

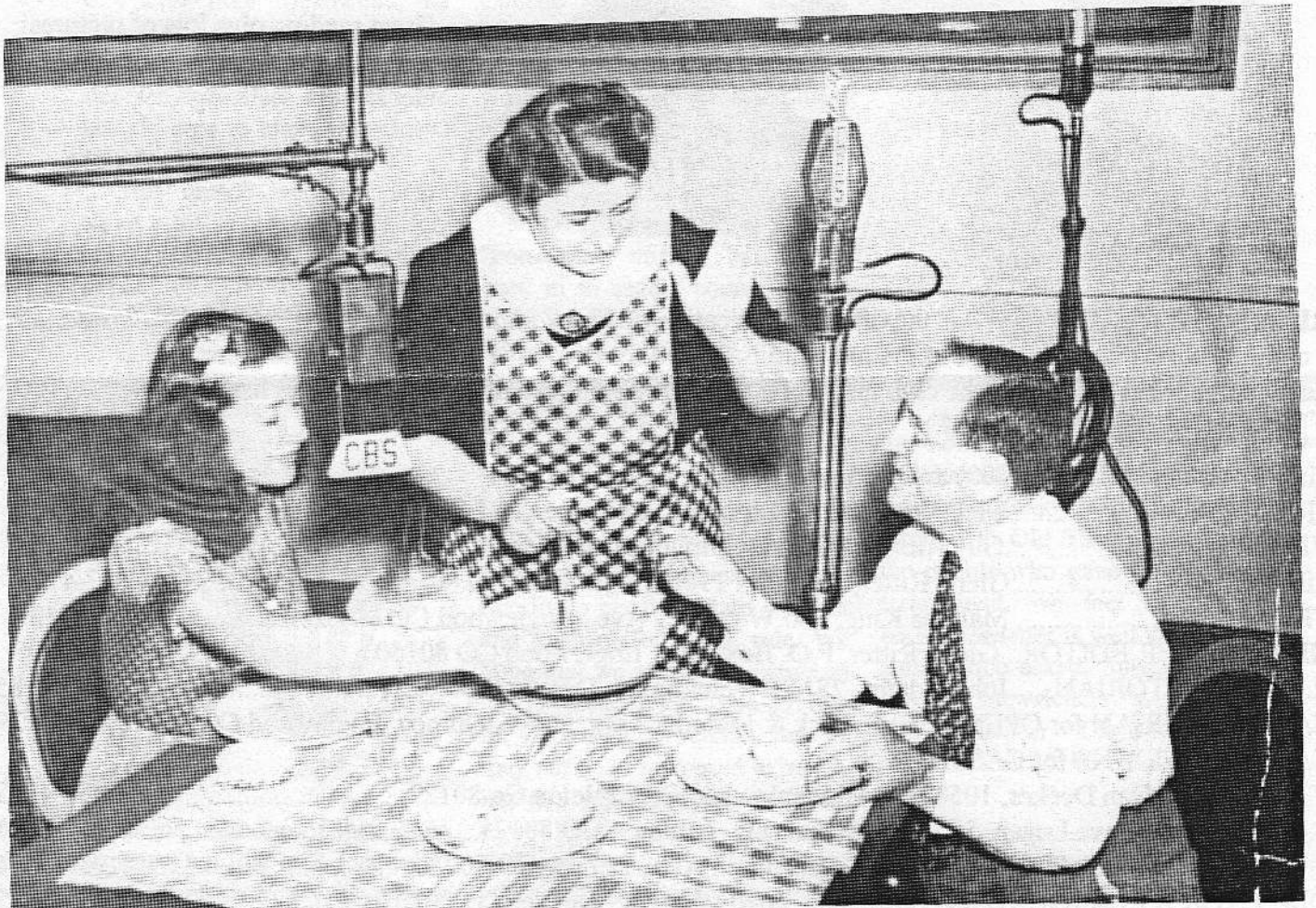
# RETURN WITH US NOW...

The Radio Historical  
Association of Colorado, Inc.



Volume 19 Number 8

March, 1994



"The Rise of the Goldbergs" made its bow on NBC on November 20, 1929. Gertrude Berg, writer, producer, and star of the program, became so closely identified with the character she played that her friends called her "Molly." The Goldbergs continued their adventures on radio until 1946, and the show was revived on television in 1949. The roster of alumni of "The Goldbergs" is a distinguished one. Among the voices heard at one time or another on the show were those of Everett Sloane, Van Heflin, Joseph Cotten, Joan Tetzl, and Marjorie Main.



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING:** There will be a board meeting on **March 3, 1994.**  
 ALL MEMBERS are welcome and invited to attend and participate at the Board of Directors Meeting.  
 The March 3rd meeting will be at the home of Herb Duniven at 7:30 PM.



There will be **NO MEETING on March 17, 1994!**

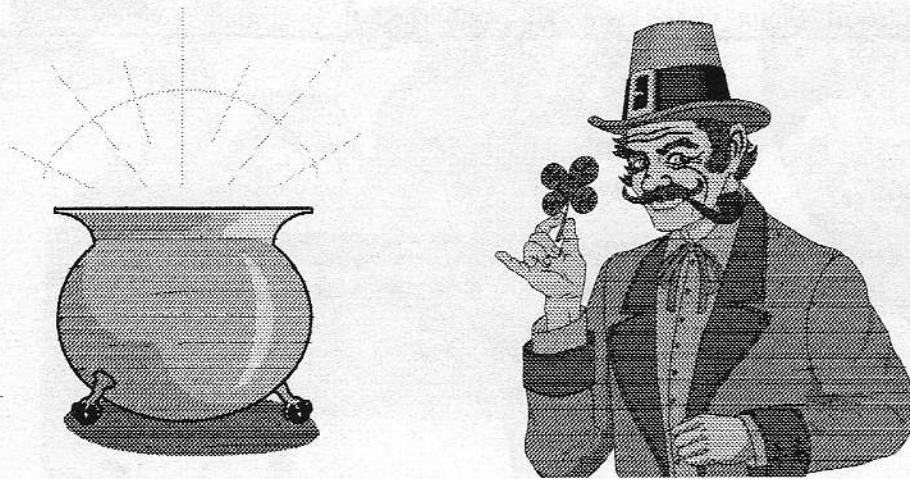
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 There are a few copies left of

Think **BIG**

Dick Beals' inspirational biography  
 of how to succeed against all odds!  
 Great reading plus lots of pictures!

Get it from the King's \$9.

By mail \$10.



**RETURN WITH US NOW...**is the official publication of *The Radio Historical Association of Colorado, Inc.*, a non-profit organization. Cost of membership is \$20.00 for the first year with \$15.00 for renewal.

Each member has full use of the club resources. For further information contact anyone listed below.



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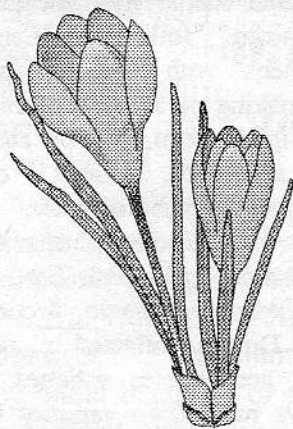


From the

## King's Roost

March, the last month of our winter weather. We in Colorado have little to complain about with our Spring days in December, January and February, but many parts of the country have certainly had a lot of severe weather this winter. Oh, we get our snows, but they are gone in our area in a very short time. Meanwhile, the snows stay in good shape up in the mountains all winter for the skiers. (Note: last summer, the last ski area to close was closed July 5th.)

This season we have heard about a lot of trouble in California, especially in the southern areas. SPERDVAC, the California based radio club, had some



problems with one of their main libraries, but true to the nature of their members, many have been active helping others trying to put their lives back together after the earthquake tried very hard to disrupt things. We can only offer our thoughts and best wishes for a speedy recovery from their trials. Good luck to all of you.

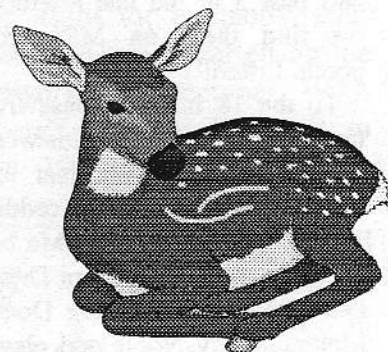
We have a note from an R.H.A.C. member that used to live on a farm about 70 miles East of Sioux City, Iowa. He would like to contact any members who lived in central Iowa in the 30's and 40's. He would like to share some of his experiences in radio at WOI, the Iowa State College radio station, and the "Golden Days" of radio "when it was our primary contact with the world." We invite you to contact Kenneth Lange, 17105 Harvard Blvd., Gardena, CA 90247. Phone: (310) 324-2160.

Maletha is recovering from a "horse play" mishap, but will be back in the saddle soon. We are both expecting to enjoy the Spring days riding in the park next to the stable where we keep our horses. We should be seeing new fauns soon and we will pause at times to let our horses enjoy the new grass along the trails. We have one friend who rides any time someone calls her. She loads her horse into a trailer and joins us for a trail ride. We hope that we will be as active as she is when we get to be 85! We do enjoy Our retirement, but we may not be as interested in traveling this year and plan to spend more time enjoying our home and yard.

We are listening to the new library entries as Dick makes the cassettes for the other libraries. Next month the Contributors' Library will feature a series of fifteen minute *Fibber McGee and Molly* programs. You can look forward to enjoying the Spring

crocuses and the *Fibbers* at the same time.

John and Carol Rayburn have published their second newsletter, "Thrilling Days of Yesterday". It contains lots of interesting articles about little side happenings in the lives of many of the radio stars. We feel



the newsletter is well composed and contains the kind of information we all enjoy. For people interested in Old Time Radio and the people who gave us this entertainment, we feel the Rayburns' newsletter is well worth the small price asked. Subscriptions for six newsletters a year is \$15.00, sent to Carol Rayburn, P. O. Box 36106, Denver CO 80236.

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### WANTED! Science Fiction series *Exploring Tomorrow*

I have ten shows on hand and would hopefully like to trade for other shows. Sound: good. Or, just phone to talk about science fiction stories.

John Stevenson  
722 W 11th Ave  
Denver CO 80204  
(303) 573-7558

## Life with Ma

"Well," said the announcer, his tone lush and breathless, "Esther just doesn't know what to do! She feels that she owes her husband Jack nothing; he hurt her in every way one person can. But now he's in need: he's alone and sick! What would you advise Esther if you were Ma? Well, Esther went over to see Ma, and now at about half past 5 in the late afternoon we find them on Ma's front porch. Listen!"

To the 18 million housewives tuned in to *Ma Perkins* this week, there was little doubt that big-hearted Ma would help caddish Jack. For listeners know Ma better than they know Nora Drake, Our Gal Sunday, Young Doctor Malone, Mary Noble and eleven other serial sobbers. Ma, like Ivory soap has been floating around longer than any of them.\* Last week, saintly, sorgum-sweet Ma Perkins celebrated her 25th year on the air as the grey, bespectacled widow who operates a lumberyard in Rushville Center, U.S.A. For 15 ~~tear-stained~~ minutes a day, five days a week, Ma has solved more than 100 real-life problems involving alcoholism, civic intrigue and second marriages. This week the problem was divorce. Ma's indomitable spirit and homely wisdom have glowed through 66,207 treacly episodes, totaling 93,105 minutes, establishing Ma as the undisputed queen of soap opera.

\*Though *The Romance of Helen Trent* went on the air three weeks earlier, Ma has chalked up more performances.

Family Friends. At one time, Ma could be heard the same day

on the full NBC and CBS networks, in Hawaii, Canada, and across Europe via Radio Luxembourg. Since 1933 she has brought in about \$1 million in network time charges, helped Proctor & Gamble sell 3 billion boxes of Oxydol (to get clothes "whiter than sun-white"). Last year Ma was leased to other sponsors, e.g., Lever Bros. (Spry for "nongreasy donuts") and Lipton ("new Flo-Thru Tea Bags"), but P&G refused to sell her outright.

A shrewd combination of Dr. Christian, David Harum and Tugboat Annie, Ma is "the conscience of her community" and trusts folks "till that trust is violated." Soap operaddicts feel that her show is a pleasant extension of the ancient art of storytelling, and offers helpful hints to daily living. Her detractors find it tired bilge, intensifying human frustration in its calculated attempts to bring temporary relief by dredging emotional sewers.

As Ma, blonde, blue-eyed Actress Virginia Payne has never missed a performance, stands loyally by the washboard weepers: "Radio is a companion and these characters are friends to millions of lonely people," she says in a soft, nasal voice. "It is not supposed to be a pretentious art form. It is not Aristotelian with beginnings, middles and endings, but a series of situations and characters that must extend and develop over great periods of time. Our critics are people who do not stay with us." Although key telegrams are still delivered on the Friday program and opened on Monday, Actress Payne insists that cliffhanging is not "the appeal of our story."

"Our characters are lovable, often funny human beings—family friends." But in accordance with the canons of daytime serials, Ma is carefully constructed to flatter the female ego. Says actress Payne: "Everyone knows more than Ma does."

Maternal Figure. Like other daytime heroines, Ma neither drinks, smokes, takes snuff or has affairs with men. Unlike Ma, Cincinnati-born Virginia Payne, 47, has never been married, downs an occasional whiskey sour and makes up to \$50,000 a year—more than any other actress in daytime broadcasting. Her present writer (she has had ten) lived on the Riviera for two years, now counts his money on Cape Cod. A devout Roman Catholic with an M.A. in literature (University of Cincinnati), Virginia sheds Ma's vocabulary of "ain'ts," "folks" and "Land o' Goshens" with ease, but insists on making personal appearances in wig, makeup, frumpy clothes and spectacles, "though I often feel like the great imposter."

She is an accomplished pianist, lives alone in a posh East Side Manhattan apartment decorated with Duvveen-collected oil paintings, accumulates antiques, and grows roses (two varieties have been named for her). She is currently touring the straw-hat circuit in *Anniversary Waltz*. "My aim," says Virginia, "is to be a good actress and some day do a Broadway musical. Meantime, there is a tremendous challenge in Ma, trying to keep the role new and interesting; she is a great maternal figure, and I have never played her short."

TIME, August 26, 1957



## MA PERKINS

The Middle-Aged Widow  
Is A Small-Town Matriarch

Tune in Mon. - Fri. 1:15 P.M. E.W.T.(CBS)  
or 3:15 P.M. E.W.T. (NBC)

Daytime serial queens are mostly glamour girls, pure but not too simple. Housewife or career woman, sweet girl graduate or mature *femme fatale*, almost all have one thing in common: Love is the theme song of their romance-packed lives. Yet one of the most firmly entrenched empresses in the whole royal family of radio drama is a motherly old soul, plain-faced, plain-spoken *Ma Perkins*, central figure in the decade-long serial which bears her name.

Just how much glamour *Ma* has can be gauged by the fact that she's been described as

a composite of *Tugboat Annie* and *David Harum*, neither of whom ever laid any claims to being either beautiful or painfully brilliant. What *Annie* and *David* possess in the way of hard-headed common sense and soft hearted sympathy for the underdog, however, *Ma* also has in abundance—and uses at the drop of a hint.

A widow with grown children, the unassuming matriarch of the mythical Rushville Center isn't hanging

around her lumber yard, waiting for her Prince Charming to ride in on a snow-white charger. She's much too busy managing the business *Pa Perkins* left her, years ago. And, though she relies much on the devotion of *Shuffle Shober*, her bachelor partner, she has little interest in personal romance—just a positive genius for getting mixed up in the love affairs of other people, both young and old.

Whatever goes on in Rushville Center—and a lot happens there, small as the town is—you'll usually find *Ma* some-

***She ... seldom passes judgement on the misdeeds and mistakes of others, and believes staunchly in the Golden Rule.***

where in the middle of all the excitement, either because her own good nature takes her to the heart of every trouble, or because some frenzied friend drags her into it against her will. Obviously both religious and conscientious (though the script has never said just what church *Ma* goes to), she also has a great tolerance for human frailty, seldom passes judgement on the misdeeds and mistakes of others, and believes staunchly in the

Golden Rule. Naturally, such qualities make her a motherly magnet for every troubled soul in the community, all of whom soon learn that her homely expressions clothe a world of shrewdness and that her gentle voice conceals a will of steel.

*Ma's* charity begins at home, of course, and her own lively brood has provided her with plenty of chances to exercise her talent for humanity, ever since the series started on the networks in December, 1933. There's daughter *Evy*, now in her 30's, married to *Willie*

*Fitz*, and mother of a 10-year-old *Junior*. There's daughter *Fay*, in her late 20's, widowed by the death of *Paul Henderson* a couple of years ago, and mother of a little girl, *Paulette*. And there's son *John*,

who is between *Evy* and *Fay* in age.

It was *John* who inadvertently plunged his mother into her current problems, although he has been in service and far from Rushville Center for many months now. His friend, *Gary Curtis*—who saved *John's* life during the North African campaign, was wounded and discharged from the Army—has been living at the *Perkins* home and has stirred up a hornet's nest, not

only for *Ma*, but for the whole town.

*Gary* was already an embittered man, before the war. Life in the service gave him the only satisfaction and happiness he had ever known, and his discharge made him more cynical and morbid than ever. *Ma's* hopes of rehabilitating him had a good chance of succeeding, however—until he discovered the source of all his bitterness, right in Rushville Center. The resultant fireworks have involved *Ma* with the *Pendletons*, the village's most social family.

*Gary's* original unhappiness stemmed from the death of his mother, years ago, for which he has long blamed his hated father, *Jeffrey Powell*, and a mysterious woman—who turned out to be the present-day *Mathilda Pendleton*, wife of Rushville Center's leading banker. In his attempt to get revenge on *Mathilda*, by breaking up her own marriage, he brought the ruthless *Powell* back into her life, creating a dangerous triangle which soon promised to become the quiet town's most sensational scandal.

Meanwhile, *Gary* became involved in a triangle of his own, since both *Gladys Pendleton*, *Mathilda's* daughter, and *Fay Perkins Henderson* were attracted to him. Torn by his grudging affection for them both and his consuming desire for vengeance, he has brought little but heartache into *Ma's* life, adding anxiety about her widowed daughter's welfare to her eagerness to see *Gary* settle down in a job and forget his murderous hatreds. Long-time listeners to

"*Ma Perkins*," however, knew from the very beginning that their hardy heroine would be more than able to cope with such a problem, even with personal complications.

Oddly enough, Virginia Payne, who plays *Ma Perkins*, possesses much of this same ability. Without make-up, the blue-eyed ash-blond may not bear much resemblance to the plump, matronly character she plays. Virginia

***Virginia is  
great-great granddaughter  
of the historic  
Dolly Madison.***

was a trim little figure, just one inch more than five feet tall, wears smartly tailored clothes and ultra-feminine hats—and isn't married. But she is warmly sympathetic, takes a genuine interest in other people and their problems, is a good listener and never loses her sense of humor.

Often called Chicago's First Lady of Radio, this daughter of a physician has merited the name as much through her good works as through the fact that she has held the top-drawer title role of "*Ma Perkins*" from the day of the program's network debut. Ever since her early days in her native Cincinnati (where she won a Master's degree in literature at Cincinnati University), she has been helping others, living quietly, attending an occasional symphony concert, and studying voice—but mainly devoting her bubbling energy to organization and community welfare.

Today, those efforts are mainly connected with war work. A

great-great-granddaughter of the historic Dolly Madison, Virginia is Midwest chairman for the United Theatrical War Activities and vice-chairman of the National Entertainment Industries Council for her area. In both jobs, she is instrumental in lining up talent for entertaining service men and headlining the various War Loan Drives. She's also a committee member for U.S.O. Camp Shows and Red Cross Hospital Shows, making many appearances herself.

For all these tasks, she is particularly well prepared by her four or five years as president of the Chicago chapter of the American Federation of Radio Artists. Miss Payne of Chicago may not live in a small town, like *Mrs. Perkins* of Rushville Center, but she is obviously just as busy being of service to her fellow city-dwellers.

A "born trooper," like *Ma* herself, she has been a conscientious worker from the moment she made her radio debut over Station WLW, a high school student playing an Indian maid in a Thanksgiving Day playlet. In 10-1/2 years of "*Ma Perkins*," she has never missed a broadcast—though she broke a bone in her leg at 6 o'clock one evening, had it set by midnight, and performed as usual the very next day.

That's a spirit which *Ma Perkins*, her family and friends in Rushville Center, could understand.





# RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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