Schaden 2/96." What I discovered was that you had put together ten consecutive shows of the "I can't stand Jack Benny because..." contest. In late December and January I organized these cassettes and transferred them to CD. When I would get one done, I'd burn a copy for six-year-old Johnnie. Because this was quite a process, identifying my poorly marked tapes, I was only cranking out two consecutive episodes on one CD per week.

This became a passion for me. My son would play the one CD a week over and over again. My wife tells me he would play it before leaving for kindergarten in the morning and in the afternoon when he got home. We listened to the same episodes during and after dinner until bedtime. Those episodes are phenomenal. Talk about standing up to the test of time. In fact, in his memoirs in the Joan Benny book about her father, even Jack recalled those shows as among the cutest they ever did.

Some recordings, though entertaining and

interesting, are not the kind of programs anybody would want to listen to over and over again. These shows are certainly the exception.

Through all of this my son and wife became big Jack Benny fans. In fact, my son loves old time radio. What you've been doing on the radio for the last 32 years is truly leaving a legacy that I'm passing down to my son, whose appreciation for old-time-radio is now ignited.

The Lord works in funny ways. Out here in Orland Park, the station is now coming in like a champ. So you see, if the antenna never fell down, my son would not have the appreciation for OTR that he does. Kids learn to appreciate things by listening repetitively. Although I have listened on Saturday afternoons for 20 years, and nearly every radio in the house and car would be tuned in, the rest of my family unavoidably heard the programming but did not have the passion for OTR they do now.

My wife recently mentioned to me that she would have loved to go to a Benny broadcast. My son has told us to "be quiet, I'm listening" when we started talking during one of your recent shows. How cool is that!!! You are THE Chicago educator of OTR. Thanks, Chuck. --JIM DAY

**EVANSTON, IL--** Kudos to Ken Alexander for the great job he does. --MIKE WUERL

**ELLINGTON, FLORIDA--** Congratulations to you and Ken Alexander on your 15 year association. Ken and you work so well together, you're both a pleasure to listen to. I am one of your many Florida listeners who appreciates your show every week. Many former Chicagoans find it a blessing to be able to listen to your show on the Internet. --RON MARUSCAK

**MOLINE, IL--** I'm writing to re-up my subscription and to express my utter enjoyment of Clair Schulz's article on *Pat Novak for Hire* [Oct-Nov 2002]. *Pat Novak* has long been one of my favorite radio programs and Mr. Schulz absolutely captured the spirit, heart and soul (or lack thereof) of that fine program. --HOWARD OLLER

**AKRON, OHIO--** The "Drive-In Saturday Night" article by Wayne Klatt [Oct/Nov 2002] had a warning that it "may bring back





## MORE MAIL

memories of films you don't want to admit you actually watched." Well, I admit I watched most all of them and I enjoyed them. I was also in the Lowe's theatre when a skeleton passed overhead in Vincent Price's "House on Haunted Hill."

The "Company B Reunion" by PFC Edwin S. Knapp [also Oct/Nov 2002] brought back memories of when I was in the army and all the friends I made. I became a company clerk in the fall of 1963 when the Beatles songs were just taking off and President Kennedy was assassinated. --PAUL MERLO

**E-MAIL--** I've been listening to you for a long time and thoroughly enjoy all the Saturday afternoons of enjoyment you and your staff provide. I was especially pleased with your show highlighting African-Americans [Aug. 17]. It was long overdue and I salute you for putting it on. I wonder how much Black radio, other than music, has survived over the years. If you have access to some of the old material, we, your Black listeners, would like to hear it or hear about it. Meanwhile, I'll be listening for *Suspense*, Fred Allen, Jack Benny and *Johnny Dollar*. You, Ken Alexander and the gang keep up the great work. --DONALD MYERS

**MAYWOOD, IL--** I'm African-American and the one Black who has no problem whatsoever with the *Amos 'n' Andy* performances. Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll weren't Black, but at least they were clever enough to surround themselves with top-notch Black performers such as Ernestine Wade, Johnnie Lee, Lillian Randolph, her sister Amanda Randolph, Roy Glenn and Eddie Green, to name a few. Hopefully, someday the ban will be lifted somewhat, so that we all can again hear one of the funnier, calmer episodes of radio's *Amos 'n' Andy* featuring honest-to-goodness Black performers and two white comedians who had a unique idea and went far with it... for a while.

Incidentally, if Freeman Gosden and Ernestine Wade portrayed George and Sapphire Stevens on radio... that, cleverly, is about as close to an interracial marriage as you could get on the air!

--PETER C. LOGUE

**CHICAGO--** I'm glad you did the program [on African-American performers]. Such a program was long overdue. In my opinion, your audience should be more aware of the contributions that African-American actors/actresses made during that era, in spite of the hardships they had to make every day of their careers. --PAUL COLLINS

**MONEE, IL--** I love your magazine. Please be sure to keep printing the WBBM-AM radio programming, as I try to catch that too. --JON NEHLS

**{ED. NOTE--}** Sorry to disappoint you, but monthly listings for *When Radio Was* are no longer readily available to us. See the note under "for more good listening" on page 23.)

**SUZHOU, CHINA--** I am listening to you right now via the Internet from Suzhou (pronounced Shoe-zoe) in China. Suzhou is located about 80 km west of Shanghai. It is pretty wild listening to Fred Allen and Robert White [Sept. 14] here on the other side of the world. The time in Shuzou is 13 hours ahead of Chicago, and it takes about 18 hours to fly here. I have a DSL Internet connection in my hotel room over here, my laptop computer plugs right in and I can tune in to Chicago radio. That's something that Marconi and Edward Howard Armstrong probably never dreamed of. Of course, I have to be up at 2 am on Sunday to hear you live, instead of tinkering around in my garage at home in Aurora, Illinois on Saturday afternoon. --NEIL MALONEY

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## ← THE SHADOW

was one of many radio sleuths who were surrounded by murder and mayhem on the air. Read what Jim Cox has to say about it on page 7.

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