

# Old Time Radio **DIGEST**

No. 109

Spring 2005 \$3.75



Tallulah  
Bankhead  
"The Big Show"

# Old Time Radio DIGEST

No. 109

Spring 2005

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# Radio's Grandest Hurrah "The Big Show" by Gary Yoggy

Once upon a time, radio ruled the ether and provided entertainment for every member of the family in nearly every American home. Although other networks existed, national programming was dominated by the big two, NBC and CBS, and their powerful heads, David Sarnoff and William S. Paley, respectively. The rivalry between these two network moguls reached its peak in 1949 when Paley lured away some of NBC's most popular entertainers including Jack Benny, Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Amos and Andy and Red Skelton. Paley also added Bing Crosby and Groucho Marx to his program roster by wooing them away from ABC (formerly "NBC blue").

This programming coup occurred with such lightening speed it was dubbed by the press as "Paley's Comet." Described by one writer as the "biggest upheaval in broadcasting since Paley bought CBS in 1928," it catapulted that network to the top of the radio audience ratings. By 1950, CBS owned 80 percent of radio's top 20 Nielsen - rated shows.

This conflict took place against the backdrop of a revolution in broadcasting technology as television began its inevitable erosion of radio's vast audience. By 1950 it was estimated that TV boasted some eight million viewers.

In what was widely regarded as a last-ditch effort to reverse the flow of advertising dollars, talent and listeners from television back into radio and as a means of restoring NBC's supremacy over CBS in

the ratings, David Sarnoff launched *The Big Show* in November of 1950. With a weekly budget of 50 to 100 thousand dollars (depending on what source one consults) per program, the network assembled the largest star-studded extravaganza in broadcasting history. (This expenditure is even more impressive when one considers that this equates to 370 to 740 thousand dollars in contemporary currency.)

The show's producer, Joseph (Dee) Engelbach, had considerable prior radio experience, working on such successful programs as The Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street, The Hallmark Hall of Fame, and The Radio Hall of Fame. To preside over this unprecedented extravaganza, he selected a most unlikely Mistress of Ceremonies, Broadway actress Tallulah Bankhead.

Ms. Bankhead's background and reputation came from her distinguished career as an actress in London's West End and on the Broadway stage. She had originated the starring roles of Regina Giddens in Lillian Hellman's The Little Foxes and Sabrina in Thornton Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth. Later, she had won raves as Amanda Pryne in a highly successful revival of Noel Coward's Private Lives. Between these theatrical successes, she found time to win a New York Film Critics Circle Award for her leading role in Alfred Hitchcock's Lifeboat.

Perhaps the most memorable role Tallulah ever played was herself. The granddaughter of a U.S. senator, niece of



Tallulah Bankhead, Mistress of Ceremonies on The Big Show

a U.S. congressman, and daughter of a Speaker of the House of Representatives, she was born to a life of privilege in Alabama, but she resolved to become more than just another Southern belle. In person, she was flamboyant and outrageous, overfond of Kentucky bourbon and wild parties, and noted for her snappy repartee, candid quotes and scandalous lifestyle. With limited radio experience, Tallulah's major qualifications for the audio medium were a deeply resonant baritone voice and a penchant for repeatedly call

ing everyone "Dahling!" (Fred Allen remarked that she possessed a voice that sounded like "a man pulling his foot out of a pail of yogurt.")

*The Big Show* promised to be easy work for Tallulah - rehearsals Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and then a broadcast Sunday evening - as well as fabulous money. "Yet," as biographer Joel Lobenthal writes, "it was a daring, risky and uncharted move."

Tallulah had made radio appearances, but they always made her nervous and

fearful. Back in 1927 she had done a charity broadcast in Britain, describing it in her autobiography:

*"As I faced the microphone, it assumed the guise of a death ray. I had a feeling such as I experience when an ether cone is slipped over my nose. There was a pounding in my ears, a buzzing in my head. My hands grew frosty. A dank dew coated my brow. My first words sounded like the caw of a crow. Fearful those invisible thousands might not hear me, I shouted. I was reading from a prepared script and my hands shook so violently the words blurred."*

Eventually recovering sufficiently from this terrifying experience, Tallulah later made radio appearances on various variety shows over the intervening years, but only out of fiscal necessity, or as she put it, "thereafter, I succumbed to radio offers only when poverty-stricken." In most instances she did no more than "trade patter" or appear in brief sketches with the likes of Hildegarde, Fred Allen, Kate Smith, Rudy Vallee, Orson Welles and Ed "Archie" Gardner. The Big Show would call for a similar approach, except that Tallulah would be the hostess of a lavish extravaganza - playing no role but that of herself.

Although, she agreed to try it for four weeks, she fretted and worried. As usual, she was just plain scared, but in this case she simply didn't comprehend what her function would be. She could not see herself as a comedienne - which she felt was very different from being an actress in a comedy - and the role of announcer didn't suit her at all. That she had been employed to somehow be herself, eluded and puzzled her. She neither understood the role, nor did she have any way of

assessing its importance. Tallulah had pursued her career during an era when actors, acted, singers sang, comedians told jokes, and announcers, made introductions and read commercials.

"I walked through rehearsals like a woman under water, numb with humiliation," she wrote in her autobiography. In the weeks just before *The Big Show* was to be broadcast, she called producer Dee Engleback day and night. "I have nightmares in which I drop every page of the script and can't think of a thing to say into the microphone," she told him. She wanted out; she wanted new writers; she wanted better billing (the show was being touted by NBC as "all this... and Tallulah too!") Of course, what she really wanted, as biographer Lee Israel points out, was "reassurance." And that could only come - for better or for worse - after the first broadcast.

At last the big day, November 4, 1950, arrived. *The Big Show* began with what was to be its standard opening as announcer Ed Herlihy intoned, "Ladies and gentlemen, you are about to be entertained by some of the greatest stars of all time on one big program." Then, one by one the guest stars stepped to a microphone and introduced themselves: Fred Allen, Jimmy Durante, Jose Ferrer, Ethel Merman, Paul Lucas, Danny Thomas and Frankie Laine. Finally, in a hushed, humble, honeysweet, but deep voice, the mistress of ceremonies introduced herself. "And my name dahlings," she said is "Tallulah Bankhead."

Presented live from the immense, newly rebuilt Center Theater in New York, it inaugurated the format of a lavishly produced entertainment showcase that would become a weekly Sunday night NBC fix-



*Fred Allen was a frequent guest.*

ture for the next two seasons. On that first broadcast, Ethel Merman sang a good deal of the score from the erstwhile Broadway smash *Call Me Madam*, following "subtle" cues from Tallulah like: "Now tell us Ethel, how you became the hostess with the mostest?" Jose Ferrer recited the "Nose" speech from *Cyrano*, which was about to be released a movie. There was also a closing tribute to George M. Cohan during which each of the guests - singers or not - sang one of the composer's songs. (Tallulah crooned an "incredible" version of "Give My Regards to Broadway.") Through it all, Tallulah's presence - her

personality - bound together this collection of sequences and introductions. Her voice, her style, gave the show its own unique "sound." Described as "glamorous and unpredictable," Tallulah coined catchphrases on the show that quickly became part of American slang. In addition to the off-used "dahling," she announced the network's half-hour I.D. as an opportunity to "ring my chimes!" And the critics loved her - and the show!

As Tallulah explained it in her autobiography, "Your heroine emerged from the fracas hailed as Queen of the Kilocycles, Authorities cried out Tallulah had redeemed radio. In shepherding my charges through *The Big Show*, said the critics, I had snatched radio out of the grave. The autopsy was delayed." Among the glowing reviews was that of John Crosby of the New York *Herald Tribune* who wrote:

*It was in practically every respect a perfectly wonderful show - witty, tuneful, surprisingly sophisticated and brilliantly put together.*

*The opening program of The Big Show, presided over and more or less blanketed by that extraordinary vibrant lady known as Tullu, was one of the fastest in my memory...*

*NBC's biggest gamble may have been Tallulah Bankhead, an unpredictable volcano who has been known to sweep away whole villages when she erupts. As mistress of ceremonies, though, she was sharp as a knife and succeeded somehow in outshining even the most glittering names on that glittering roster.*

And Cosby wasn't alone in his admiration for *The Big Show*. In January 1951, *Colliers* editorialized:

*We'd like to congratulate the person*

who had the inspiration to think of Miss Bankhead... for the richly talented and combustively temperamental Tallulah is scarcely the master-(or mistress)-of ceremonies type.

In a field noted for the folksy exuberance of its practitioners, Miss Bankhead specializes in the deadpan and often deadly squelch. Her general air of graciousness is never completely reassuring. For there is always the possibility that marvelous voice of hers is about to pass from a purr of honeyed hospitality to an outraged bellow of professional rage. She is, in a word, terrific.

Tallulah was jubilant. Her fears and uncertainties gone, she abandoned any plans to leave when her four-week option came up. And *The Big Show* was more than just a critical success. It actually managed to knock several points off television's burgeoning Trendex ratings. Tallulah became a Sunday institution in millions of American homes. As biographer Israel, put it, "Hers was the classiest and certainly the most talked about event of the 1950 broadcast season."

As the weeks passed, the list of guest stars read like a who's who of the entertainment world with a few statesmen like Ralph Bunche (speaking on behalf of the United Nations) and sports heroes like Tommy Hendrick (teaching Tallulah some of the finer points of baseball) thrown in for good measure. Where else could one hear dramatic scenes from *Cyrano de Bergerac* (with Jose Ferrar); *Twentieth Century* (with Gloria Swanson); *A Farewell to Arms* (with Gary Cooper); *Born Yesterday* (with Judy Holiday); *The Man Who Came to Dinner* (with Monty Woolley); *Second Threshold* (with Clive Brook); *Anne of a Thousand Days* (with

Rex Harrison and Lili Palmer); *State Secret* (with Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.); *Go For Broke* (with Van Johnson); *Romeo and Juliet* (with Olivia de Havilland); *Green Pastures* (with Ossie Davis); *The Devil's Disciple* (a George Bernard Shaw play with Dennis King); *Caesar and Cleopatra* (another Shaw work with Lawrence Olivier and Vivien Leigh from London); Dorothy Parker's *Hear We Are* (with Jack Carson); and Edgar Allan Poe's *The Cask of Amontillado* (with Peter Lorre).

From time to time powerful dramatic readings were presented: from the works of Abraham Lincoln (Jose Ferrer); a patriotic soliloquy by Ethel Barrymore (with original music composed by her brother, Lionel); "Casey at the Bat" (by Tallulah herself!); and "A Tribute to America" written by Walt Whitman (also performed by Tallulah).

There were also memorable musical moments like Lauritz Melchior singing Pagliacci, and Ezio Pinza, an aria from *The Marriage of Figaro*. Pop music highlights included Ray Bolger singing "Once In Love With Amy," Judy Garland (mistakenly introduced by Tallulah as Judy Holiday) performing "Get Happy," Jane Morgan crooning "Hymn of Love," Jane Powell with the upbeat "It's a Most Unusual Day," Perry Como's smooth rendition of "Patricia," the Andrews Sisters doing a medley of their hits to celebrate 15 years as a trio; the Sons of the Pioneers with their all-time great country hit "Cool Water," semi-regular Mindy Carson warbling the delightful "If I Were a Bell," Jimmy Durante and Eddie Jackson teaming up for "Bill Bailey," and from the London broadcast, Beatrice Lillie with "I Apologize."

Supervising such enjoyable musical performances was maestro Meredith Willson (his best years lay ahead with "The Music Man") who conducted the program's 44 piece orchestra and 16 voice choir. (He also frequently played "straight man" to Tallulah and helped coordinate visits by special musical groups like the West Point Cadet Choir). After the first several weeks, Willson's "May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You" became the show's closing signature song with Tallulah talk-singing the first and last lines and each individual guest star (no matter how well they could sing) filling in the middle verses.

However, despite all these delightful

naturedly and usually gave as good as she got, with her arch rival and nemesis, Bette Davis her most frequent target.

In fact, the best and most note-worthy performances are all comedy classics. At the top of any such list would be the Fred Allen spoof of the Jack Benny Show called, appropriately, "The Pinch Penny Show" and broadcast during the final 7 pm segment of "The Big Show"'s inaugural broadcast.

As suggested by Portland's mother, the show would have an announcer who was "big and fat and jolly and laughs all thru the program" (played by Danny

### **Fred Allen, "I've decided why they call television a medium. It's because nothing in it is well done."**

performances, they were mere appetizers for what was the main course of entertainment on *The Big Show*, comedy. From the basaltioned ad-libs of Tallulah to the nonsensical tunes of Durante, it was humor that sustained and enlivened the audience. Blessed with outstanding writers like Goodman Ace (of Easy Aces), George Foster, Morton Green, Frank Wilson, Selma Diamond and occasionally Fred Allen, the broadcasts produced such memorable quotes as Allen's "I've decided why they call television a medium. It's because nothing in it is well done."

Much of the humor was of a caustic nature - that of the insult, of which frequent guest Groucho Marx was a master. And the butt of much of it was Tallulah herself - her advancing age, her diminished sexual appeal, her drinking, and her limited singing ability. One of the biggest laughs on the show was garnered by Portland Hoffa when she addressed Tallulah as "Sir" But Tallulah accepted it all good-

Thomas - at least he had a nice laugh); an orchestra leader who is "tall, good-looking and eats hamhocks" (Meredith Willson - at least, he was handy); "a young fellow who sings and his mother always wants you to pay him more money" (Jimmy Durante, hilarious, as always) and you have "a butler who drives your car which is a broken down Maxwell" (Tallulah as Portchester - she could really do a deep dialect); and you have "a quartet that sings your commercials" and for "a sponsor you get a cigarette company" and "the star of the show is you - you wear a toupee, you're always 39 years old, you play a violin and you do your own laundry, you have a washing machine that you rent out to your neighbors and you're very tight and you keep your money down in a vault."

There were also two telephone operators, played by guest vocalists Ethel Merman and Mindy Carson, who talked about dating their boss, "Pinch Penny."

Add a clarinet rendition of "Love in Bloom," throw in a couple of "cut that outs!" and "wells!" and you had all the ingredients of a classic spoof! (Of course, listeners could have heard the original at exactly the same time on another network -hmmm...)

Another memorable routine involved a slightly modified version of Groucho Marx's popular comedy quiz show, *You Bet Your Life!* featuring "the one and only Groucho" himself as quizmaster and three humorous pairs of celebrity contestants - Baby Snooks and Daddy (played by Fanny Brice and Hanley Stafford) in by far the funniest segment - Snooks outwits Groucho by betting all of Daddy's money and asking the quizmaster a trick question; an actress (Tallulah, of course) and an orchestra leader (who else but Meredith); and "a young singer" (Jane Powell) and "a plantation owner" (Ezio Pinza from *South Pacific*) in a very funny bit with both getting ample opportunity to sing.

Speaking of singing, my third example of a *Big Show* comedy classic featured Lauritz Melchior singing selections from Pagliacci -while Ed Wynn relates a highly simplified and hilarious version of the opera *Carmen*. This routine was loosely adapted by Ed Gardner from an earlier episode of *Duffy's Tavern* (with the entire cast actually singing selections from *Carmen*). The "Duffy's" format worked very well and permitted other guest stars like vocalist Mindy Carson) to wander into the "tavern" as Archie (Gardner) presided over his domain. This was another example a spoof enriched by the involvement of the show's original star.

And then there was that classic "Mr. and Mrs. Breakfast Couple" sketch featuring Fred Allen and Tallulah (or as they

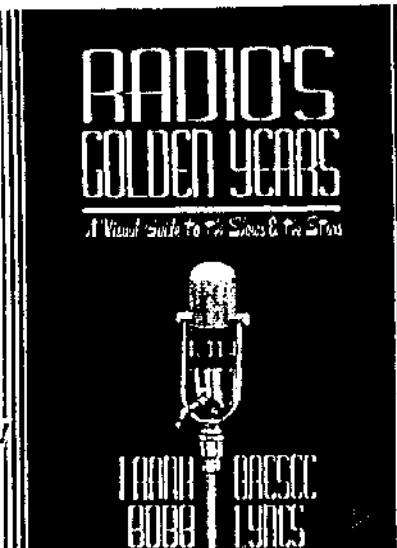


*Groucho without his mustach*

were introduced "Freddie and Taloo") which had been performed earlier on Allen's show, predating her caustic humor on *The Big Show*. Its satire on husband-and-wife talk shows had a married duo making sugary patter over breakfast, complete with endless sponsor plugs (Pasternak Pussy Willow mattresses, Madame Evon's Hair-do Heaven, *The Morning Record* newspaper, Pepto-Besto.). Then an alternate version was presented as the audience eavesdropped on the surly, squabbling couple complete with sponsor bashing ("Pussy Willow Mattresses stuffed with cat hair make my back arch," Panda spot remover that "ate my shirt and left the spot") that might take place if the microphones weren't plugged in. ("At 6 o'clock in the morning who's up

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to listen to us anyway? - a couple of burglars and a disc jockey, maybe.") These are examples of the best that radio had to offer... To paraphrase Allen, on *The Big Show*, they were not rare, but well-done.

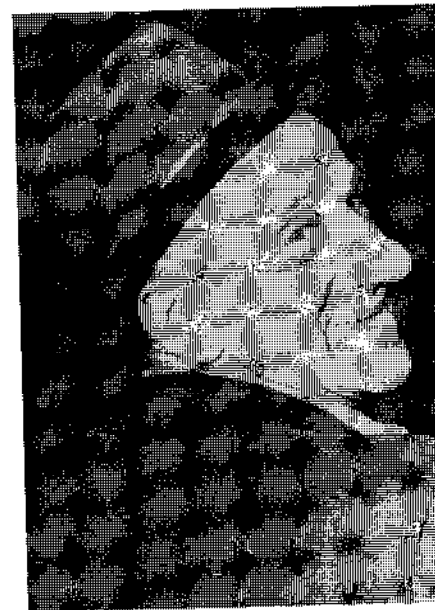
There were many other memorable comedic moments/routines during the show's two-year run. Consider: Eddie Cantor as Maxie the Taxi," a Brooklyn cab driver; Milton Berle's monologue on the good old days of radio; Georgie Jessel's monologue in praise of Hollywood in which he does impersonations of Al Jolson and Cantor; Fred Allen and Jack Buchanan (in London) doing a British take-off of Allen's Alley called "Buchanan's Mews," Bob and Ray with a "travelogue to Tahiti," a "Molly Goldberg" routine with Gertrude Berg and Tallulah; Bob Hope's monologue about entertaining the troops in Korea; Fanny Brice as "Baby Snooks" getting an "acting lesson" from Tallulah; Phil Silvers' movie satire; Rudy Vallee in a comedy skit with Tallulah (where a baby can be heard screaming in the audience); a classic Dean Martin/Jerry Lewis routine; Herb Shriner with a humorous "Hoosier State" monologue; Smith and Dale's "Dr Kronkeit" skit; Jack Pearl and Cliff Hall doing "Baron Munchausen" and "Sharlie"; Joan Davis attempting a "Calypso" number; Victor Borge dissecting an opera by Mozart; Fibber McGee and Molly (with a little help from "Teeney") on a remote from Hollywood celebrating twenty years on NBC radio; and Tallulah clowning around with almost any of the show's great stars. (The list could go on and on if space would permit.)

The announcers on the show were first rate as well: Ed Herlihy alternating weekly with Jimmy Wallington. (Herlihy had a habit of emphasizing the BIG in *Big*

*Show*, while Wallington stressed the SHOW.) Combined they had several decades of prior broadcasting experience.

For the opening broadcast of its second season, the network flew the entire cast to Europe, taping the show at the London Palladium on September 16 and from the Empire Theatre in Paris on September 24, 1951. Tallulah was excited about returning to the scene of her earlier theatrical triumphs and quipped on the London Broadcast, "After twenty years I return to the scene of my triumphs. Of course, most of them are married now." The broadcast featured an all-star lineup including Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh, George Sanders, George Bernard Shaw, Vera Lynn and Beatrice Lillie. What Tallulah hoped would be received as a token of her love for Britain, however, turned out to be a disaster as she recited Gene Fowler's poem "Jervis Boy," saluting the heroism of a World War II freighter that chose to slip out of a convoy so that other ships might escape attack. The British were appalled by her reminder of their wartime losses.

Most of the British press blasted the entire show with the harshest comments coming from the *Daily Express*: "90 minutes of bad jokes, tuneless songs, witless dialogue, soapy compliments, and onion-under-the-nose emotion." The usually austere London Times was more generous: "an amusing mixture of audacity and ingenuousness. It exploits for all she is worth, of course, Miss Bankhead's legendary reputation as a woman as wicked as she is fascinating and her undoubted ability to make a pretended acrimonious wit appear the real thing." Other reviews were more favorable. One said "the audience at the Palladium tore down the



*Jimmy and Tallulah were great together*

house," and another, "the show had the perfect timing and zest of a Commando raid."

Returning to New York, *The Big Show* began to sputter, limping along like radio itself. A few visits to the West Coast to add a Hollywood flavor to the show failed to stem the ratings decline. The program, which had never been able to surpass Jack Benny's show, was now being regularly trounced by CBS in its 7 pm segment. NBC finally decided to call it quits and canceled the show after its April 20, 1952 broadcast. It has been estimated that the network ultimately lost nearly one million dollars on its ill-fated venture.

Consequently, most critics and historians assess *The Big Show* to have been a colossal failure. Certainly, if one uses only a monetary yardstick, it would be difficult to dispute that conclusion. Noted radio historian John Dunning even proclaims that

there is a lesson to be learned from this, "The moral is that brilliance and genius cannot be bought, that a buckshot approach never works, and that most good things come finally from a single inspired source."

Others, however, disagree. Columnist Jack Gould, in writing the show's obituary at the time said, "it was good enough to make one wish he could have seen it." And popular film critic Leonard Maltin, writing much more recently, proclaimed, *The Big Show* was a wonderful program... offering every week a knockout lineup of talent" while attributing the program's demise to "the growing popularity of 'The Ed Sullivan Show' on television."

My own personal view strongly endorses the latter evaluation, perhaps best articulated by Ivan G. Shreve, Jr. in liner notes written for the new audio restoration of the series' first five shows by the First Generation Radio Archives, "...listening to the program through 21st century ears, the show will surprise many an OTR fan; the program's writing remains top-notch, the performers are at the peak of their craft, and the music remains as sprightly and entertaining as ever." *The Big Show* was not radio's last gasp, it was radio's grandest hurrah - a gigantic, star-studded celebration of the many facets of the medium, most notably comedy, music and drama - much of which, thanks to the wonders of modern electronics, can still be enjoyed today!

#### **A WORD ABOUT SOURCES**

For those who might like to pursue the subject further, I found the following publications most useful:

1. On the Air: the Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio by John Dunning - the place



to start researching ANY program from radio's golden age has an excellent listing on *The Big Show*.

2. *Say Goodnight Gracie: The Last Years of Network Radio* by Jim Cox - provides considerable insight into *The Big Show's* role in delaying network radio's decline and fall.

3. *Miss Tallulah Bankhead* by Lee Israel and *Tallulah! The Life and Times of a Leading Lady* by Joel Lobenthal stand out from among the numerous biographies of radio's "Queen of the Kilocycles" for their excellent chapters on Tallulah's adventures in broadcasting with emphasis on *The Big Show*.

4. *Tallulah, My Autobiography* by Tallulah herself is the single most important source of information about the actress' personal feelings and reactions to her experiences as radio's foremost Mistress of Ceremonies.

5. There is, of course, no substitute for listening to the actual shows themselves. I located 28 of the 57 original broadcasts - in various formats and most in quite good quality. (Once you start listening, it can become quite addictive.)

6. *Additional Treat:* In 1987, George Baxt, screenwriter, former theatrical agent and award-winning author of mysteries, published *The Tallulah Bankhead Murder Case*. This is a fascinating fictional account of the author's own experiences during the infamous Hollywood blacklist. The novel is set in 1952 in the midst of the McCarthy communist witch hunts. Tallulah, "enjoying a professional comeback as the star of highly successful radio program, *The Big Show*, becomes involved in the blacklist scandal when a scheduled guest on her how kills himself after his name is given to the House UnAmerican Activities Committee. Tallulah

is threatened with being blacklisted and the first in a series of murders is committed. Fictional detective Jacob Singer, with the assistance of the irrepressible Tallulah races against time to puzzle out the murderer's identity and put a stop to the killings." In an "Afterword," author Baxt explains "the murderer and his victims are fictitious, as is Tallulah Bankhead's involvement with the blacklist, but the tribulations she encountered in trying to use these unfortunates on her program are true." (I highly recommend this for all murder mystery buffs as well as Tallulah fans!)

My personal thanks goes to Martin Grams, Jr. for sharing his detailed logs of *The Big Show* and to Derek Tague for obtaining photos for my article. And to all those who read this far -thank you, dahlings...you ring my chime!

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"It's been a pleasant day," the old actor said. "And now I think I'll take a nap."

He sank into a soft leather chair and gazed past the walnut trees and the citrus groves to the high hills beyond. The lines in his face softened, and slowly his eyes closed.

The California sunlight slanted through, the wide, win-dowed front of his living room, touching his white hair. The walls were galleried with autographed pictures of stars of an era now in the shadows-Sir Henry Irving, - Ellen Terry, Beerbohm Tree. Souvenirs and mementoes of the stage and screen were arrayed about the room.

Those were all this drowsing actor had left-those and the comfort and happiness of a home he can call his own, a home where he can keep alive the memories of his long years before a camera and behind the footlights.

He, like the other venerable folk of Hollywood's movie-land who now live in the Motion Picture Country House, must remain anonymous. But he and the others have, in the twilight of their lives, found peace and contentment because those whose names are still bright in lights willed it so.

Country House is a tribute to the generosity of both radio and the film industry. It was created and is operated by the Motion Picture Relief Fund, Inc., now in its 22nd year. Like all houses, it's a house that jack built, but in this case a mike provided the jack for the Screen Guild Players radio program, which started in 1939 under sponsorship of the Gulf Oil

Company and since 1942 has been sponsored by the Lady Esther Sales Company, actually contributed the funds for the building and furnishes the money that keeps it going.

Hollywood usually is guilty of overstatement, but it stretched modesty to a fine point of understatement when it christened this development the Country House. Actually, it is a community of rare scenic beauty, planted in 60 acres in the Woodland Hills section of lush San Fernando Valley.

Situated some 21 miles from the heart of the film capital, Country House is a cheery, spacious and modern group of cottages where those of the film industry who have long since passed out of the limelight are given a new lease on life. Its residents include former producers,



*IN THE CENTRAL BUILDINGS are located the dining room, lounge, library, administrative offices, kitchen and laundry, all blazingly modern*



directors, writers and technicians as well as one-time actors and actresses who, by reason of old age, infirmity or some other hapless condition, are no longer able to support themselves. Some were stars in their own right in years gone by. Others were personalities whose names rarely, if ever, received conspicuous billing. But every one of them contributed at least 20 years of service to the motion picture industry—one of the eligibility requirements. Male guests must be 60 or over; women must be 55. The average age of the present 35 occupants is 70.

The guests of the Country House—they're always called guests—are a proud and devoted group who spend most of their time reading, playing cards, listening to the radio and puttering around the flower beds and vegetable gardens.

The walnut and citrus groves are worked by professional gardeners, and proceeds from the sale of fruit and nuts last year totaled \$9,171, more than double the receipts of the previous year. But some areas are set aside for those with a penchant for gardening.

The group is taken to Hollywood in station wagons once a week, a treat which is Number One on their hit parade by a slight margin over the first-run motion pictures that are shown every Friday night through the courtesy of the studios.

Live entertainment shows are staged occasionally—John Charles Thomas sang for them last Easter—and once in a great while they present a play of their own. These are few and far between because such undertakings are a strain. Country House is no Waldorf-Astoria or Chateau Frontenac, but it has a similar air of solid and exclusive prosperity. There are 38 one-story bungalows, rustic in design and blazingly modern in planned conveniences. They are in attached units of four and six, scattered in casual rows



*Country house is as beautiful as a movie set in the California sunlight. It's 60 acre site is 21 miles from Hollywood*

and spread out among flowered walks and pathways. The landscape is sprinkled with ponds bright with water lilies.

The central group of buildings houses the administrative offices, a lounge where entertainment is presented, a library with more than 5,000 books and scores of magazines, a large dining room, kitchen, storage facilities and laundry.

The program, heard over CBS Monday nights from 7 to 10:30, is unique. The writing and acting talent is donated, which means that the sponsor turns over \$10,000 every week to the fund. A veritable fortune in talent has appeared on the show since Joan Crawford, Judy Garland, Jack Benny and Reginald Gardiner inaugurated the Screen Guild Players broadcasts on January 8, 1939.

So successful was the innovation that Jean Hersholt, who had succeeded Mary Pickford as president of the Motion Picture Relief Fund, was authorized the following year to select and purchase a site for the Country House—a goal on which the fund had set its sights at its inception.

Hersholt had helped establish such a

home in his native Denmark, and he tackled his new assignment with the enthusiasm of a new star. He spotted the site one day while driving toward Santa Barbara. Then and there he slapped down a deposit.

"If the Motion Picture Relief Fund won't take it," he told the real estate man, "I will." The fund took it.

There was no stopping Hersholt now. He collared William L. Pereira, one of the country's leading architects, who designed the Country House and organized the huge construction job. Pereira donated his services, but the bread he cast upon the waters didn't just float away. He has since become a motion picture producer and director.

Ground for the project was broken the same year, and the Motion Picture Country House was dedicated on September 27, 1942. The first guest moved in the following month. The home has been filled ever since.

An 18-bed clinic has the services of a full-time staff of doctors and nurses. It has proved its worth a thousand times, not

only to the guests of the Country House but to hundreds of others in the motion picture industry who have grasped the helping hand of the Motion Picture Relief Fund.

Hersholt, now serving his eighth consecutive term as president of the fund, is the Country House's most frequent visitor and its most enthusiastic champion. He moved earth—with a shovel—to help get it started, and he would have moved heaven, too, if necessary.

In the process of laying the financial groundwork for the home, he touched Will Hays for a \$100,000 gift from the Will Rogers Memorial Fund. He got Hollywood stars to buy penny Christmas cards one year for the same amount they usually spend for expensive ones—with the difference going to the Motion Picture Fund. President Roosevelt gave him an old campaign hat so he could raffle it off for a pretty penny.

But the money piled up by the Screen Guild Players was the clincher. The guests of the Motion Picture Country House wouldn't miss it for love, money or Shakespeare.

## Information Please by Martin Grams, Jr. Review by Rodney Bowcock, Jr.

When you think of the most popular and long running radio programs, we all have the same few that pop into our minds: Jack Benny, Suspense, Fibber McGee and Molly, Lone Ranger, and maybe one or two other personal favorites. In the minds of most of us, *Information Please* is a program that is absent from that list. However, the program was very popular, and ran fourteen years. Now, Martin Grams Jr. gives the show called "the most literate popular entertainment program to ever go out over the air" its due in his new book appropriately and simply titled *Information Please*.

Grams starts at the beginning, with a brief accounting of the early programs of *Information Please* creator Dan Golenpaul. Then we are treated to a thorough history of the program, its stars (including brief biographies and clever quotes from various episodes), the many lawsuits that the program was involved in (something I found particularly interesting), and the various attempts to penetrate other media. The show seems to have had a rocky history, and Grams explores it all.

Fans of the visual mediums will be pleased to see the sections devoted to the RKO film shorts and the short-lived television series, which only lasted thirteen episodes. Also included is an extensive look at the long running Almanacs that held the *Information Please* name.

Of course, the meat of any OTR book is the logs, and this book has extensive and complete logs for all 506 radio broadcasts, 13 television broadcasts, and 18 RKO shorts. In this day and age, logs for radio programs are easily found for free on the internet, but Grams goes above and beyond those who put together (or steal) the online logs, by using only the most accurate sources for his published material. If you

are an *Information Please* fan, this log is the most accurate available today, and is really worth the purchase price alone.

Overall, *Information Please*, is very readable and enjoyable. Readers may have a difficult time muddling through the various contracts that are printed in the book, and to some that is surely a downside, but it's hard to fault Grams for being thorough. Fans of the program will really be glad to get a copy of this one, and will be grateful that such a book has finally been written.

*Information Please* is 248 pages and is available from BearManor Media PO BOX 750 Boalsburg, PA 16827, or on the web at [www.bearmanormedia.com](http://www.bearmanormedia.com), at the cost of \$29.95 plus shipping and handling.

TONIGHT  
ON  
**Information Please**

LISTEN TO  
**GLENWAY WESCOTT**  
author of  
**Apartment  
in Athens**

"... the most considerable  
American work of art to  
come out of the war."  
—Clifton Fadiman

A Dash-of-the-Mouth Club  
Selection for March  
At all bookstores \$ 2.50

## Radio Without Soap by Aiken Welch

**He kicks radio's limitations in the face and insists on giving you the best, whether it sells soap or not. At 34, Norman Corwin is the man who "drapes radio with long pants"**

A HARD-SHELLED radio official tuned in on New York's experimental station WQXR one day in 1938, on his rounds to catch anything new on the air. The show he dialed was an obscure dramatic presentation, but it riveted his attention. He telephoned WQXR.

"Who's directing that show?" he inquired. Norman Corwin.

"Never heard of him. Who cast it?" Norman Corwin.

"Who read the prologue?" Norman Corwin.

"Who wrote the confounded show?" Norman Corwin.

"He's not a man. He's an industry!"

That was the first step toward Columbia Presents Corwin, an annual series of original half-hour plays presented on the CBS network, written, cast, directed, and produced by Norman Corwin.

Corwin at thirty-four is regarded as the Noel Coward of radio. Critic Carl Van Doren, emphasizing his pioneer quality, goes further and says that Corwin is to American radio what Marlowe was to the Elizabethan stage. The only author to have his name in the title of a big radio show, winner of more radio Oscars than anyone else in the field, he commands an audience that ranges from mere hundreds of thousands to millions.

Last November, Corwin put on one of radio's most revolutionary shows, a political program sponsored by the Democrats which bristled with new tricks in production. For the first time in radio, songs were integrated into a political program. Corwin

says another innovation was "using little people as stars, and stars as little people." For example, when it came time to introduce President Roosevelt over the air, Corwin didn't give the lines to Humphrey Bogart, Judy Garland, Tallulah Bankhead, or any of the other stars on the show. He gave the honor to a girl who had just become old enough to vote.

The election show drew an immense listening audience. But it didn't top the total of sixty million people who listened to *We Hold These Truths*, written for the 150th anniversary of the Bill of Rights and broadcast over four networks. True, the added attraction that gave Corwin the largest number of listeners a radio play has ever had was the address at the end by the President of the United States. But Crossley ratings show that Corwin is usually tuned in for his own sake.

*We Hold These Truths* is typical of Corwin's ear-minded method of producing a greatness of scene and showing our personal relation to it. From the streamlined blue-and-chromium studio, with no stage settings other than a few microphones, a talented and resourceful musician, and a few sound trappings, came the illusion of the thin-walled, echoing eighteenth-century Virginia Assembly.

Against a panorama of great events in the history of civil rights, individual farmers and blacksmiths were heard making up their minds to join in wresting from the reluctant lawyers and aristocrats the Bill of Rights. As each Article was taken up for ratification, a ghostly procession of men and peoples was heard and almost seen to go by. The clatter of muskets suggested Concord Bridge; Lincoln's rich grave voice, the Civil War; the scream of a woman might mean a medieval rack or a modern concentration camp.

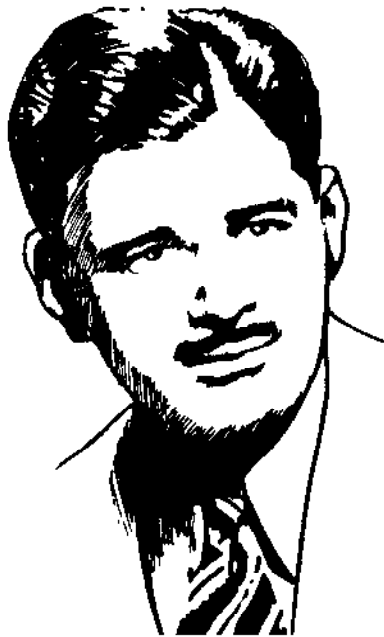


Illustration by Bobb Lynes

Another big Corwin show has been on the fire since last August. It is a V for Victory Day program. Corwin has finished the script while leaving it fluid for changes. The script will be published by Simon and Schuster and, if all goes well, it will appear the day after the program goes on the air.

Though his work is his passion, Corwin is not at all the temperamental director. Throughout most rehearsals he is patient, even-tempered, and witty, dropping a wisecrack at a tense moment without moving a muscle of his face. He does, however, insist on strict attention. Sloppy reading and gossip while waiting for cues throw him off. "For heaven's sake, Joe," he'll trumpet, "stick to the script. Don't write your own lines."

But if Joe has really improved the passage, the artist Corwin takes over and accepts the change.

Corwin peers through the glass of the

control room with the keen blue eyes of a New England fisherman. When he's not calling directions he slightly sucks his lower lip beneath his mustache. At the studio he is likely to have on a well-worn-tan sack suit, a white shirt, a red-and-tan Paisley tie, and red garterless socks. Yet he somehow looks trim and tidy. His well-scrubbed Yankee face gives him the appearance of a boy who got dressed for a party and then fell to playing with his trains.

Most New England of all is his speech. His baritonish voice pronounces "market" to rhyme with "racket," and his flattened vowels twang like a Nantucket whalers. He doesn't like his voice. When he hears one of his own recordings, the critic Corwin shudders, says, "I wouldn't take that from an actor."

To watch the bits and pieces at a Corwin rehearsal is to be quite certain that they will never fit into a finished performance. Sprawling in their chairs, the shirt-sleeved musicians try to understand what Corwin wants with his screwy yet wonderfully specific directions. The sound-effects men are put through their paces. "That's not a girl running to the phone," he'll say. "Without seeing you, I know you're stamping in one place. You sound like a man waiting to get into a public station."

Contrived and phony sound effect, irritate him. In *El Capitan* and *the Corporal*, a pair of young lovers run about in confusion for a train. Corwin staged the scene with the nearest actual staircase. His actors ran as they would for a due train, talking into a microphone one of them carried. Other microphones were strategically placed at foot level below and above the stairs.

To the listener it was an unusually realistic station scene. To the radio professional it was a classic in the handling of microphones.

His musical directions written into the

scripts drive his musicians mad—then on to the perfect score. Music: A schmaltzy Rumanian combination playing a good five-cent *tzigarnya*. Or, in another mood, Music: Prelude; a statement of a five-note theme accented in the same way as the spoken name, "Czechoslovakia!" It is strong, as though you were declaring, "This is about the country of a great ally and we are much in earnest."

Actors like to work with him. Veteran radio actress Minerva Pious says Corwin has a good understanding of actors' psychology. When a dress rehearsal goes too well, he always interrupts it, giving the actors a higher peak to aim for.

Charles Laughton, frankly a Corwin fan, says, "I believe it to be true that there is no actor on the stage, on the screen, or in radio who won't drop what he is doing to be in one of Norman Corwin's radio shows."

Most of author Corwin's plays read almost as well as they play. In theme, some are a judicious mixture of com and social consciousness. He loves to parallel everyday affairs with cosmic ones; what happens to Alice in Peoria is translated on a larger scale to our nation on the planet Earth. Nor is it unusual for a heroine of Corwin's to interrupt a glowing love scene to remind her lover of the Spanish Republican cause and its relation to the present war.

UNTITLED, which is fast becoming the radio classic of the war years, is an example of his ability to combine the personally poignant with large, world-wide concerns. The story centers around an American boy, Hank Peters, who was killed in Italy. His family doctor, his teachers, his best girl, an editor to whom he once wrote an indignant letter, the Nazi who killed him, his pal, and his mother live through their memories, all vividly shown against a background of world events. "While you were going to the movies once a week,"

the narrator tells Hank's girl, "the Weimer Republic failed you. While you were fumbling on a sofa, a paperhanger laid waste your plans." The play culminates in a shock to the whole audience when Hank himself demands angrily from "his acre of now undisputed ground" that the right answer be given to his mother's question, "Why was my boy killed?"

Even those who disagree heartily with his views on life and politics admit that Corwin represents the future of radio. Puns, horseplay, earnest conversations on sociology, musical intervals, rhymed and blank verse are all grist to his mill. No mood or tone is untried by him. He has the longest reach of anyone in radio today.

But with all this, there's a large fly in his soup. "But Corwin is not commercial," goes the refrain. "You can't tie up his program with selling soap." And to many a radio director who gets several times as much as Corwin's \$500 a week for yessing the sponsor, this is the higher criticism.

Corwin concedes that it gripes him. But it is not with the sponsors of so-called soap opera that he quarrels. He declares that he's perfectly willing to hitch an advertiser's car to his freight train. But his requirements are two: the advertising agency may send no representatives into the control room, and "his material cannot be tampered with. When agency men realize he means it, they fade away."

So Corwin does not sell soap; but the Columbia Broadcasting System, not in business for its health, admits he sells radio.

A Corwin show requires attention. You can't listen and do your housework, bang doors, rustle newspapers, chat with your family. But after a few minutes of deliberate attention, chances are you'll shush anybody who comes into the room. To Corwin, radio is a ripening medium

whose possibilities are just beginning to trouble our sleep. That is why he often gives away, entirely without compensation, material asked for by radio stations he approves of, as he did recently to a noncommercial Australian network.

He has given gratis much time, energy, and work in the cause of democracy. He is a Jefferson-Lincoln-Whitman believer in democracy, he says, and it shows in most of his plays.

"Most of my liberal friends," says a colleague of Corwin's, "are so full of social theory that they beat their wives and cheat their friends. You know-everything for the masses, but nothing for their brothers and sisters. Norm isn't like that; he's just the opposite. He'll listen to your troubles and try to help you like a human being. I wish I had a nickel for every favor he's done for a nonentity in the eyes of the public. Who ever heard of John LaTouche and Earl Robinson until Norm picked their song out of a half-baked WPA show? Now it's the Ballad for Americans."

Corwin is a bachelor, but he is looking for someone to regulate his life and broaden his domestic streak. Now he writes and edits throughout the night, trails into the kitchen for cold cereal-when he doesn't forget to eat. There are bets on whether he'll ever marry, but the odds are in his favor, since he grew up in a happy home.

He was born in Winthrop, Massachusetts, in 1910, the third of four children. His father was a printer of copper engravings. His mother painted still life in oil before marriage, and afterward doodled Gibson girl profiles. Norman inherited his mother's talent for caricature, and will today expose your most shameful traits on a scratch-pad if you talk long enough. Very early he loved sound and learned to play the piano by ear.

When he was still an infant his eavesdropping parents heard elaborate dia-



logues going on over Mrs. Corwin's sewing box, with buttons as actors. Outgrowing that, he used the buttons for a piece of as-tounding magic: he could make one disappear in his ear. One day he failed to retrieve the button and had to have the help of a surgeon.

He next dazzled his following with a self-illustrated literary masterpiece called *The Adventures of John Ransford*, a precursor of Superman, who, quite without the aid of Pershing or Foch, won World War I.

Between books and poems, worrying about his family took most of his energy. Once when his mother was late at market he organized a schoolboy posse which only her providential return prevented from becoming a country-wide woman hunt. He is still a worrier today.

At Winthrop High School his teachers encouraged his work in poetry and composition, for which he rewarded them by winning the prize in a state-wide short-story contest, and, as a final flourish, he wrote the Class Day exercises in rhyme.

Then he bade farewell to school forever. To his family's pleas to consider college, he replied, "Nuts!" He knew where

he was going ... he hoped. He composed a letter, sent it to eighty-three Massachusetts newspaper editors, and sat back waiting for recognition. Many kind replies came, but only one, the Greenfield Recorder, offered a job.

So Norman at seventeen had the invaluable small-town experience of covering city news, social agencies, Sports, writing a column, and reviewing the movies with freely expressed boyish scorn that soon made him persona non grata in every movie theater in town. Even if he paid, they wouldn't let him in.

Greener pastures claimed him: the Springfield Republican. Under one name he contributed verse and comment to the column of a rival paper, and in his own column he criticized them. Readers challenged him with angry defenses of his own work.

It was during his six years in Springfield that radio first lured him. His voice, which he doesn't like, won him the assignment of nightly news presentations over WBZ and WBZA, and later several sustaining programs over WBZ and WMAS. One series, called *Norman Corwin's Journal*, in which he spoke informally or read a striking passage from a book, brought in a surprisingly large response, vindicating his suspicion that the audience for verse was considerable and that people wanted to hear poems read clearly rather than in the usual cloying voice mercifully drowned out by organ music. Eventually he became radio editor of the paper.

Admiring elder brother Emil felt that his kid brother ought to have a chance in New York. When Twentieth Century-Fox offered Emil a job, he recommended Norman, and Norman was hired. Before long, he was made radio director.

In New York he began to bombard WQXR with criticisms, ideas, and scripts. Shortly he was on the air half an hour a

week in Poetic License.

Paid only with glory, he wrote an endless number of plays, dramatized poetry, introducing voices to give the effect of counterpoint.

One of the best shows was reviewed by *Variety*. It was a satire on *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, an Alec Templetonish sort of thing, done in words, with the piece recited as by Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Lawrence, and a news commentator. Letters began to pile up, and among them came an invitation to prepare a guest piece for the Magic Key of RCA. That same week the radio scout heard him.

Almost before he realized it, Corwin was made director of his own show for CBS.

Cautiously he felt his way. To get the effects he wanted, he studied and experimented. But he had absorbed more than he realized. Long before the series was well under way he had tapped his apparently limitless talent for sound control.

For six months he directed *Americans at Work and Living History*. For twenty-five weeks he wrote, adapted, cast, and produced *Words Without Music*, which received the highest dramatic award of the year, the first prize of the institute for Education for "best demonstrating the cultural, artistic, and socially important uses of radio." That year he came into general recognition with *The Plot to Overthrow Christmas*.

Then he began to skyrocket to fame with play after play: *The Long Name*, *None Could Spell* (Czechoslovakia), *The Master Plan*, *What is the Enemy?* A *Soliloquy to Balance the Budget*, and, in quite another tone, a burlesque on his own medium, *Radio Primer*, and later, after a few experiences with Hollywood, *Movie Primer*. The British Broadcasting Corporation and CBS together asked him

FEBRUARY 10, 1945 LIBERTY

## Old Time Radio Series Reviews

by Bill Kiddle

### AFFAIRS OF PETER SALEM

For four seasons, between 6/13/49 and 4/18/53, THE AFFAIRS OF PETER SALEM was a popular crime drama heard over the Mutual network on various nights and at different times. The series was based upon the cases of a suave, sophisticated private detective. "Salem", played by Santos Ortega, used his deductive ability rather than his fists to solve cases. He was aided in his crime deduction by his side-kick "Marty" played by Jack Grimes.

### ALIAS JANE DOE

Radio dramas in which a beautiful and adventurous female magazine writer finds it necessary to don various disguises to get material for her magazine, and then writing her experiences under the name of Jane Doe, might at first glance appear to be a new wrinkle, proved to be a short-lived series, lasting only a few months between April 7 and September 22, 1951. Kay Phillips was cast in the title role and Tudor Owen played her editor. The program was heard over NBC on Saturdays at 1:30 pm.

### AMAZING MR. SMITH

Keenan Wynn, well-known comedic star of stage, screen and radio turned his talents to a comedy-mystery program titled AMAZING MR. SMITH. The storyline focused upon "Gregory Smith" an amateur sleuth with an uncanny knack for attracting trouble. The program sponsored by the American Can Co., was aired for a few short weeks, between April 7 and June 30, 1941 over Mutual on Monday

nights.

### ATTORNEY FOR THE DEFENSE

Michael Raffetto, known to radio listeners as "Jack Packard" in the original LOVE A MYSTERY series made an unsuccessful attempt to bring life to ATTORNEY AT LAW, a crime drama that featured the exploits of "Jonathon Brixton" a San Francisco attorney. The program was aired over Mutual in 1944-1945 in two auditions.

### ANN OF THE AIRPLANES

The age of flight produced a romance with aircraft and an ordination for a new popular hero-the aviator. Comic strips and children's radio serials promoted this new interest. A viatrix Amelia Earhart was the model for many girls and young women in this new era, but "Ann Burton" airhostess/nurse was the featured attraction in ANN OF THE AIRPLANES, a juvenile serial drama, heard daily as a syndicated feature in the 1930's "Ann" was always coming to the aid of her pilot friends "Jack Baker" and "Pete Peterson." Radio Memories has an outstanding collection of 48 of these old episodes on cassette for your enjoyment.

### AUTHOR'S PLAYHOUSE

For four short seasons, between 3/05/41 and 6/04/45 AUTHOR'S PLAYHOUSE was a solid dramatic anthology, created by Wynn Wright with scripts by celebrated, young American writers. The series was heard over NBC on various days and at different times. The cast in these dramas included young actors like John Hodiak, Nelson Omsted, Marvin Miller, Olan Soule, Les Tramayne and Curley Bradley-people who would make major contributions to radio drama over the next decades.

### RADIO CITY PLAYHOUSE

Over a span of three decades NBC produced many outstanding radio dramas. RADIO CITY PLAYHOUSE, heard for two years between 7/03/48 and 1/01/50, was one of those excellent, yet short-lived series. In the summer of 1948, this sustaining program, was heard on Monday nights at 10:30. The show, which seldom listed production credits, thrived on the idea that the play, not the players, was all important. The series specialized in high-octane stories of adventure, and Radio Memories has an excellent collection of most of the episodes in this well-crafted series.

### RADIO GUILD

According to the old adage, "variety is the spice of life" and RADIO GUILD, the creation of director Vernon Radcliffe, was radio's first major theater of experimental drama. For at least five years, between 7/15/35 and 10/12/40, this interesting anthology was heard over the Blue Network on various days and times. The productions provided listeners with a good mix of original plays and classics. Often the focus was on the experimental, with plays in verse, slices of life- all provided opportunities in radio for new and unknown writers.

### RADIO HALL OF FAME

In December, 1943, Abel Green, editor of "Variety", the trade paper of the entertainment world brought to Blue/ABC this creation: RADIO HALL OF FAME, a unique musical variety program that in many ways attempted to be a "weekly Academy Awards of radio." The performers judged to be worthy were invited to perform in an all-star hour of music, drama, comedy and news. The

great names of show business were under the capable direction of Paul Whiteman, Devere Jacob and Dee Engelbach. The program, sponsored by Philco, was heard until 4/28/46. Radio Memories has two of these one hour productions in its catalog.

### RADIO READERS DIGEST

For many decades, READER'S DIGEST magazine has been a popular collection of short stories and articles, printed in compact form for readers with a variety of tastes in literature. At first, between 1942 and 1945, Campbells Soup sponsored a radio edition of the popular magazine in a series of half-hour dramas. Then, between 1/13/46 and 6/03/48, the sponsorship was picked up by the Hallmark Greeting Card Co. During this long run, the program attracted top flight Hollywood talent for memorable performances.

### RAFFLES

E.W. Horning, brother-in-law of Sir. Arthur Conan Doyle, created in his series of short stories a magnificent crime drama character, RAFFLES, a gentleman burglar, turned detective. A century ago "Raffles" rivalled the popularity of "Sherlock Holmes" and established a prototype for "The Saint", "James Bond." and other gentleman rogues of modern detective fiction. "Raffles" first appeared in Hollywood films in the 1930's, and THE ADVENTURES OF RAFFLES was heard over CBS in the early 1940's. In the UK, BBC Radio 4 developed a series of six thirty-minute dramas starring Jeremy Clyde in 1985.

### RAGGEDY ANN

Nearly one hundred years ago, Johnny Gruelle, a one-time newspaper

illustrator, created a world famous rag doll, RAGGEDY ANN. His character creation, came to radio as pilot to a 15 minute serial on 10/23/47. The program never prospered and little or no information is available as to its production credits.

#### KEEP 'EM ROLLING

The broadcasting industry played a vital role in promoting Home Front morale in the early perilous days of World War II. KEEP 'EM ROLLING, thirty minute war-related variety program, hosted by Clifton Fadiman, used the the top talent of stage, screen & radio to produce an excellent patriotic program for the US Government's Office of Emergency Management. For seven short months, between 11/09/41 and 5/17/42, the show was heard on Sunday evenings at 10:30 over the Mutual network. Morton Gould supplied the music and short dramatic plays were from the pens of some of America's best writers.

#### LASSIE

An all-star Hollywood cast made LASSIE COME HOME a family film classic in 1943. Four years later, the Morrell Packing Company, makers of Red Heart Dog Food, attempted to cast the MGN canine star and his/her owner-trainer Rudd Weatherwax in a series of 15-minute dog stories before a live Hollywood studio audience. Unfortunately, the acting talents of the original Hollywood cast were not utilized in the radio program. However, the end product was still a likeable, light-hearted juvenile adventure, aired over either ABC or NBC for three years, between 6/08/47 and 5/27/50.

#### LEONIDAS WEATHERALL

Collective wisdom directs that a head-

master of an exclusive boy's prep school in New England, who wears a Shakespeare-styled beard, should conduct himself in a very proper demeanor. Such a gentleman would not be suspected of being the creator of a successful radio detective drama, let alone be a real life amateur detective. LEONIDAS WEATHERALL led a very busy life engaging all of these bizarre pursuits. This interesting fictional character, created by Alice Tilton, was the "hero" of a detective series heard over the Mutual network on Sunday evenings for almost a year; between 6104144 and 5106145. , Veteran Hollywood actor Walter Hampden was cast in the title role, and Ethel Remey played the part of "Mrs Mollet", his faithful yet feisty housekeeper.

#### LEO AND THE BLOND

The mortality rate for summer replacements and programs in an audition format during the Golden Age of Radio were always very high. One of the many unsuccessful experiments was LEO AND THE BLOND, a 15 minute serial heard briefly over a two; month span between 6/18/47 and 8/02/47. Lionel Stander was cast in the role of a would-be Hollywood press agent who uses "pages from a calendar" to promote the talents of "Hester", a lovely blond, played by Florence Lake. Only two "audition programs " have survived.

**MICHAEL SHAYNE** (New Adventures of) Radio, during the 1930's-1940's, abounded with crime dramas and the exploits of private detectives. THE ADVENTURES OF MICHAEL SHAYNE heard in various formats for over a decade, from 10/16/44 to 7/10/53,

did not differ greatly from others in the genre. "Michael Shayne" was a "reckless, red-headed Irishman at his old haunts in New Orleans." During the 1948-1950 era, Hollywood film star Jeff Chandler was cast in the title role, and the show was heard over either ABC or Mutual. Radio Memories has several fine episodes for your listening pleasure.

#### MIDNIGHT

In recent decades, National Public Radio (NPR) has done much to keep alive the traditions of fine radio drama. For two short months in the summer of 1982, between July 13 and -September 9, MIDNIGHT was a serious effort made by Roger Ritner Productions to create some new gothic thrillers of the type originally made popular by men like Arch Oboler in LIGHTS OUT, one of the classics in radio horror programs.

#### MIKE MALLOY, PRIVATE EYE

Steve Brodie, Well-known Hollywood film actor, moved from the film lot to ABC's sound stage in the summer of 1953 when he was cast in the title role of MIKE MALLOY. Unfortunately, the "luck of the Irish" did not attach itself to the program. The show, heard on Thursday evening at 9:00, lasted only two months, from July 16 to September 24, 1953. The program format was resurrected by CBS during the "later days of radio drama" in a bit more successful run from 4/03/56 to 3/18/57 when the show aired Monday nights at 7pm.

#### MISCHA, THE MAGNIFICANT

Memories based upon one's past exploits or greatest fantasies was the comedy framework for MISCHA, THE MAGNIFICENT, an interesting summer

replacement heard on Sunday evenings over CBS from July 5 to September 9, 1942. Veteran film and radio personality Mischa Auer was cast as himself - a Russian born actor - a man writing his memoirs of his youth. Each episode opened with the theme "The Volga Boatman" and Mischa explored dreams of his past as a lover, an opera singer. All this took him far beyond the type cast "mad Russian" image he portrayed in many comedy guest appearances.

#### MISS PINKERTON INC.

In the days before equal rights legislation, few actresses made it onto the airwaves in crime dramas that focused on the exploits of female detectives. Hollywood film star Joan Blondell was cast in the role of a young woman who attempts to be a sleuth after she inherits a detective agency from her late uncle. This 30 minute program, heard over NBC in the summer of 1941 had an excellent supporting cast of Dick Powell, Gale Gordon & Hanley Stafford.

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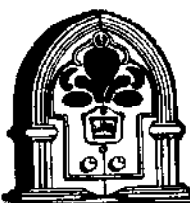
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## THE BIG SHOW

- 04322 11/05/50 #01 Fred Allen, Jimmy Durante, Danny Thomas, Lorraine Day, Portland Hoffa
- 04323 11/12/50 #02 Groucho Marx, Fanny Brice, Ezio Pinza, Hanley Stafford, John Agar
- 04324 11/19/50 #03 Eddie Cantor, Mindie Carson, Jimmy Durante, Bob Hope, Perry Como
- 04325 11/26/50 #04 Fred Allen, Ed Wynn, Jack Carson, Ed Archie Gardner, Meredith Wilson
- 04326 12/10/50 #06 Clifton Webb, Jimmy Durante, Imogene Coca, Joe Buskin, Charles Boyer
- 04327 12/17/50 #07 Bob Hope, Phil Harris, Louis Armstrong, Martin & Lewis, Deborah Kerr
- 04328 12/24/50 #08 Jimmy Durante, Robert Merrill, Margaret O'Brien, Bert Lahr, Ed Wynn
- 04329 12/31/50 #09 Vivian Blaine, Jose Ferrer, Margaret O'Brien, Sam Levine, Ken Murray
- 17790 01/07/51 #10 Fred Allen, Portland Hoffa, Danny Thomas, Edward G Robinson, Marlene Dietrich, Phil Baker
- 04330 01/14/51 #11 Louis Calhern, Jimmy Durante, Martha Raye
- 04331 01/21/51 #12 Fred Allen, Portland Hoffa, Eddie Cantor, Judy Holiday, Gypsy Rose Lee
- 04332 01/28/51 #13 Ray Bolger, Gary Cooper, Danny Kaye, Maxie Rosenbloom, Rudy Vallee

## THE ADVENTURES OF BABE RUTH (NEW)

- 13452 Dusty Collins (Skips) Dutch Reaver Kidnapped Bobby Lee
- 13453 Harry The Hat Sweet William There Are No Bad Kids Chick Foster

## KRAFT MUSIC HALL (NEW)

- 13458 12/04/47 Red Skelton 02/12/48 Charles Laughton
- 13459 03/04/48 Cary Grant 03/25/48 Clifton Webb

## LEONIDAS WITHERALL (NEW)

- 13455 Square Nazi Jackpot Mrs. Mullet Disappears The Four Killers
- 13456 Murder At Danny's Dream Murder At The State Fair
- 13457 Murder On The Train The Corpse Meets A Deadline

## LUX RADIO THEATER (NEW)

- 13462 11/18/40 #282 The Rage Of Manhattan
- 01978 02/24/41 #296 The Whole Town's Talking
- 13466 07/06/42 #359 Love Affair
- 13467 10/05/42 #365 Love Crazy
- 13481 01/11/43 #379 She Knew All The Answers
- 13481 01/11/43 #379 She Knew All The Answers
- 13482 02/01/43 #382 The Show-Off
- 13483 04/26/43 #394 The Lady Has Plans
- 13484 05/31/43 #399 The Major And The Minor

## THE PACIFIC STORY (NEW)

- 13479 08/29/43 # 8 Monsoon Asia: C-90 International Rivalries (Flutter) 09/05/43 # 9 India From Clive To Gandhi 09/12/43 #10 Islands Of The Pacific
- 13480 09/19/43 #11 WWI In The C-90 Pacific 09/26/43 #12 Manchurian Incident & Sequel 10/10/43 #14 China's Exiled Universities

## BEST OF ALL (NEW)

- 10931 09/30/51 Louella Parsons 10/11/54 # 9 Judy Garland
- 10971 10/04/54 Irving Berlin Tribute
- 10972 10/18/54 #10 David Rose Tribute
- 14550 01/10/55 #22 Tribute To Rudolph Friml

## OLD GOLD COMEDY THEATER (NEW)

- 12931 01/28/45 #14 Appointment For Love 02/11/45 #16 A Girl, A Guy & A Gob
- 12932 02/18/45 #17 The Milky Way 02/25/45 #18 You Can't Ration Love
- 12933 03/04/45 #19 Standing Room Only 03/11/45 #20 Magnificent Dope
- 12934 03/18/45 #21 Lady Takes C-90 A Chance 04/01/45 #23 The Major & The Minor 04/08/45 #24 A Slight Case Of Murder
- 12935 04/22/45 #25 The Nervous Wreck 04/29/45 #26 Scatterbrain

- 12936 05/06/45 #27 Hired Wife C-90 05/20/45 #29 Boy Meets Girl 05/27/45 #30 June Moon
- 12937 06/03/45 #31 Having A Wonderful Crime 06/10/45 #32 Tom, Dick & Harry

## UNIT 99 (NEW)

- 12938 08/23/57 # 1 Shopping Center Burglary 08/30/57 # 2 Man With Dynamite
- 12939 09/06/57 # 3 Man Threatening A Woman With A Gun 09/13/57 # 4 Possible Purse Snatcher
- 12940 09/20/57 # 5 Suspicious Juveniles 09/27/57 # 6 Family Disturbance
- 12941 10/04/57 # 7 Woman Assaulted And Witness To Robbery 10/11/57 # 8 Accident At Seventeenth And F
- 12942 10/18/57 # 9 Liquor Store Holdup 10/25/57 #10 Threatening Letter
- 12943 11/01/57 #11 Attempted Suicide 11/08/57 #12 Loaded Gun And Burglar Tools
- 12944 11/15/57 #13 Possible Market Burglary 11/22/57 #14 Incomplete Phone Call
- 12945 11/29/57 #15 Ambulance Follow-Up 12/06/57 #16 Woman Screaming
- 12946 12/13/57 #17 Attempted Suicide At Drive-In 12/20/57 #18 Attempted Suicide At Tower Bridge
- 12947 12/27/57 #19 Accident With Injury At 12th And E 01/03/58 #20 Following Speeders East On Q Street



**SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS**

- 12632 01/08/39 #01 Variety Review #1  
01/15/39 #02 Miss Brown Of  
Worcester
- 12633 01/22/39 #03 Can We Forget  
01/29/39 #04 Variety Review #2
- 12634 02/05/39 #05 Jr Screen Guild  
Show - Variety Review #3  
02/12/39 #06 Three Days March
- 12635 02/19/39 #07 A Song For  
Clotilde  
02/26/39 #07 Variety Review #4
- 12636 03/05/39 #09 Bridge Of Mercy  
03/12/39 #10 Tailored By Toni
- 12637 03/19/39 #11 Zaza  
03/26/39 #12 Never Of  
This World
- 12638 04/02/39 #13 A Mug, A Moll, &  
a Mountaineer  
04/09/39 #14 Variety Review #5
- 12639 04/16/39 #15 The Hand Of  
Providence  
04/23/39 #16 A Review
- 12650 04/30/39 #17 Alone In Paris  
05/07/39 #18 Thwarted  
Ambition
- 12651 05/14/39 #19 Variety  
05/21/39 #20 A Review
- 05447 05/28/39 #21 A Review  
06/04/39 #22 Variety
- 05448 09/24/39 #23 Variety  
10/01/39 #24 Imperfect Lady
- 05449 10/08/39 #25 Variety  
10/15/39 #26 None Shall  
Part Us
- 05458 10/29/39 #28 We Were Dancing  
11/05/39 #29 Going My Way
- 05459 11/12/39 #30 The Beachcomber  
11/19/39 #31 Variety

**INFORMATON PLEASE**

- 15840 05/17/38 # 1 Harry Overstreet,  
Marcus Duffield

- 06/07/38 # 4 John Erskine,  
Bernard Jaffe, Marcus Duffield
- 15841 06/14/38 # 5 Marc Connolly  
06/21/38 # 6 Oscar Levant
- 15842 06/28/38 # 7 Carmen Show  
07/05/38 # 8 Oscar Levant
- 15843 07/12/38 # 9 Quincy Howe,  
George S Kaufman  
07/19/38 #10 Thomas Craven,  
Ben Heet
- 15844 07/26/38 #11 Oscar Levant,  
John Gunther  
08/02/38 #12 Moss Hart,  
Quincy Howe, George Kaufman
- 15845 08/09/38 #13 Alton Cook, Alice  
Dever Miller  
08/23/38 #15 Percy Waxman
- 17923 #15 Bill Corham, Jimmy  
Gleason  
#16 Russell Crouse, Joshua  
Logan
- 15846 08/30/38 #16 Ben Heet  
09/06/38 #17 Ben Bernic,  
Bernard Jaffe
- 15847 09/13/38 #18 Percy Waxman  
09/27/38 #20 Basil Rathbone,  
Sigmund Spaeth

**SCREEN GUILD THEATER**

- 14551 12/22/40 #66 The Juggler of  
Notre Dame  
2/29/40 #67 Drink a Glass  
of Sassafras
- 16912 01/18/51 Birth Of The Blues
- Aldrich Family (New)**  
13604 10/12/39 Barbara Pearson's  
Ring  
08/18/42 Christmas Cards
- 13605 00/00/00 Love Note To Miss  
C-90 Elliott By Mistake  
12/17/49 Antique Chairs  
00/00/00 Carrier Pigeons

**JIMMY FIDDLER (new)**

- 13597 05/21/51 - 06/13/51

**FIBBER McMEE AND MOLLY (New)**

- 13566 02/16/54 #837 Light In  
Fibber's Closet  
02/17/54 #838 House  
Finally Rented  
02/18/54 #839 Molly, In The Attic!  
02/19/54 #840 Fibber Sleeps  
Through "Two Gun Justice"
- 13567 02/22/54 #841 Celebrating  
Washington's Birthday  
02/23/54 #842 Tall Tale McGee  
02/25/54 #843 Eight Year  
Old Newspaper  
02/26/54 #844 Fibber's High  
School Athletic Trophy
- KRAFT MUSIC HALL (NEW)**  
13557 04/15/48 w/Charles Boyer  
01/06/49 w/Larry Parks
- 13558 04/21/49 w/Jimmy Durante  
05/26/49 w/Groucho Marx

**LONE RANGER (NEW)**

- 13598 05/12/47 #2232 City Of The Dead  
05/14/47 #2233 Blotched Brands
- 13599 05/16/47 #2234 The Bully  
05/19/47 #2235 Jail For Sale

**MURDER IS MY HOBBY (NEW)**

- 13563 # 3 Snowbound  
# 4 Dude Ranch
- 13564 # 5 Murder In The Ring  
# 6 Who Killed David Austin?

**NIGHTWATCH (NEW)**

- 13561 06/04/54 # 7 Kid Explosives  
06/11/54 # 8 Paper Hanger
- 13562 06/18/54 # 9 Kenny Narco &  
Headplate  
06/25/54 Big Search

**QUIZ KIDS**

- 13568 03/28/48 #406 Easter Bunny  
Visits (Noise) (NEW)  
04/11/48 #408 From Dearborn  
Michigan (Noise) (NEW)
- 13569 04/18/48 #409 Wild Animal With  
New Look (Noise) (NEW)

04/25/48 #410 With Jack-In-The-  
Box (Noise)

- 18915 06/06/48 #416 Baseball Dessert  
07/04/48 #420 Celebrating  
Independence Day

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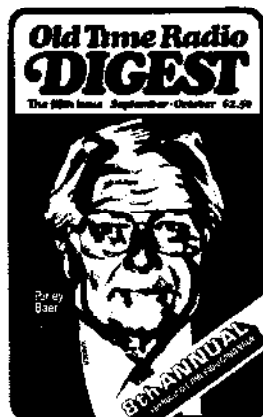
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