



The Old Radio Times

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MYRNA LOY: HOLLYWOOD & RADIO by Martin Grams, Jr.

Confident, sophisticated, whip smart and equipped with a wit as dry as the martinis she favored in her films, she had a gift for nuance and comedic timing. More than a pretty face, Myrna Loy made men swoon and set standards of elegance and star power emulated by Hollywood actresses today. She was born in a small Montana town and moved to Los Angeles at the age of 13, following the untimely death of her father. Her unusual look -- Celtic red hair and freckles complemented exotic almond eyes -- caught the attention of Rudolph Valentino's wife, acclaimed designer Natasha Rambova, who made arrangements for Myrna Loy to appear before the movie cameras.

Myrna Loy is perhaps best-known for her role as Nora Charles in the six Thin Man movies, but her career on the screen began in the silent era. If she wasn't a chorus girl, she was a villainous vamp who showed more skin than subtlety. Although she plays the role of Dr. Fu Manchu's daughter with perfection in *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932), she fought the studio industry for roles that were more sophisticated, avoiding the typecast personalities she played on the screen for years. I recommend *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, by the way. It's a great film and often overlooked. Gregory William Mank wrote a superb behind-the-scenes history of the movie for an issue of the now-defunct *Scarlet Street Magazine*, and it's a great read. But if you can, catch the movie when it is screened on Turner Classic Movies. All of the video and commercial DVD



releases have been edited (each with various different scenes deleted!) and you have to see this pre-code uncut and unedited to enjoy it.

Having been teamed with William Powell in more than a dozen films, most of the American public believed they were really married. And their appearances together on radio broadcasts helped clinch that belief. Loy never dated or married Powell, but the two certainly had chemistry on the screen -- especially in the *Thin Man* movies -- and the studios knew it.

Myrna Loy had distinguished ears which MGM producer David O'Selznick insisted be glued to her head by the makeup artists. Loy considered plastic surgery at one time, but decided that hair styles covering her ears was much better suited and this pleased Selznick. Soon after learning that she was John Dillinger's favorite actress, and was the main reason why he went to see *Manhattan Melodrama*, the movie that ultimately led to his death outside the theatre, Loy admitted she took no pleasure in learning of the news.

HOLLYWOOD FUN FACT

Impressed by 16-year-old Myrna Loy's beauty, the head of the art department at Venice High School assigned her to model for a seminude statue that stands even today in the school's courtyard. Ironically, the actress only liked the spotlight when the cameras were rolling, preferring night at home with her brother and mother (or husband when she was married). Director John Ford joked, "Wouldn't you know, the kid they pick to play tramps is the only good girl in Hollywood."

During World War II, Myrna Loy devoted much of her time to the war cause -- far more time than she did acting. Because of this, her

screen and radio credits drop considerably during the War Years. After the War, Loy devoted much of her time to public service, including UNESCO.

Unlike most of her competition such as Bette Davis and Barbara Stanwyck, Myrna Loy's radio credits are not as extensive. She did not appear before the microphone unless committed under contract, for the purpose of promoting an upcoming movie. Her guest spots on radio programs that had nothing to do with reprising her movie roles were through an arrangement whereby with the announcer commented, "Myrna Loy appeared courtesy of MGM, producers of the [movie] now in theaters."

Throughout 1934 to 1937, MGM Studios recorded a number of 14-15 minute transcription discs featuring exclusive interviews and audio tracks from their upcoming motion pictures. Local theaters often paid for airtime on local radio stations and the transcriptions were played as 15 minute specials, promoting the day and time the movie is going to be screened. Myrna Loy appears in many of these, from *The Thin Man*, *Parnell*, *Whipshaw* and *Libeled Lady*, but her radio appearances were in the form of audio tracks from the motion pictures.

Hollywood on the Air

Broadcast on September 12, 1932.

Hosted by Hollywood columnist Jimmy Fidler, this broadcast featured two celebrity interviews with Irene Dunne and Myrna Loy.

Hollywood Hotel

Broadcast on November 9, 1934.

Sponsored by the Campbell Soup Company. This was Myrna Loy's first of three appearances on this radio program, hosted by Hollywood gossip columnist Louella Parsons. William Powell and Myrna Loy are interviewed by Parsons, following a performance of "Within The Law," in



which Loy played a woman falsely accused and imprisoned for a crime she did not commit. Upon her release, Loy exacts revenge on the guilty parties, always remaining within the law to avoid being accused of another crime.

William Powell and Myrna Loy were originally scheduled to appear on *Hollywood Hotel* on the evening of April 3, 1936, in a scene from "The Great Ziegfeld." Filming schedules at MGM prevented the actors from appearing on the show. Instead, *Hollywood Hotel* presented George Burns and Gracie Allen in "I Married A Doctor." The script originally intended for Powell and Loy was never presented on the program.

Hollywood Hotel

Broadcast on May 22, 1936.

Sponsored by the Campbell Soup Company. Myrna Loy, Warner Baxter and Claire Trevor reprise their roles for a scene from *To Mary, With Love*, Release date August 1936?. Myrna Loy plays the role of Mary Wallace, who stands by her husband, Jack, after the Depression of 1929, but considers divorce when he again becomes successful by 1935. Bill Hallam, who loves Mary, works at keeping them together.

The Lux Radio Theatre

Broadcast on June 8, 1936.

Sponsored by Lux Soap.

William Powell and Myrna Loy reprise their role as Nick and Nora Charles from *The Thin Man*. This was the second episode of Lux to be broadcast from California under a new format. Prior to June 1, the series originated from New York and featured Broadway actors in adaptations of stage plays and Broadway musicals. In February of 1936, John Gilman, head of Lever Brothers advertising, began conferring with people at J. Walter Thompson about revising the program's format. What ultimately happened was Lux went Hollywood. Not only were they



featuring adaptations of motion-pictures, but the series originated from the 965-seat Music Box Theatre on 6126 Hollywood Boulevard in California. Loy stumbles over one line just slightly, but noticeably. For movie buffs, Theda Bara appears after the story and discusses her planned comeback.

Hollywood Hotel

Broadcast on November 13, 1936.

Sponsored by the Campbell Soup Company. Buddy Ebsen and James Stewart reprise their roles from the movie, *Born to Dance*, with Myrna Loy co-starring in the role Eleanor Powell played in the motion-picture. Jean Harlow and Clark Gable are interviewed by Louella Parsons, because the two actors are being filmed for *Saratoga*, due for a theatrical release in a few months.

Good News of 1938

Broadcast on December 30, 1937. Sponsored by Kraft Foods (promoting Maxwell House coffee). Myrna Loy and Jimmy Stewart appear in a skit about newlyweds. Obviously since the series was designed as a weekly



promotional ad spot for MGM, their actors appeared on the program frequently. Wallace Beery stars in a scene from *The Bad Man From Brimstone*. So it comes as no surprise that Lionel Barrymore describes a "name the movie" contest.

The Silver Theatre

Broadcast on January 15, 1939. Sponsored by International Silver. Myrna Loy is the weekly guest in a drama titled "The Debutante."

Good News of 1939

Broadcast on May 11, 1939. Sponsored by Maxwell House Coffee. Myrna Loy and Robert Taylor reprise their roles of Cora Jordan and Bill Overton in *Lucky Night*. They attempt to settle down with a serious relationship, only to discover that leopards cannot change their spots. The movie was released theatrically just a few days before this broadcast.

The Gulf Screen Guild Theatre

Broadcast on February 11, 1940. Sponsored by Gulf Oil. In an attempt to piggyback on the popularity of William Powell and Myrna Loy's screen personifications, the two actors were scheduled to star in "Single Crossing," a romantic comedy. Powell was unable to attend, however, so James Stewart replaced him.

The Lux Radio Theatre

Broadcast on June 17, 1940. Sponsored by Lux Soap. William Powell and Myrna Loy reprise their roles of Nick and Nora Charles from *After The Thin Man*, the second of six *Thin Man* motion pictures.

The Lux Radio Theatre

Broadcast on September 9, 1940. Sponsored by Lux Soap. William Powell and Myrna Loy reprise their roles in an adaptation of *Manhattan Melodrama*. To give you an idea of how big *Gone With the Wind* was (not meaning to steer from the subject at hand), the sponsor offered a Scarlett O'hara brooch to the listeners, during one of the commercials. The movie was released in theaters nine months earlier and was still going on strong.

Bundles for Britain

Broadcast on January 1, 1941. This was one of several specials designed as patriotic support for the "Bundles for Britain" program. Arch Oboler directed. Celebrities on this broadcast included Myrna Loy, Jack Benny, Bette Davis, Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland, Loretta Young, Claudette Colbert, Spencer Tracy, Charles Boyer, Mary Martin, Ronald Colman, Merle Oberon, Tony Martin and Charles Boyer.

The Gulf Screen Guild Theater

Broadcast on January 19, 1941. Sponsored by Gulf Oil. Myrna Loy and Don Ameche play the leads in "Magnificent Obsession." *American Calling*
Broadcast on February 8, 1941. Sponsored by the Greek War Relief. This ninety-minute special originated from Hollywood and featured an all-star cast that included Clark Gable, Merle Oberon, Groucho

Marx, Madeleine Carroll, Connee Boswell, Dick Powell, Charles Laughton, Ronald Colman, Shirley Temple, Ann Rutherford, Barbara Stanwyck, Mickey Rooney, Robert Taylor, Tyrone Power and many others. Myrna Loy appears in a comedy skit with Mary Martin, Jack Benny and Bob Hope. This program was broadcast over both the Mutual Broadcasting System and the National Broadcasting Company.

The Chase and Sanborn Program

Broadcast on March 23, 1941.

Sponsored by Standard Brands (promoting Chase and Sanborn Coffee).

Myrna Loy is guest, playing opposite to Charlie McCarthy, Edgar Bergen's ventriloquist buddy.

The Lux Radio Theatre

Broadcast on June 30, 1941.

Sponsored by Lux Soap.

William Powell and Myrna Loy reprised their roles from the 1940 MGM classic, *I Love You Again*. Powell plays boring businessman Larry Wilson, who recovers from amnesia and discovers he's really a con man. But romance tangles the plot. This same story was done again on Lux in 1948, but not with Myrna Loy in the cast.

William Powell and Myrna Loy were originally scheduled for The Lux Radio Theatre's production of "Third Finger, Left Hand," on the evening of September 29, 1941. The announcement was made at the conclusion of last week's program, and the two stars were even billed in newspapers (such as the *New York Times*, proving once again how newspapers can be unreliable when researching old-time radio). When both actors came down with a touch of the flu, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. and Martha Scott were quickly recruited as replacements. Had Myrna Loy been able to attend, she would have been able to reprise her role as Margot Sherwood, an unmarried editor, who attempts to repel potential suitors by pretending to be married to a small town Ohio boy.

The Lux Radio Theatre

Broadcast on November 3, 1941.



Sponsored by Lux Soap.

William Powell and Myrna Loy play the roles of Stephen Dexter, an ad man, and secretary Kendall Browning, who agree to a marriage of convenience as a loophole in order to protect his finances during an important business deal. After the deal is signed and delivered, he asks for a divorce but Kendall (Loy) surprises him by refusing. Seems she's fallen in love with him. According to Art Pierce and Connie Billips' *Lux Presents Hollywood* book, this recording was not known to exist in 1995, but has since been discovered and is now commonly circulating among collector hands.

The Silver Theater

Broadcast on November 30, 1941.

Sponsored by International Silver.

Myrna Loy is the celebrity guest for this broadcast, starring in a witty drama titled, "Strictly Personal."

The Gulf Screen Guild Theater
Broadcast on January 11, 1942.

Sponsored by Gulf Oil.

Herbert Marshall and Myrna Loy co-star in an adaptation of the 1939 motion-picture, Love Affair, which originally starred Charles Boyer and Irene Dunne.

The Lux Radio Theatre

Broadcast on February 23, 1942.

Sponsored by Lux Soap.

In Myrna Loy's last of many Lux appearances, she played the role of Jane Alexander, who falls in love with Charles Boyer. This adaptation of "Appointment for Love" was done two years later with a different cast so if you are not a die-hard collector of radio programs, be aware that there are two versions and only the 1942 version features Myrna Loy. Since the U.S. had recently entered World War II, Charles Boyer had recently become an American citizen and was congratulated on the program.

The Cavalcade of America

Broadcast on March 23, 1942.

Until 2002, a recording of this episode was not known to exist in collector circles. A company in Connecticut, Radio Yesteryear, had this recording in their archives. I bought the audio cassette (at an expensive \$12 price tag) and then used it to trade for recordings that collectors were holding on to jealously. The result? I gained a few treasures that made it worth spending that kind of money on a single recording and "Angels on Horseback" with Myrna Loy got into circulation. Loy stars as Dr. Mary Breckenridge who created the "Frontier Nursing Service."

Keep 'Em Rolling

Broadcast on April 12, 1942.

This program was produced in co-operation with the War Production Board. Myrna Loy and Otto Kruger star in an adaptation of "The Captain From Connecticut."

Greece Fights On

Syndicated beginning circa 1943.

Sponsored by The Greek War Relief Association. This fourteen-minute recording was designed to promote the sale of a newly-published book, The Atlas of World War II (published in 1943). Profits from the sale of the \$1 book

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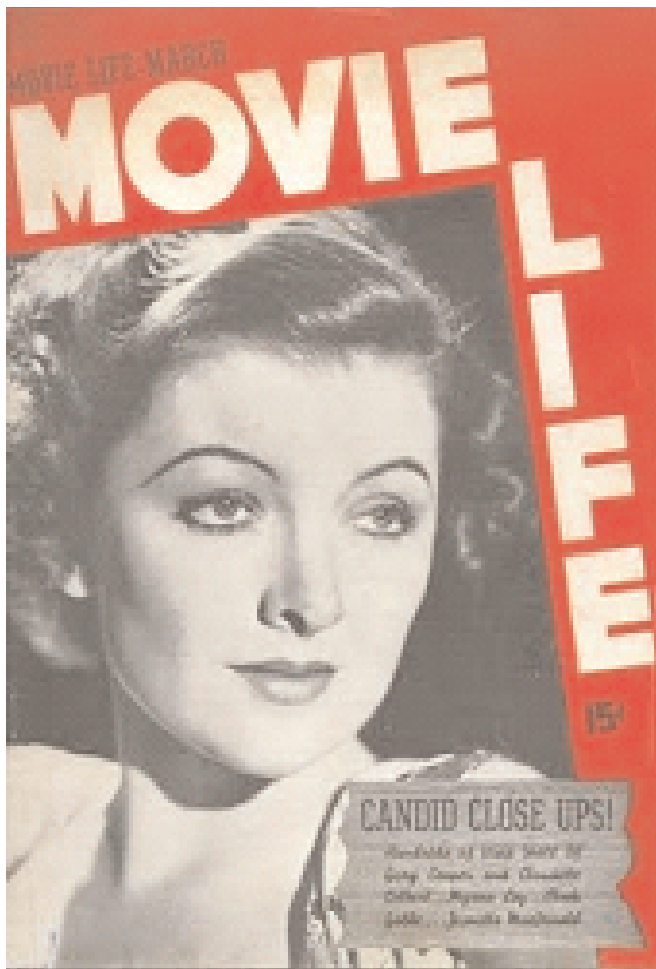
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were to be donated to The Greek War Relief Association. Celebrities endorsed and urged the purchase of the book: Fred Allen, Tallulah Bankhead, Ilka Chase, Clifton Fadiman, Myrna Loy and Paul Muni.

Ed Sullivan Entertains

Broadcast on October 18, 1943.
Sponsored by the Colgate-Palmolive Company (promoting Mennen Speed Stick).
This fifteen-minute radio program offered a variety of singers and actors performing for the radio audience, and exclusive interviews. For this broadcast, Myrna Loy was a guest.

Mary Margaret McBride ("The Martha Deane Show")

Broadcast on November 4, 1943.
Myrna Loy is interviewed by Martha Deane.

Command Performance

Recorded circa early 1945.
Myrna Loy was the emcee for this episode.

Command Performance was produced by the Armed Forces Radio Service for entertainment to U.S. troops stationed overseas. Various Hollywood stars made guest appearances, providing music and drama. This program was not broadcast in the U.S. per se, but rather for the troops. Recordings of this episode are circulating among collectors with a broadcast date of June 7, 1945, but I am not sure how they acquired such a broadcast date. The official episode number (taken from the transcription disc) is #178.

The Frank Sinatra Show

Broadcast on April 11, 1945.
Sponsored by the Sales Builders.
Myrna Loy was a guest on this broadcast. Looking back on history, had Sinatra's show aired on Thursday, Friday or Saturday, instead of Wednesday, Myrna Loy's appearance on this show would have been cancelled. FDR died on April 12 and soon after the news reached the public, all of the major broadcasting studios cancelled regularly scheduled programming in favor of news, solemn music and FDR specials.

Suspense

Broadcast on September 20, 1945.
Myrna Loy plays the role of a librarian who deduces a kidnap plot from a torn page in *Gone With the Wind*. The title of the drama is "The Library Book." Based on a story by Cornell Woolrich.

Movie Premiere

Broadcast on November 21, 1946. This broadcast originated from the lobby of the Astor Theatre, New York City. Myrna Loy, Virginia Mayo, Hoagy Carmichael and Toots Shor speak before the microphone, moments after the James J. Walker Memorial is dedicated over WOR.

Meet the Stars

Broadcast on November 25, 1946.
This interview program was broadcast over Chicago and originated from the studios of WGN. Myrna Loy was in Chicago at the time to promote *The Best Years of Our Lives*, so she appeared as a guest.

The June Baker Show

Broadcast on November 26, 1946.

This interview program was broadcast in Chicago and originated from the studios of WGN. Myrna Loy was in Chicago at the time to promote *The Best Years of Our Lives*, so she appeared as a guest.

This is Hollywood

Broadcast on December 14, 1946.

Sponsored by Proctor & Gamble.

Myrna Loy and Don Ameche reprise their film roles from *So Goes My Love*. Jane Budden (Loy), a country girl, goes to the big city determined to find and marry a wealthy man. Instead, she meets and marries Herman Maxim (Ameche), a struggling inventor. After their marriage, his inventions become successful. Their happiness is complete when they have two children, and Maxim's portrait is given a place in the National Hall of Science. The host of this radio program was Hedda Hopper.

Telephone Quiz

Broadcast on July 15, 1947, *Telephone Quiz* featured Myrna Loy -- but not in person. While she was not a guest on this radio quiz program, her name was the answer that the game show host was looking for.

Hollywood Fights Back

October 26, 1947

Sponsored by the First Amendment Committee, this thirty-minute radio special was broadcast over ABC, featuring (as billed by the announcer) 45 Hollywood personalities who chose to strike back at the House Un-American Activities Committee. These included Myrna Loy, Eddie Cantor, Richard Conte, John Huston, Burt Lancaster, Van Heflin, Lucille Ball, Lauren Bacall, Humphrey Bogart, Judy Garland, Charles Boyer, Peter Lorre, Marsha Hunt, Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Keenan Wynn, Artie Shaw, Fredric March, Paulette Goddard, Edward G. Robinson, Paul Henreid and many others.

Hollywood Fights Back

November 2, 1947

Sponsored by the First Amendment Committee, this thirty-minute radio special was broad-



cast over ABC, featuring (as billed by the announcer) 42 Hollywood personalities who chose to strike back at the House Un-American Activities Committee. These included Myrna Loy, Burl Ives, Dana Andrews, Danny Kaye, Dorothy McGuire, George S. Kaufman, Gregory Peck, Groucho Marx, Jane Wyatt, June Havoc, Richard Rodgers, Rita Hayworth, Vanessa Brown and many others.

The Camel Screen Guild Theatre

Broadcast November 24, 1947

Sponsored by Camel Cigarettes.

Fredric March and Myrna Loy reprise their roles from *The Best Years of Our Lives*. This movie won the "Best Picture" Oscar and concerns three World War II veterans who return home to small-town America to discover that they and their families have been irreparably changed.

The Spencer Tracy Story

Syndicated in 1949.

Narrated by Van Johnson, this MGM air trailer remains a mystery. It was apparently created

to promote the numerous films Spencer Tracy starred in, with excerpts from his movies. Myrna Loy appears courtesy of the soundtrack from *Test Pilot* (1938). A recording of this broadcast exists but has been inaccurately dated 1948. A sound track to *Edward, My Son* (1949) with Deborah Kerr is featured, verifying the 1948 date is inaccurate.

Camel Screen Guild Players

Broadcast on May 10, 1948.

Sponsored by the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company (promoting Camel Cigarettes). Cary Grant, Myrna Loy and Shirley Temple reprise their roles from the 1947 RKO classic, *The Bachelor and the Bobby Soxer*.

Teenaged Susan Turner (Temple), with a severe crush on playboy artist Richard Nugent (Grant), sneaks into his apartment to model for him and is found there by her sister Judge Margaret Turner (Loy). Threatened with jail, Nugent agrees to date Susan until the crush

abates. He counters Susan's comic false sophistication by even more comic put-on teenage mannerisms, with a slapstick climax.

The Robert Taylor Story

Recorded circa 1951.

Syndicated from MGM Studios, this fifteen-minute recording features Deborah Kerr who introduces scenes from thirteen of Robert Taylor's films, with many of his leading ladies except for Deborah Kerr, all of the women appear via recording, sound tracks of Taylor's motion-pictures, including Jean Harlow, Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Hedy Lamarr, Greer Garson, Ava Gardner, Janet Gaynor, Norma Shearer and Myrna Loy.

The National Symphony Orchestra Annual Kick-Off Luncheon

Broadcast on January 16, 1951.

Guests included Walter Lippman and Myrna Loy. This program was not broadcast coast-to-coast across the country. It was broadcast



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only in the Washington D.C. and Maryland/Virginia area.

Monitor

Broadcast on July 7, 1956.

Myrna Loy was a featured guest for a one-on-one interview about her Hollywood career.

The Louis Sobol Show

Broadcast September 23, 1957.

Known primarily for the musical programs of the 1930s and 1940s, Sobol began interviewing celebrities on this short-run program heard over New York City radio waves during 1957.

Abe Burrows, Jack Benny and others were featured guests. For this broadcast, Myrna Loy was interviewed.

UNESCO

During the 1950s, Myrna Loy was a member of the United States National Commission for UNESCO, and Chairman of The Hollywood Committee for UNESCO. So it comes as no surprise that she appeared on a number of radio programs concerning the organization. On August 3, 1950, Loy participated in a general radio forum, broadcast courtesy of the Voice of America, originating from Washington D.C. The discussion topic was mass communications, with two delegates of the recent UNESCO General Conference, Fifth Session. On March 2, 1958, Myrna Loy was a guest for As Easy as A.B.C., a series on the UNESCO and United Nations Radio. Titled "B is for Bargains," Loy appeared alongside Edward G. Robinson and Dinah Shore. On June 16, 1960, The United Nations Today program offered news from Geneva, Florence and Los Angeles. Myrna Loy spoke as a U.S. observer to the UNESCO meeting in Los Angeles.

The Barry Gray Show

Broadcast on September 10, 1960.

This interview show, originating and broadcast mainly in New York City over WOR, featured a variety of celebrity guests. For this particular broadcast, Myrna Loy was the guest. ■

Special thanks to Neal Ellis and Jim Widner for their assistance.

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That being said, The Old Radio Times will run free ads from individuals, groups, and dealers whose ideals are in line with the group's goals and who support the hobby.

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Radio Technology through the Golden Age of Radio

by Henry Morse with Harry Klancer

This writing will take a different tack than the usual topics in Radio Times. Instead of this being about radio personalities, programs, or genre, this article will be the first of a series of 2 articles that focus on radio technology and events that influenced the radio industry. The first part will be a non-technical description of the scientific discoveries that laid the ground work for radio. Part of this first article will be a description of the technologies used for radio reception beginning at the outset and progressing into the 1930s. The second article will highlight some of the events in radio that shaped the broadcast industry from the earliest experimentation through the 1930s.

But before we begin our journey we need to focus on just what is radio!

What is Radio?

Basically radio is the transmission and reception of a signal which is an electromagnetic wave, taking advantage of certain behaviors of electricity and magnetism discovered in the late 1800s by James Clerk Maxwell of Great Britain and demonstrated by Heinrich Hertz of Germany. The transmitter at a radio station takes information, in our case radio programs, and impresses it on an electromagnetic wave at a frequency assigned by a governmental agency (at present, in the US this is the Federal Communications Commission, or FCC) and broadcasts this information through the air using a transmitting antenna. The antenna is usually very high in order to permit the signal to be



transmitted a long distance. The more antenna exposure and the greater the power of the transmitter, the more energy is released at the assigned frequency. This wave consists of a carrier wave with the audio signal as part of the transmission. The carrier frequency for AM radio in the US is between 550 and 1750 KHz. The all-important audio portion, usually topping out at 10 KHz simply rides along and is easily separated at the receiving station because of the vast difference in frequency between the carrier and the audio portion of the signal. In a given market area there may be as little as a single station or very many stations (think New York City). The airwaves, sometimes incorrectly called "the ether" because during the earliest days of radio there was a lack of understanding of how radio operates, are filled with these transmissions at different frequencies. In fact the air around us contains a cacophony of wireless signals from not only AM radio, but FM, radar, cell phones, TV, and more. Once a signal from a given radio station has been broadcasted the person who wishes to receive the signal must have a radio receiver which can be tuned to the carrier frequency of the radio station of interest. Basically the quality of reception depends on many factors including the distance from the transmitter, the

transmitted power, the directionality of the transmitting antenna, atmospheric conditions, and the sophistication of the radio receiver.

Radio grew from a mere scientific curiosity to a major entertainment medium during the golden age of radio which was roughly from 1930 through the early 1940s. Radio grew to include all of the genres of entertainment currently available in today's television. In order to track the growth of radio we will first examine some of the scientific principles used in radio transmission and reception.

The Underpinnings of Science as a Precursor to Radio

In the 1820s Michael Faraday discovered that an electric current could be produced by a magnetic field. This is important because it was later discovered that the electromagnetic radiation thus produced could be transmitted through the air.

One of the basic underpinnings of radio technology was the development of a set of equations by the Scottish scientist James Maxwell who in 1873 posited a set of equations that proved that electromagnetic radiation can propagate through the air at the speed of light. This is important because the audio that we call radio programming can be carried by this electromagnetic radiation.

In 1889 a German scientist, Heinrich Hertz, built a device in his laboratory that actually demonstrated this propagation through the air that Maxwell had theorized.

You might ask why this information is important! In radio, a transmitter sends an electromagnetic wave at an assigned frequency. As mentioned above, audio information is carried on the wave – the method, or rather methods, of impressing this information on an electromagnetic wave are known as “modulation”. The main methods of modulation that we are inter-

ested in for broadcast radios are known as “amplitude modulation”, or AM, and “frequency modulation”, or FM. During the period in which we are most interested (to the 1940s), AM was the primary modulation method used for radio broadcasting. In AM radio the audio is impressed on the carrier wave by varying the amplitude, or strength, of the signal making possible the transmission of speech and musical content.

In the mid 1890s Guglielmo Marconi demonstrated a method of sending radio signals over distances as far as across the Atlantic. This early system used a device called a “spark transmitter” and was only capable of sending



Morse code – not voice or music. This technology was not capable of transmitting audio since it operated only by stopping and starting transmission. However, this technology was perfectly adapted to the sending of Morse code which heretofore had only been transmitted over telegraph wires. Marconi won the Nobel Prize in 1909 and this system of transmission became known as “wireless” (in fact, in Britain what we know as “radio” is still called “wireless”). In 1909 passengers on the US ship SS Republic; sinking off the east coast were saved by sending a distress call. The ship sank but because the distress call had been heard and heeded, most of the passengers were rescued. Around the same time, the US Navy began utilizing this technology for point-to-point communication from ship to ship, and ship to shore

While all of the above was occurring Ambrose Fleming of England began his investiga-

tion of what was called the “Edison Effect” in 1904. We all know that an incandescent light bulb works by passing an electric current through a conductive filament in a glass bulb. The current flow heats the filament to a point where it glows, giving off light. Fleming took this one step further by adding a second electrode within the bulb. Heating the filament causes electrons (little bits of negative electricity) to “boil off” the filament. This is known as thermionic emission. By placing a positive electric charge on Fleming’s additional electrode (now referred to as the “plate”) there is a flow of electrons between the filament and the plate. This device was arguably the first vacuum tube.

Fleming used this phenomenon to rectify electrical signals, that is, to permit them to flow in only one direction. The oscillations of the carrier wave of a wireless signal are far too rapid for the human ear to detect. However, by permitting these oscillations to flow in only one direction, the resulting “rectified” or “detected” signal can be used to operate a device such as a set of headphones (think of your Ipod earphones), and the wireless operator can actually hear the resulting signal, which as described earlier, was Morse code. The immediate use for this improvement was to make more effective detection of Morse code signals that was the primary use of this emerging wireless technology at that time. This tube came to be known as a diode (“di”, because it contains two electrodes) and can only conduct in one direction.

Not long after the invention of Fleming’s valve (vacuum tubes are still called “valves” in Britain), Lee DeForest of the US posited the idea that by adding a third element to the diode, a control grid, the amount of current flowing from the filament to the plate could be either amplified or reduced by applying a “signal volt-



age” to the control grid. This new tube, which De Forest called an “audion” and is now called a “triode” (or three element tube), greatly increased the functionality of Fleming’s valve since the triode could more effectively detect radio signals, and even more significantly, could amplify them. This became a very important part of radio receiver technology.

Other tube technologies with four and even five elements gradually appeared during the 1920s. These allowed radio receivers to become more sensitive reducing the need for an outdoor antenna and to become more functional, more sophisticated, and easier to operate. The technicalities of these tubes would

probably be more than most of my readers would wish to endure.

Before we discuss the technologies used in radio reception it is important to note that during the earliest days of radio the environment was mostly experimental. There was very little programming on the airwaves until 1920. Although some programming was initiated as early as 1916, America's entry into WWI put a damper on commercial broadcasting. In fact, the government restricted broadcasting in order to maximize radio's use in the effort.

Three Important Technologies Used in Home Listening

We will explore some of the radio technologies used in home listening from the earliest days of broadcast radio until the present day: crystal sets, Tuned radio frequency receivers, and finally the technology that has dominated the radio market starting in the 1930s – the Superheterodyne. There are other circuit designs and exploring all of them and their offshoots is beyond the intended scope of this article.



Crystal Receivers

Early on, it was discovered that using certain types of crystals, and in particular the mineral galena, one could detect radio signals. The crystal receiver which uses such a device, is passive and needs no external power sources.

Instead, it derives its power from the radio waves themselves which are generally picked up by a long antenna suspended high in the air. Actually galena or other crystal, in combination with a piece of wire (sometimes called a “cat’s whisker”) which is mounted in such a way that it touches the surface of the crystal, is really a diode. Therefore, this crystal /cat’s whisker combination is useful as a signal detector. Successful functioning depended on the position of the cat’s whisker on the surface of the crystal. The main parts of the crystal set are an antenna wire, a tuning coil made of copper wire, the crystal detector, and headphones. Crystal sets had very limited range and depended on the strength of the signal picked up by the antenna, which obviously was not very much. Crystal sets were inconvenient to use, as one could only listen to the closest and strongest stations, and because only one person at a time could listen because of the headphone requirement. However, crystal sets were instrumental in raising interest in radio technology in the early 1920s. Crystal sets were a relatively inexpensive way to receive radio broadcasts but gradually gave way to receivers using the newly improved vacuum tubes. However, crystal sets are still being built by hobbyists today.

Tuned Radio Frequency (TRF) Receivers

Tuned Radio Frequency – TRF receivers were the next stage. The object of this new technology was to solve certain problems that existed in early crystal receivers. First, a TRF could select a particular station out of the cacophony of AM signals previously mentioned. Secondly it could take advantage of the possibility of using several vacuum tubes to amplify the signal at a number of different stages within the receiver. The TRF receiver was patented in 1916 by Ernst Alexanderson and was widely

used until the entrance of the Superheterodyne receiver arriving later in the 1920s. Each stage in the TRF could amplify the desired signal while reducing the interfering signals.

Tuning a TRF receiver was not for the faint of heart. For example most TRF receivers had 3 tuning knobs calibrated in 1 to 100. In order to receive a given radio station one had to tune all 3 tuning knobs to receive a particular broadcast. This was fine if one could figure out the knob settings for the particular radio station being tuned - the sounds being broadcast would then emerge from either a horn speaker or more modern loudspeaker. This made it possible for a room full of people to listen in to a program, certainly an improvement over crystal set reception. However, it certainly was not optimum for a listener searching the airwaves, an activity sometimes called DXing, or "distance listening".

Since early TRF receivers came before the advent of using AC power, (i.e., from the wall outlet), the receiver had to be powered by DC current that came from batteries. To operate, the TRF receiver needed 3 batteries called A, B, and C. The A battery provides DC voltage to heat the vacuum tube filaments. The A battery

was somewhat like the battery in most cars. It was usually a lead acid type, and because of its size and weight had to be external to the receiver. Many a household had problems of acid burns on the carpeting. The A battery had to be recharged frequently, not having the advantage of a generator or alternator (a component of most cars) to keep it charged. The B battery provided a higher voltage to power the plate circuits in the vacuum tubes. The C battery was used to "bias" the grids in vacuum tubes, the element that could control the current flow from the filament to the plate. Because of the amount of current that was drawn from them by the radio, the A battery had to be recharged fairly often, perhaps even weekly. The B batteries were moderately expensive, and needed to be replaced every few months. Only the C battery lasted a long time, although even these eventually needed replacing.

Both B and C could be incorporated into the cabinet of the receiver, but often these batteries were outside of the receiver itself and presented an interesting contrast to the décor of the day. By the end of the 1920s, improvements in technology provided the capability of





Editor's note: *I have a radio like this one. Still plays*

using AC wall circuit power into the receiver to replace this myriad of batteries.

Another disadvantage of the TRF was that it required a lot of tubes and quality of the output was somewhat low in comparison to the number of tubes needed. Also, it was difficult for the average listener to keep all the stages in the required alignment. In addition TRFs were not very sensitive meaning that one needed a strong signal to listen to. Also, TRFs were not very selective meaning that there were difficulties in separating broadcast stations on adjacent frequencies. Even so, the TRF was a considerable improvement over crystal sets and was the best technology around in the early 1920s.

An improvement was needed and it arrived as the Superheterodyne receiver.

The Superheterodyne Receiver

Edwin Armstrong invented the Superhet in 1918 while he was in the Signal Corps in France. He later sold the patent to Westinghouse, but there was another claim of originality by M. Lucien Levy, a French inventor. There was considerable wrangling over the ownership of the patents that lasted throughout the 1920s, although the Levy patent had been purchased by

AT&T, which along with Westinghouse was one of the principals of the patent pool which had formed RCA. As a result, RCA was the sole legal manufacturer of Superheterodyne receivers throughout the 1920s. In 1930 RCA agreed to license this technology to other manufacturers, finally bringing the Superheterodyne into general use in the early 1930s. This technology has been the basis for almost all radios (and televisions) in use since the 1930s.

Superheterodyne receivers differ from the TRF in that each stage of the TRF amplifies the incoming radio frequency – RF – signal, while the Superhet changes the incoming RF signal to an intermediate frequency (IF) within the radio (today, this is usually 455KHz). This allows the Superhet receiver to amplify a limited range of frequencies around the IF frequency, a much simpler and reliable process than amplifying a different set of frequencies that depends on the incoming RF signal.

Basically and as non-technical as possible a Superhet operates as follows:

1. A radio station's transmitted signal arrives at the antenna input of the receiver. This signal consists of the carrier frequency with the audio portion of the signal riding along. The listener tunes to the frequency of the station broadcasting the desired program, for example, 800 on the radio dial is actually 800KHz. When the signal arrives it is at 800,000 cycles per second. Riding on top of this is the audio that varies from perhaps 50 cycles to about 6,000 cycles if we are mainly concerned with the spoken word. Music can go a bit higher but never greater than 10,000 cycles because radio frequencies permitted by the station's license must fit into a bandwidth of 10,000 cycles since another station may be occupying the next frequency on the dial. Generally, most AM station

operators are very careful not to overlap their signal into another station's assigned frequency.

2. Sometimes the received signal is tuned and amplified as transmitted by an RF amplifier stage. Thus the wave form is still the same, just amplified. Whether there is an RF amplifier depends on the cost and sophistication of the radio.

3. In the next stage the incoming RF signal is mixed with the an internally created signal which is different from the incoming signal by exactly the intermediate frequency, for example, 455KHz, with audio still riding along. The circuit is sometimes called a converter, or first detector.

4 In the next stage called the IF stage, the signal – centered on the IF frequency - is amplified.

5. In the next stage the 2nd detector then strips away the 455HZ leaving only the audio portion.

6. The signal from the detector is amplified by one or two stages of amplification to make it strong enough to drive a loud speaker and is fed to the loudspeaker.

The Superhet has many advantages over TRF technology:

1. Lower cost for equal or better performance.

2. Tuning is done with a single knob meaning that finding your favorite station is much simpler than the three knobs on a TRF receiver.

3. The Superhet can be more sensitive, meaning that it is able to pull in more weak signals.

4. The Superhet has much better selectivity, meaning that adjacent frequencies do not present as much interference.

There are a few drawbacks but they have not been significant enough to keep this design from being the leading technology to this day. Transistor radios still employ the Superheterodyne design.

Part 2 of this article will address events in radio from its earliest beginnings through the golden age including a foray into the entertainment that preceded the popularity of radio.

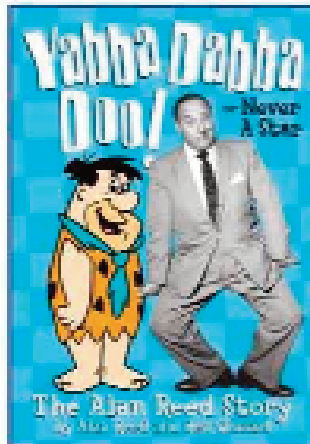
I wish to acknowledge the contributions of Harry Klancer, Vice President of the NJ Antique Radio Club for his thoughtful suggestions. The club is associated with the NJ Antique Technology Museum which is associated with InfoAge, the science History learning center and museum at Camp Evans, New Jersey.



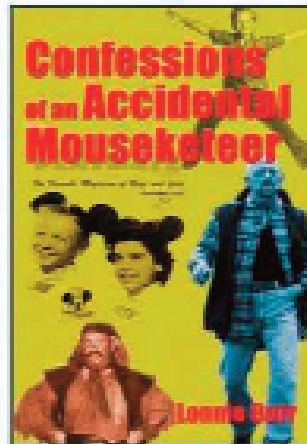
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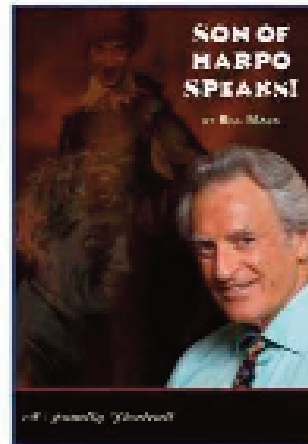
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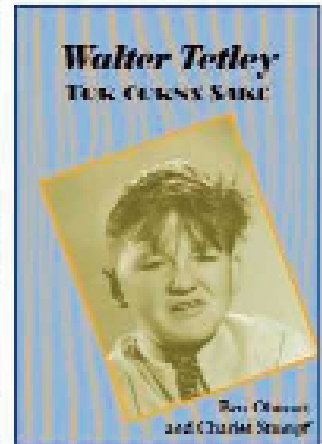
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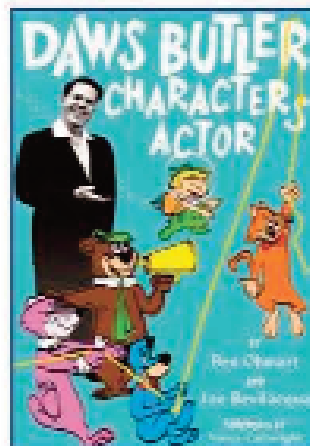
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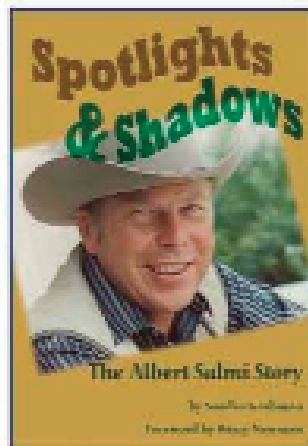
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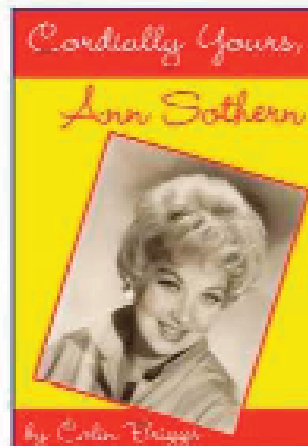
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OTRR ACQUIRES NEW EPISODES & UPGRADED SOUND ENCODES FOR JAN/FEB

The following is a list of newly acquired series/episodes. They may either be new to mp3 or better encodes. These were acquired by the Group during the months of Jan and Feb. They were purchased by donations from members and friends of the Old Time Radio Researchers. If you have cassettes that you would like to donate, please e-mail

beshiresjim@yahoo.com. For reel-to-reels, contact david0@centurytel.net and for transcription disks tony_senior@yahoo.com.

Cisco Kid

[ZIV_531] - Night Rider of Redrock.mp3
[ZIV_532] - Dynamite In the River.mp3
[ZIV_535] - Chinook.mp3
[ZIV_536] - Convict's Revenge.mp3
[ZIV_543] - Rustlers of the Shoshone.mp3
[ZIV_544] - Cisco Meets the Sundance Kid.mp3
[ZIV_545] - Morbid Jones and the Web of Death.mp3
[ZIV_546] - Wheel of Chance.mp3
[ZIV_547] - Vengeance of Laughing Lou, The.mp3
[ZIV_548] - Pancho and the Princess.mp3
[ZIV_571] - Flood at Humbug City.mp3
[ZIV_572] - Salmon River Rustlers.mp3
[ZIV_575] - Stampede in Texas.mp3
[ZIV_576] - Jingle Bob's Last Stand.mp3
[ZIV_577] - Fighting Deputies, The.mp3
[ZIV_578] - Old Shell Game, The.mp3
[ZIV_579] - Law's a Fool, The.mp3
[ZIV_580] - Son of Rawhide Cargan, The.mp3
[ZIV_583] - Murder at North San Juan.mp3
[ZIV_584] - Porfirio and the Bearded Lady.mp3
[ZIV_589] - Dynamite at Rye Creek.mp3
[ZIV_590] - Robber of the Rio Grande.mp3

[ZIV_591] - Caravan of Danger.mp3
[ZIV_592] - Burning of the Jail, The.mp3
[ZIV_593] - Raiders Roundup.mp3
[ZIV_594] - Colorado River Desperadoes.mp3
[ZIV_595] - Frightened Witness, The.mp3
[ZIV_596] - Dart of Death.mp3
[ZIV_597] - Fight at Devil's Canyon.mp3
[ZIV_598] - Cashiel Raynor's Revenge.mp3
[ZIV_599] - Uncle Cipriano's Mule.mp3
[ZIV_600] - Lochinvar Jones.mp3
[ZIV_601] - Boomerang Vengeance.mp3
[ZIV_602] - Stage to Silver City.mp3
[ZIV_603] - Scavengers, The.mp3
[ZIV_604] - Pancho's Return.mp3
[ZIV_605] - Double Frame-Up.mp3
[ZIV_606] - Link Colby's Mine.mp3
[ZIV_607] - Point of Honor.mp3
[ZIV_608] - Little Train Robbery, he.mp3
5x-xx-xx (471) The Giant Of Laredo.mp3
5x-xx-xx (472) The Lancers Of The Black Horse Brigade.mp3
5x-xx-xx (609) Larrupin' Lil.mp3
5x-xx-xx (610) The Outlaw Brand.mp3
5x-xx-xx (613) Intrigue In Ensenada.mp3
5x-xx-xx (614) Pot O' Gold.mp3
5x-xx-xx (615) Bullets At The Bridge.mp3
5x-xx-xx (616) Sir Cisco, Knight Of The Round Table.mp3
5x-xx-xx (619) The Tunnel.mp3
5x-xx-xx (620) Bandits Of Tucumari.mp3
5x-xx-xx (621) War In The Pecos Valley.mp3
5x-xx-xx (622) Gohst Town Gazette.mp3
5x-xx-xx (637) Killer In The JailHouse.mp3
5x-xx-xx (638) Mistaken Identity.mp3
5x-xx-xx (639) Mesa Of The Hidden Bandits.mp3
5x-xx-xx (640) The Devil's Highway.mp3
5x-xx-xx (641) The Sheriff's 44's.mp3
5x-xx-xx (642) Holdup At The Pass.mp3
5x-xx-xx (647) Headless Valley.mp3

5x-xx-xx (648) The Vandals.mp3

Fibber McGee & Molly

55-04-10 The Mystery Movie.mp3

55-03-23 Molly Tries To Increase McGee's Sales Resistance.mp3

55-03-24 McGee Utters A Joke.mp3

55-03-27 McGee Helps Doc Catch A Plane.mp3

55-03-28 McGee Drives A Car.mp3

55-03-29 McGee Meets A Texas Oil Man.mp3

55-03-30 McGee Tries To Avoid The Elks.mp3

Eye on eBay:

Photo Shopping Without the Software
by Doug Hopkinson

Having the inclination to decorate in a nostalgic manner and having the freedom as a hermit, to decorate my home in any way I see fit, I once again visited the quintessential photo shop that is eBay. My searches yielded up some excellent photos of vintage radio celebrities that I thought I'd share with you in this, my latest installment of Eye on eBay.

For me, there is nothing better than researching an old radio show that I like. It is especially rewarding when there is virtually no easily acquired information available and then you find something. Sometimes you find a vague reference thirty-five pages in on a Google search that gives you a clue. Other times you can find a few hits searching Newspaper Archive. Another tool I like to use is eBay. As some of you know, I happen to have a slight obsession with a few radio shows. Foremost among these are *Cecil and Sally* followed closely by *Air Castle*. Well, I happened to find a photo related item for each of these shows in the past month on eBay. This was most surprising as I have constantly monitored for the last several years and very rarely has anything been there. I'll start with these two and move on to more common fare.

To the right is an original 1933 calendar featuring Cecil and Sally perched atop. I'm not going to say what I paid for this but it was worth every penny to me. I will say the opening bid was set at \$17.00 and the final bid was significantly higher. Just be happy for me. OK?



THE KHJ STORY MAN AND HIS AIR CASTLE FOLK FROM THE LAND OF MAKE BELIEVE

Here are some of the little folk who entertain regularly from KHJ, the Don Lee station in Los Angeles. Left to right they are:
YIP, the little wooden dog, BUGLER MURPHY, HAPPY DUCK, MUMBO-GUMBO, the cannibal, THE STORY MAN; JIMBO, the happy monkey, little CLICKETY-CLACK, one of the leading characters of "THE KHJ AIR CASTLE" and PRESIDENT PIP, who rules over the land of MAKE BELIEVE.

LISTEN TO EARON KEYES ON KHJ--AND FIND OUT WHERE THESE FAMOUS CHARACTERS WILL MAKE THEIR NEXT PUBLIC APPEARANCE

The picture above is of an original advertising hand-bill for *Air Castle*. This picture of the marionettes first appeared in newspapers across the country in September of 1929. This one is very clear and sharp in comparison. This had an opening bid set at \$75 but it also had a "best offer" button. I made an offer to the seller and saved at least \$20. Be very happy for me!



There are many examples of post cards that bear images of radio performers. Some are well known, some not so much. The postcard on the left was listed as The Three Jesters, NBC radio music stars.

The following is how the item was described: Here is a nice Postally Unused Real Photo Postcard of the type that was sent to fans of NBC Radio by The Three Jesters, or the Tastyeast Jesters. They were active in the 1930s. Their music show was sponsored by Green Brothers Co, of Springfield, Massachusetts, and Trenton, New Jersey, makers of Tastyeast Candy. The Jesters included "Red" Latham, "Guy" Bonham, and "Wamp" Carlson. These men also formed the band: The Home Town Boys. I wonder if anyone has this show in their audio collection? Price \$7.99 Buy it now plus \$1.25 shipping.



The picture above was up for auction by a seller named screengems. We all know who these two guys are, or do we?? Lou I recognize but is that Bud on the right? I've never seen him with hair like that or such an elongated head. Priced at \$49.95 plus \$5.75 shipping, I'm not surprised it didn't sell.



Above is someone we may not all immediately recognize but I'll bet 90% of us know her. In 1940 she was a beautiful teenager but she was still being called Baby. She is none other than Baby Rose Marie, the singing child prodigy. If you don't know her from the radio you may know her as Sally Rogers on the 1960s Dick Van Dyke television series or as herself on the 1970s television show *Hollywood Squares*. This autographed picture was listed for \$44.95 plus \$4.95 shipping.

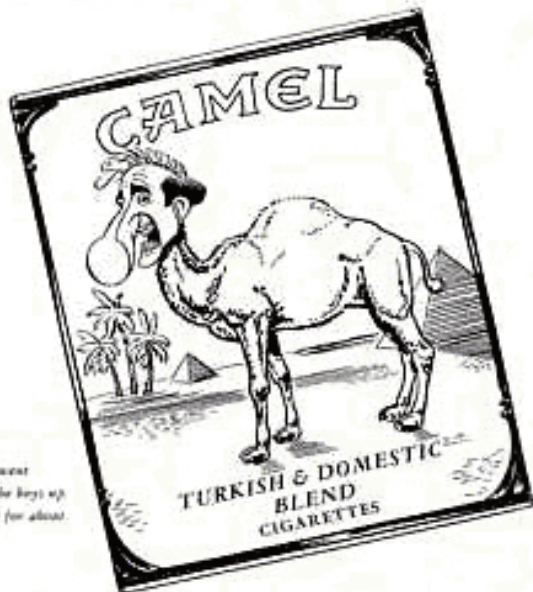
To your right I offer you a photo for sale by a seller named jp-themint. JP has many great photos for sale. This particular one of Billie Burke, star of stage and screen (silent and talkies) and radio, caused me to decide to do the whole photo theme for this article. Billie is one of my all time favorites! At only \$15.00 (not \$14.95) plus \$4.00 shipping, hey JP, put me down for two!



Now here is a fantastic photo! Do you know who that is? It's our favorite director from *Lux Radio Theater*, none other than Cecil B. DeMille. This is an original photo dated 1937. Dig those threads. At just \$12.50 plus \$2.75 shipping it's a steal.



NBC EVERY FRIDAY AT 8:30
Starting In October



**I'D WALK A MILE FOR
A SCHNOZZLE**

There are quite a few folks that make a living on eBay by cutting up old magazines and newspapers. They clip out features, pictures and ads. Such is the case above. It's a 1948 ad for the Jimmy Durante Show. At \$9.99 which is better than paying out ten bucks, plus \$3.51 shipping (really?? \$3.51?), I think I'll pass on this one.

Here is a nice example of another advertisement. The seller claims it's from a 1935 publication. Campbell's Tomato Juice. Interesting. Who can say no to George and Gracie?? At \$9.95 (that's under ten bucks folks) plus \$3.50 shipping, this could be hanging in your kitchen (if you were a hermit like me).

Anyone recognize this stylish blonde (right) woman? No? She was the wife of one Goodman Ace. Now you know. It's Jane Ace. Together they were the Easy Aces. The recommended buy it now price is just \$28.88 (I swear that was a randomly generated number) Shipping on this little gem is FREE! There is also an option to make an offer. I'd make the offer, you have nothing to lose.



Ok, here's a fairly easy one. It's the mega multi-talented Judy Canova. She had her own radio show that ran for over a decade. Just \$9.95 plus \$4.00 shipping brings her to your door. The author would like to mention that Judy's beautiful daughter

Diana Canova attended and performed at the very last FOTR convention in Newark, NJ this past October (2011). The apple did not fall far from the tree where talent is concerned.

This next one is a tough one. Perhaps some of you readers know the identity of these two. This picture was taken in 1937. When they first teamed up on radio they were known as Molasses



and January. Not long after they were Pick and Pat. They frequently performed in black-face make-up. They are Pick Malone and Pat Padgett. I'm not sure which is which in this picture but I'm very sure you could own it for that great price of \$28.88 and remember, shipping is FREE!

Well, it's about time to wrap up this installment but before I do, I want to leave you all with one more great picture. Evidently, in 1953 the



Bowman Card Company ran a set of trading cards of TV and Radio Stars of NBC.

Many of you know the gentleman pictured. He has been an entertainer pretty much all his life. He has attended many, many old time radio and nostalgia conventions. He is always warm and kind when you speak with him. Please enjoy this picture of Bob Hastings as a rosy-cheeked youth. I know Bob will.

I urge everyone to pick up one of these cards on eBay and bring it with to Cincinnati Nostalgia EXPO May 31-June 1, 2013.

Of Mikes & Men

HAL PEARY, NBC's "Great Gildersleeve" is so proud of his Portuguese ancestry that he's gathering material for a book on famous people from Portugal. March king JOHN PHILLIP SOUSA is one of his subjects - and Brazilian chanteuse CARMEN MIRANDA may soon be added. Hal only recently discovered that he and Carmen are distant cousins, through branches of their family living in the Azores.

ED GARDNER's return from Hollywood meant a lot of needlework for a certain woman out in Flushing, on New York's Long Island. The woman is Ed's mother, who embroiders over the autographs on the bar apron Ed wears as "Duffy's" Archie - and the Blue star gathered plenty of new penciled signatures while he was in the West Coast radio and film center.

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Every Sunday Night

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Written by Jay Hickerson December, 2012

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