

RETURN WITH US

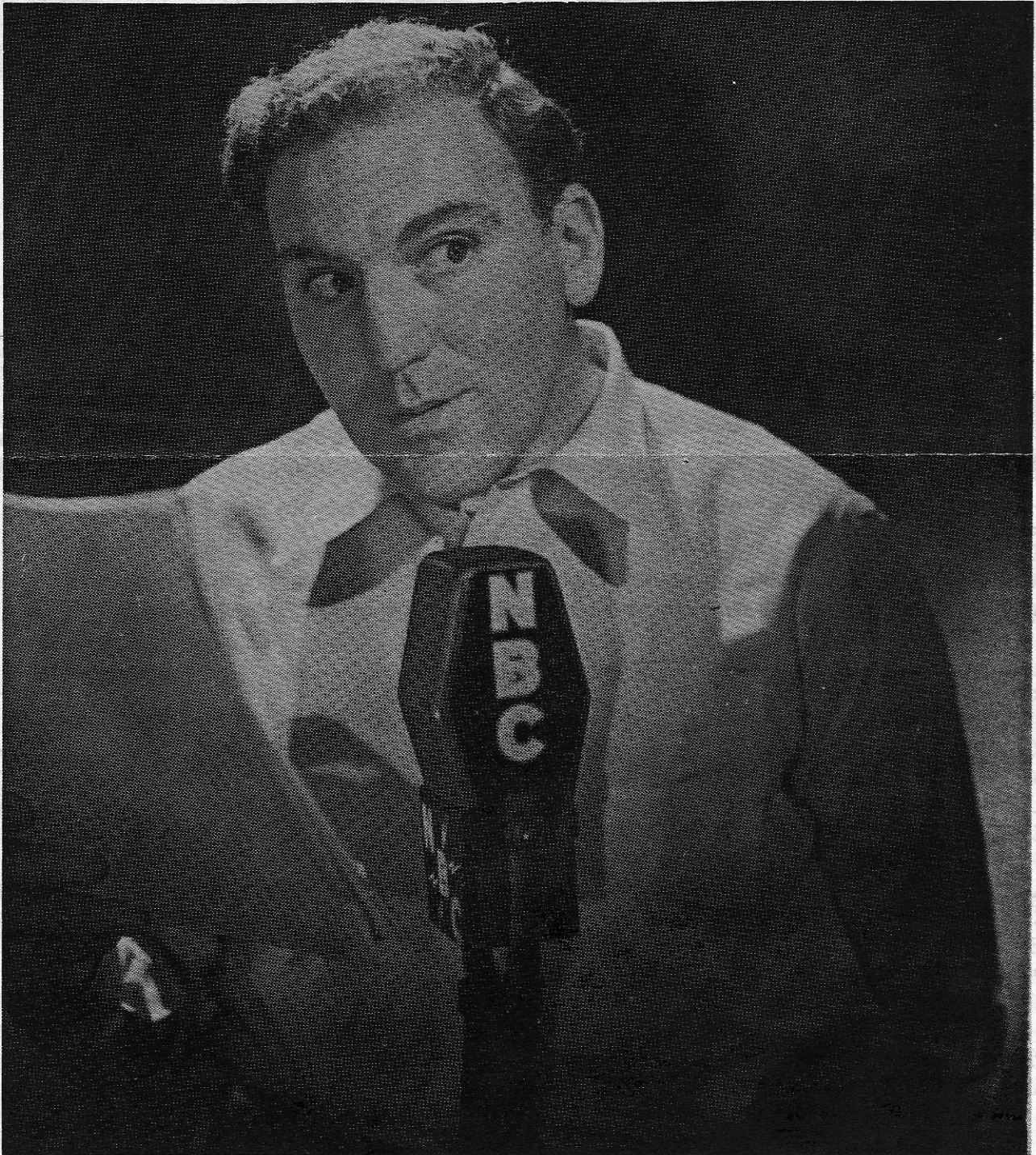
The Radio Historical
Association of Colorado, Inc.

NOW...



Volume 20, Number 10

May, 1995



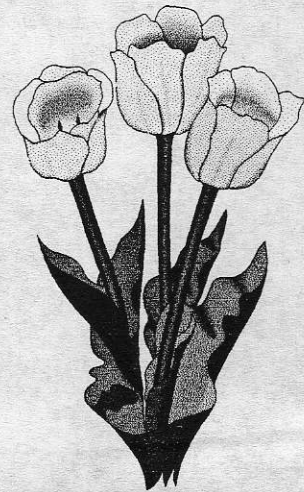
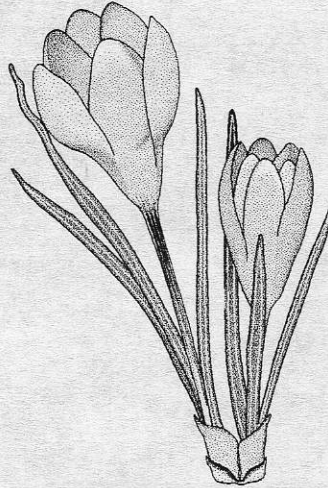
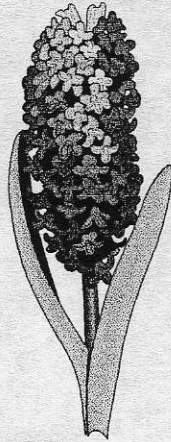
William Bendix (1906-1964). William Bendix, whose screen career as a likeable tough guy spanned the years from 1942 until his death, came to radio in 1943 with *Life of Riley* on NBC.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: There will be a board meeting June 1, 1995, at the Dick King horse farm at **6 p.m.**, 9470 W Titan Rd. Take Santa Fe south and it becomes US 85 as it goes south of Littleton. Continue south of Littleton 4 to 5 miles to traffic light at westbound Titan Road. 2-1/2 miles west. Farm is on south side of Titan Road. All members are invited and encouraged to attend.



The May 18, 1995 meeting will be **SOMETHING SPECIAL!** Our guests are visiting from California especially to appear at this meeting! Our guests are **JEANNE BATES** and **ALICE BACKES** The May 18, 1995 Meeting will be **Thursday night at 7:00 p.m** The Church of The Master, located at 17th Avenue and Filbert Court (Filbert Ct is between Forest and Fairfax Streets).



RETURN WITH US NOW... is the official publication of *The Radio Historical Association of Colorado, Inc.*, a non-profit organization. Cost of membership is **\$25.00** 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.

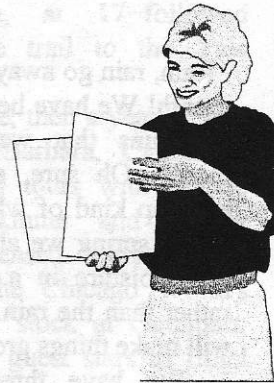


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JEANNE BATES

and ALICE BACKES



to Speak in Denver
at R.H.A.C. SPRING MEETING
7 p.m., May 18, 1995
Church of The Master, 17th & Filbert Ct

JEANNE BATES

Jeanne may well be one of the most talented ladies that was constantly called upon to play roles in radio, TV, and the movies. She was Teddy, Paul Barber's daughter in *One Man's Family*. She played roles on *Who Done It?*, *Today's Children*, *I Love a Mystery*, *Lux Radio Theater*, *Richard Diamond*, *Aunt Mary*, *Stars Over Hollywood*, *Point Sublime*, *Screen Director's Playhouse*, *Cisco Kid*, *Doctor Christian*, *Gunsmoke*, *Halls of Ivy*, *Have Gun Will Travel*, *Mr. President*, *Murder Will Out*, *Philip Marlowe*, *Suspense* and many, many more.

Jeanne is skilled in British, Irish, German, Southern, and French dialects to make her a versatile actress who can fill any role asked of her.

ALICE BACKES

Alice is a very talented lady who had her first lead on the *Dr. Christian* show with Jean Hersholdt. Alice was able to play many ages, many characters and many dialects during her radio career.

By the time the Golden Days Of Radio disappeared Alice had been in over 100 radio shows and then went to TV, movies and theater.

Her credits included roles in the following:

Alias Jane Doe, *Armed Forces Radio*, *Cisco Kid*, *Halls of Ivy*, *Mr. President*,
NBC Theater, *Stars Over Hollywood*, *The Great Gildersleeve*, *The Whistler*,
This Is Your FBI, *This Woman's Secret*, *When A Girl Marries*. And many more.

From the

King's Roost

Rain, rain go away, come again next month! We have been inundated with the rains that we never had last month. Oh sure, some of the rain ends up kind of white and deep, but in the spring we always seem to get our moisture in a series of storms, rather than the rain and sunshine that will make things grow.

We have three small pastures planted and benefiting from the moisture, but now we need some warm weather.

We were able to get 147 of the seedling trees and bushes planted one Saturday. We had a good watering from above the next day, so, it isn't all bad. Despite all the efforts to gravel paths and lanes and be prepared for this

mess, we still find ourselves floundering in mud.

All we can do now is wait for things to dry up.



When it does dry we will get the remainder of the seedling trees into the ground (about 200).

The U. S. Forest Service grows trees for about three years and offers them to owners of acreage at minimal cost to plant for windbreaks and wildlife habitat. We have planted them for both reasons. It still comes out as WORK.

We are looking forward to the May 18th R.H.A.C. Spring Meeting that will feature our two guests, **Jeanne Bates** and **Alice Backes**, with lots of old time radio background and stories. We always find these old time radio personalities to be very nice. Having met these ladies, we know what pleasant people they are. In the early days of their careers they have been through hard times. But they persisted and succeeded in the highly competitive field of radio broadcasting. They have helped make listening to radio a part of our lives that we shall never forget.

Mr. & Mrs. North

*Pam and Jerry's hobby
is collecting corpses
— and their killers*

Wed. 8 p.m. EWT (NBC)

Cops-and-robbers literature to the contrary, few American citizens know any gangsters and almost none ever finds a battered body in the family broom closet. But, oh, how they all love to hear about other "average" people stumbling upon a tantalizing *corpus delicti* and sleuthing after a maniacal murderer—particularly if such homicidal holidays are liberally spiked with humor!

More than twenty million listeners to "The Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. North," each Wednesday night, can testify to that. Only on the air some seventeen months now, the *Norths* piled up a Crossley rating of 20.3 at

the end of their first year, last December. That's an unusual mark for a new show of any type and a good one, even among evening series of long standing. *Pam and Jerry North* (as portrayed by co-stars Joseph Curtin and Alice Frost) have been romping along in the twenties ever since, running neck and neck for leadership in the mystery-comedy-drama field.

Part of the success formula, according to producer S. James Andrews, lies in keeping the main characters and their backgrounds on a level of common experience. *Pam and Jerry*, presumably married for about a decade, are a typical pair of comfortably-weds. Their flat at the mythical 24 St. Anne's Place, in New York's very real Greenwich Village, is an average sort of apartment. If—unlike the *Norths*—Mr. and Mrs. America aren't quite so accustomed to dogging the heels of the Homicide Squad or building up an amusing list of acquaintances among the more whimsical denizens of the

underworld, just chalk that up to artistic license in adventure-writing!

The fact remains that book-publisher *Jerry* is just a middle-class professional man, with a natural inquisitiveness, a strong streak of common sense and a general desire for peace, and that *Pam* is a competent housewife, with a quick wit, a quicker tongue and a tendency to rely on woman's intuition—even when solving crimes.

And the crimes themselves are rather ordinary ones, such as you might find in your daily newspaper. There are no Hindu *swamis* cluttering up the plots, no arrow-poisons from the Amazon, and the *Norths* leave saboteurs and spies strictly to the F.B.I. Andrews once even vetoed an otherwise excellent script simply because it was laid in a medieval museum and concerned antique torture-devices unfamiliar to the average listener.

"We don't like to ask our audience to work too hard," he explains. Even

sound effects are kept to a minimum which includes only those easily recognized from everyday life—or, at the very most, from movie-going. Slamming doors, running feet, revolver shots and ringing telephones are the order of the evening. Atmosphere is created mainly by the dialogue and the mood-music (specially written by Charles Paul and played by his 15-piece orchestra) which "bridges" the gaps between scenes.

The upshot of this simplicity is escapist entertainment which almost any listener can half believe and wholly enjoy. The commonplace settings make him say to himself: "Such exciting things *could* happen to me." The light-comedy handling reassures him: "And, if they did, I hope it wouldn't be any more serious than this!"

Groundwork for the program's present success was laid by the same characters' long-time popularity in print. The *Norths* first appeared in the pages of *The New Yorker*, about a dozen years ago, in a series of little domestic sketches penned by Richard Lockridge. They were a peaceful, home-loving pair then and didn't turn detective until Dick Lockridge teamed up with his wife, Frances, to produce the first of the *Pam-and-Jerry* mystery novels. Their success in the new medium can be judged by the fact that the latest volume, "Killing the Goose," is the seventh one published in less than four years.

Radio has proved to be equally receptive—and has made even further changes in the personality of the *Norths* and their police-force playmates. In the interests of speeding up the plot and streamlining the characters, so that an entire mystery story can be presented within a half-hour's time, the original members have become almost caricatures of themselves. Quiet, scholarly Jerry has had to learn to swing his fists to get out of some violent situations. The more frivolous-minded Pam has less time now for her delightfully irrelevant chatter. And

Lieutenant Weigand, their indispensable link to the Homicide Squad, is now so busy coming to their rescue that he has little time for solving crimes himself.

The players who enact these roles on the air undoubtedly have much to do with the program's audience appeal. They represent the cream of radio's crime-show society and, as such, are unusually typical of the new-style troupers radio drama itself has brought into being.

Stage actors may come from families which have been in show business for generations. Other types of radio performers may come from many different fields and professions. But the "Mr. and Mrs. North" cast illustrates two phenomena which most straight radio actors have in common today: None of them came from theatrical families, yet almost all of them have had stage training.

Minneapolis-born Alice Frost (Pam) is the daughter of a Swedish minister and a church organist. Starting out by singing duets with her mother and the other musical—but still non-professional—members of her family, Alice switched to the study of dramatics on a scholarship at the McPhail School of Music in her home town. Acting, however, was just a hobby until the tall, creamy-complexioned blonde took leave of absence from her first job in the credit department of a large retail store to make a three months' tour with a chautauqua troupe.

Playing the lead in a tabloid version of "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" then convinced Alice that this fair lady, at least, preferred acting. Stock-company experience in Miami, Florida, merely strengthened that belief and led her finally to New York and network radio—where she has portrayed so many long-suffering heroines of various daytime dramas that playing the light-hearted, never-to-be dismayed *Pamela* must be a refreshing change.

Alice's fresh-faced, blue-eyed co-star, Joseph Curtin, is a bookbinder's son born in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Although he played juvenile roles, at the age of 10, with George Pierce Baker's famous Harvard "47" Workshop, Joe went on to finish his education at the local Latin School, then—upon graduation, at 17—followed Baker's collegiate trail to the Yale Drama School.

Three years there, then a year of repertory in Santa Barbara, California, followed by road tours with Maude Adams, Otis Skinner and Walter Hampden, condensed versions of Shakespeare at the Chicago World's Fair and summer stock at Ogunquit, Maine—with such guest stars as Ethel Barrymore and Florence Reed—have, given Joe an unusually thorough background of stage training.

Radio, however, has taken up all the Curtin time ever since he got his first big break, back in 1936, and Joe has been heard in a great variety of roles, though he seems to specialize in marital ones—first (and still) as Helen Menken's "Second Husband," later as John in "John's Other Wife," and now as Pamela's spouse.

Native New Yorker Frank Lovejoy (Lieutenant Weigand) came a bit closer to being born into the amusement world. His birthplace was just one block from the old Biograph studios, and his father worked for Pathe News. But the elder Lovejoy was so set on Frank's not growing up to be an actor that he even refused to let his own newsreel company take pictures of his sailor-suited 6-year old son performing for the Fourth Liberty Loan Drive.

It took Frank two years of financial study at New York University and a stint as a Wall Street broker's clerk to make the break into radio acting by way of "little theater" work in Brooklyn, a "bit" part on Broadway, and the inevitable "stock" in Virginia and Cincinnati.

Mandel Kramer (garrulous cab-driver Mahatma McGloin) studied law for a couple of years at Western Reserve University in his native Cleveland, before following a similar little-theatre-

and-stock trail to Radio City, where he has been playing multitudinous "mugs" ever since.

Walter Kinsella (Sergeant Mullins) is another New Yorker, who served as a Marine during World War I and was an amateur running champ before getting started in the old silent films, playing in a long list of Broadway hits, and finally performing in more radio programs than he should be able to cover with wings on his heels.

Only Betty Jane Tyler (whose father is in the furniture business) is too young, at 15, to have had any stage experience. But she brings plenty of radio training to the role of little Susan. Dancing and singing lessons led her to children's programs "years ago" and she has been much in demand for juvenile roles ever since.

Though occasionally handicapped by too-familiar plots or overburdened with too many wise-cracking gangster pals, these seasoned players wring every last chuckle from some amusing and hair-raising situations and make crime-detecting—in mirthful mood—an armchair pastime shared by all.

Unidentified Radio Magazine, May 1944

The Minister, Mickey Mouse And Murder

Wednesday, 9:00 p.m. NBC

A far cry from the Minnesota church in which Alice Frost spent so many hours of her childhood is her present-day role as the excitement seeking, quick-thinking feminine member of NBC's popular sleuthing duo, *Mr. and Mrs. North*, who weekly engage in a fast-moving half-hour's chase of crime and criminals.

But the actress early displayed her feeling for things dramatic with her impish impersonations of the parishioners who attended her father's church, and eventually this ability brought her to the New York stage and radio, via stock companies and

Chautauquas in many parts of the country.

Her first play on Broadway was *Green Grow the Lilacs*, and her early work on the airlines consisted of mimicking the voices of everybody from Greta Garbo to Micky Mouse. Later came choice dramatic assignments on an impressive number of New York's airshows, and the title role on one of radio's most popular daytime serials, *Big Sister*—a part she played for over six years, during which time she married her "boss," radio director William M. Tuttle.

Alice and Bill were married in a colorful outdoor ceremony four years ago at the country home of a friend in Bedford Village, New York.

They still retail an attachment for a rural setting and now, besides their home in New York City, have rented a Cape Cod cottage covered with vines and surrounded with lilac bushes and azaleas. It has a large pine-paneled living room and a huge fireplace.

"Some day," smiled Alice, "we want to have a country home of our own—New England, part field stone and wood."

It isn't likely, however, that Miss Frost will ever completely abandon her airplane work to "take to the woods." "I doubt it," she laughed. She continues to supplement her one regular radio role with appearances on the programs (including "Romance" and "Comedy Theater," the latter opposite Fred Allen). In addition, as "Pamela North," she does guest spots with her ether spouse, Joseph Curtin, on mystery-quiz shows like "Quick as a Flash."

Alice is a tall (five feet, seven) willowy blonde with fair skin and gray eyes that turn blue "when I get mad or wear blue." Her full name is Alice Dorothy Margaret Frost Tuttle. It's an old Swedish custom.

She doesn't like to shop. "I'd love to be able to order anything I need in the way of clothes, right from my own home." But she does like to browse in antique shops.

She doesn't like to wear hats, but has to wear them because her hair is too soft and blows about too much. In 1941 she was named the best dressed woman in radio.

She prefers sport clothes, simple well-fitting dressmaker suits and dresses, and evening clothes; she turns thumbs down of dressy afternoon things, and beading, braid or fringe. Her favorite colors are blue, black, tan, gray, chartreuse and white.

Around the house she dons pinafores; in the country, slacks.

She employs "a wonderful housekeeper called Fanny." "Fanny," the actress went on, "keeps her 'children' with properly balanced meals and scolds us if we work too hard."

Alice cooks—"only if I'm forced to, but I've become a proficient sandwich maker because Bill loves sandwiches. No *he* has no culinary accomplishments but *definitely* not!"

Alice expressed a love for steaks, broiled lobster, corn on the cob and strawberry ice cream, and for breakfast (she seldom sleeps late), orange juice and a cup of coffee followed a half-hour late by more coffee, toast and occasionally an egg—or French toast—or Fanny's and guava jelly.

The actress thinks it would be wonderful to live in California—"to do a program, then hop into a sun suit and get some vitamins that don't come in bottles."

She likes Bing Crosby—adds "Who doesn't! He's an example to actor and singer in his wonderful ease in delivery and unstudied casualness." She also admires Helen Hayes, Ingrid Bergman, Irene Dunne, Alfred Lunt, Spencer Tracy and Barry Fitzgerald.

She likes to listen to the radio—all the programs that her husband supervises (he is now an agency representative), plus "Fibber McGee and Molly."

As for mystery stories, she loves them. She and husband Bill frequently read aloud to each other, alternating every "good" book (usually philosophical writings) with a juicy murder mystery!

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There is no way that the Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound can appropriately thank all of those Golden Age personalities who made the first two Radio Showcase experiences so outstanding. When you examine the lengthy list of wonderful people who have come to share with us, you'll understand part of this. But, unless you were there, you just can't feel the intimacy and warmth of their special sharing. What generosity! What talent! Last year was almost a sell-out. **Registrations continue**

to run way ahead of last year's pace.

Friday night there will be two new radio dramas written around the specific talent of some of our OTR guests.

Saturday The popular "Just Sittin' Around and Visiting" will be back. Re-creations include *Vic and Sade*, *Pat Novak For Hire*, and *X Minus One*. Many panels. Special fun at dinner.

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Jeanne Bates
and Alice Backes

to speak in Denver
at RHAC Spring Meeting!

7 p.m.

May 18, 1995

Church of The Master
17th & Filbert Court

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