



# RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION OF  
COLORADO

Volume 22, Number 6

January, 1997



Eve Arden's role as a wise-cracking school teacher in the "Our Miss Brooks" program started and maintained its popularity on radio. Here, we see Eve Arden, Dick Crenna and Gloria McMillan performing on CBS.

# RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

Dedicated to the preservation of old time radio programs and to making those programs available to our members.

## RHAC BOARD MEETING FEB. 6th

AT THE KINGS RESIDENCE 7:30 PM 900 W. QUINCY AVE. ENGLEWOOD

### Old time radio is alive in Denver

- ◆ John Dunning's OTR Program on KHOW 630 Saturday evening 9:00 till 11:00 PM
- ◆ John Rayburn's "Reminiscing with Rayburn" Saturday evenings 6:00 till 11:00 PM KEZW 1430
- ◆ KEZW has syndicated OTR weekdays from 7:00 till 9:00 PM 1430 on the dial.
- ◆ KEZW Imagination Theater Sundays 5:00 till 6:00 PM

RRSR (Radio Reading Service of the Rockies) is in need of sighted volunteers to help with their radio shows for the blind, being produced at their Boulder studios, 5290 Arapahoe Avenue, unit G, Boulder, CO 80303 their phone number is 303-972-2850 for further information, they need help.

RETURN WITH US NOW... is the official publication of the *Radio Historical Association of Colorado, Inc.*, a nonprofit 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.

Phone numbers are in the (303) area code except where indicated.

PRESIDENT	Dick King, 900W Quincy Ave, Englewood CO 80110.. email; rking63823@gnn.com	761-4139
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### TAPE DONATIONS

Bill McCracken, 7101 W Yale Ave #503, Denver CO 80227

Herb Duniven, 4184 S. Syracuse St., Denver CO 80237

DIRECTOR AT LARGE: David L Michael, 1999 Broadway, Lowery Suite, Denver CO 80202

## LIBRARIES

REFERENCE MATERIAL	Bill McCracken, address above	986-9863
LOGS & SCRIPTS	Fred Hinz, c/o RHAC, P 0 Box 1908, Englewood CO 80150	
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CASSETTE TAPE LIBRARIANS:		
#1 (1-499)Terry Hamilton, 9393 E Colorado Ave, Denver CO 80231		696-8196
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#3(1000 & up)Dave Logan, 5557 S Sherman Cir, Littleton CO 80121		730-1430
#4 (5001 up) Mika Rhoden, 3950W Dartmouth Ave, Denver CO 80236		937-9476

The

# Kings Roost

Now that we have made the last library shipments for 1996 and sent out the catalogs to the new members that joined in 1996, we look back and just shake our heads. Lots of people have joined RHAC in the past year and are enjoying the vast collections of shows that we offer for their pleasure. Ten years ago some noted authorities in the business of OTR were saying that no one would be listening to reel-to-reel shows and only a few would be listening to cassettes by this time, so we feel sure that this note is being sent to the rare few that still are able to think and use their imaginations to "see" the shows they are listening to. We may be a dying sector of the populus, but at least we are having fun doing it.

The skiers may wonder as they travel from the airport through Denver heading for the ski slopes, Where is the snow? but they will soon find it in the high country. The mountains and the ski slopes have plenty of snow, which will make for good flow in the streams and good levels in the reservoirs for summer usage, but here in the Denver area the skies are clear and the temperature is

mild, and that D--- wind keeps blowing. I really don't remember the wind being such a problem fifty or sixty years ago, but maybe it isn't the country changing, just us.

One member told us the other day that he thought that we probably got lots of flack from the members, but we informed him that we have a very select group of people, and really never have any problems. Once in a while a tape gets damaged, but that is not a problem, just a sign that it has been out and is being enjoyed. We get lots of very nice notes from our members and we certainly want to thank all of you that sent us cards. OTR listeners are a very special group of people and we certainly enjoy our part in keeping the shows alive.

While checking to see what shows would be entered into the libraries for January, I noted that the last catalog sheet in the catalogs already sent out was only one-sided. **BE SURE TO ADD THE SHEET IN THIS NEWSLETTER TO YOUR CATALOG.** We are entering several reels of **ABBOTT AND COSTELLO**, who we have learned to appreciate more after going to **SPERDVAC'S** convention a few years ago and seeing and hearing members of their families talk about their lives. We also have a lot of

**MURDER AT MIDNIGHT SHOWS** going in, for those who enjoy the mystery shows.

The Denver area members had a nice get-together on December 14th, and since that time we have been listening to some of the RHAC programs that will go into the library in a few months. At our December get-together we gave away several records that came from the collection of a former member, Dick Henry. In listening to the RHAC programs we could often hear Dick's voice and it is hard to realize he is no longer with us. The same can be said for the OTR shows that we listen to. Those people are still with us in voice and spirit, and certainly gave us better entertainment than we are getting on many of today's shows.

We were able to get a good copy of **A CHRISTMAS CAROL** from 1939 with Lionel Barrymore and Orson Wells, plus many others. We made copies of this show and gave them to several families that never had the opportunity to hear this classic. Sharing our pleasures with others is really what this club is all about. Hope you all enjoy it during the **NEW YEAR.**

# Our Miss Brooks

From John Dunning's "Tune in Yesterday"

Our Miss Brooks was a show that teachers everywhere took to their hearts from the first broadcast. Here at last was a teacher seen a something other than a sexless tormentor of tenth-grade morons. Connie Brooks, the show's heroine, taught English at Madison High School, in a town of mid-America that somehow had a little piece of everywhere built into its foundations.

Perhaps that was the secret of the program's success. For teachers, Our Miss Brooks was all too human, finding plenty of time during the weekly half-hour comedy format to complain about her lowly salary (how teachers identified with that!) and to chase Philip Boynton, the bashful biology teacher.

The show premiered on CBS July 19, 1948, and was one of the network's most popular comedies for nine years. For six years, Colgate sponsored the program; then Toni Home Permanent began footing the bills. Along with Ozzie and Harriet, Life with Luigi, and the Phil Harris-Alice Faye

Show, Our Miss Brooks was one of the last bright lights of radio situation comedy.

The title role was perfect for Eve Arden, a refugee from the B-movies. She was born Eunice Quedens but left that name in Mill Valley, California. When she set out with a touring theatrical group to see the world, she combined the names on cosmetic bottles on a dressing room table--from "Evening In Paris" and "Elizabeth Arden" Eve Arden was born. With her touring company, she played barns and hotel lobbies in the early 1930's and finally landed in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1936. Hollywood beckoned the following year, and she embarked on a film career.

Her earliest notable acting credit was in "Oh, Doctor," a 1937 celluloid cheapie. Following that, Miss Arden played gun molls and wisecracking babes in more than fifty horrible Hollywood capers, among them The Forgotten Woman (1939), Slightly Honorable (1940), and She Couldn't Say No (1941). Those B roles began to taper off only after Our Miss Brooks had become a national hit and she could afford the luxury of selecting her own slots. Her comic gifts had long been overlooked by filmdom, so it was in radio that she found her greatest

success. She brought to the character a sarcastic wit that became its strongest trademark.

Writer Al Lewis captured the human side of Connie Brooks. Each year Miss Arden received thousands of letters from teachers frustrated with their own circumstances. At least half a dozen high schools offered her jobs teaching English. She turned down the jobs, but sometimes spoke at PTA meetings.

The schools couldn't have afforded her anyway. By then she was making \$200,000 a year for being the tart-tongued schoolmarm of the air.

Her supporting cast was distinguished and funny, proving again that a show seldom flies with only one sail. Jeff Chandler, who died in 1961 without quite attaining superstardome some producers had predicted, was Philip Boynton. It was one of his few tries at comedy, precisely the reverse of his later rough-cut, machismo screen image. Chandler handled the part extremely well, stumbling over words and laughing nervously whenever he was the center of attention. He was the perfect bashful boyfriend, even growing red-faced at the mention, in mixed company, of his frogs' breeding habits.

Probable the funniest character in the show was Osgood Conklin, Madison High's harried principal. Gale Gordon, who played Mayor La Trivia on Fibber McGee and Molly, was at his best in these roles of blustery windbags, and Conklin was probably his best all-around radio role. It provided at least one solid stack-blowing per show.

Rounding out the cast of important regulars were Leonard Smith, Jane Morgan, and Richard Crenna (Dick in those long-ago days of bob and bobby-soxers). Smith played the school idiot, Stretch Snodgrass. Miss Morgan was heard as Mrs. Davis, owner of the boarding house where Miss Brooks lived. Mrs. Davis was always naive and sometime seemed slightly senile, making remarks in a patter of logical lunacy taken from Gracie Allen-Marie Wilson cloth.

Crenna was Walter Denton, the show's Henry Aldrich, who often drove Miss Brooks to school in his alleged automobile (remember the leaky top on rainy days?). Walter was another thorn in Conklin's side because he was in love with the principal's daughter, Harriet. Harriet was played with Corliss Archer's breathlessness by Gloria McMillan. Crenna would later

become Luke on the Walter Brennan TV show, The Real McCoys, and today can be seen on a variety of serious film roles. But in 1949, he was Walter Denton, Jeff Chandler was just getting a foot in Hollywood's door, and Gale Gordon was one of radio's greatest character actors. Wilbur Hatch provided the music.

They came to work on Sunday, arriving at the Hollywood studio at mid-morning for an informal reading of the script. Lines and cues were learned, and a more polished rehearsal followed in the early afternoon. At 3:30 Pacific time, the show was broadcast live to the East Coast and taped for later replay in the West.

Radio comedy is often stilted and badly dated, but Our Miss Brooks is still funny and warm. So completely did Eve Arden assume the part that even today she is best remembered as the English teacher of Madison High. Her voice is immediately recognizable in any TV guest shot, and sometimes it can be distracting. It's hard to imagine Our Miss Brooks playing, as she has recently done, the part of a heavy.

Editor's note: Remember this article is from John Dunning's book, copyright 1976.

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ur Miss Brooks shows can be found in RHAC libraries on # 006,191,192 and 220  
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RHAC member Garrett Farwell 14616 Creek Valley Court, Centerville, VA 20120-2922 is trying to find broadcasts by Frank Edwards. According to his books, he was sponsored by the AF of L and heard on the Mutual network. His syndicated show "Stranger than Science" was said to be very popular. Garrett is interested in finding any of his broadcasts, especially the "Stranger than Science". Garrett prefers cassettes, but if anyone has some material on reel, we can easily transfer it to cassette for him. You can call Garrett at 703-222-1054.

.....  
RHAC member Larry Weide, Phone 303-758-8382 is restoring a 1931 GE radio and is hoping to find someone that has a GE #K82/62 Georgian chassis. This chassis was used in several models of radios at that time. If you can help him, please give him a call. He can use a unit even if it needs repairs.  
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Article from the Jan. Feb. 97  
Reminisce Magazine. By Ted  
Tyson.

## "Goodnight Mrs. Calabash where ever you are"

"Good Night, Mrs. Calabash  
wherever you are!"

For years Jimmy Durante  
ended his radio and television  
shows with that unusual  
sign-off. Most people thought  
the mysterious Mrs. Calabash  
must have some fictional  
character that Durante  
dreamed up just to tease his  
audiences.

But longtime resident of  
Calabash North Carolina  
believe otherwise. The folks  
in this town will tell you she  
was a real person with a real  
name-and a fascinating story  
to boot.

They claim that Mrs. Calabash  
was really a local woman  
named "Lucy" Coleman.

In 1940 Lucy was 28 years  
old and running a restaurant in  
Calabash, then a tiny seaside  
community bordering South  
Carolina. Durante and his  
touring entertainment troupe  
are said to have stopped in for  
supper one night.

It might have been the genuine  
homespun friendliness of the

young restaurant owner that  
prompted the gregarious  
Jimmy Durante to beckon  
Lucy over to his table for a  
short chitchat.

"I'm going to make you  
famous" vowed Durante,  
thinking she recognized his  
well-known face. (In fact at  
that moment she didn't even  
know who he was!) Lucy's  
daughter Clarice Holden, says  
she will never forget what  
happened next.

### Secret sign-off

"As Mr. Durante and his  
group were walking out the  
door after their meal," Clarice  
recalls, "he turned to my mom  
said, 'Good night  
Mrs..Calabash.'"

It wasn't long afterward that  
this popular entertainer began  
signing off his radio shows  
with a similar message. For  
years, audiences enjoyed his  
rather lighthearted farewell  
mystery.

By the time of Durante's death  
in 1980, it had become one of  
his trademarks, almost as  
recognizable as his big  
"schnozzola".

But while that sign-off may  
have remained a mystery to  
most folks, Calabash residents  
believe it was Durante's way  
of saying to Mrs. Coleman,  
"Hi, Lucy-I remember you, if  
you're still out there now"

Lucy Coleman passed away in  
1989, nearly 50 years after her  
meeting with Jimmy Durante.  
Calabash residents note that  
Lucy recognized the  
significance of Durante's little  
secret message but preferred  
to stay out of the limelight.  
She had no desire to claim  
credit as the real "Mrs.  
Calabash".

"Mom was very private  
person," recalls Clarice, "She  
didn't speak much about her  
'Mrs. Calabash' entity, and she  
declined all interviews and all  
invitations to appear on  
television."

Apparently, Durante's  
popularity was so great that he  
could immortalize a prim  
Southern restaurant keeper.  
But neither he nor anyone else  
could get her to talk.

.....  
Editors note; In about March  
of 1944 while in New York  
waiting for my free passage  
to? they gave us a one day  
pass to New York City. I saw  
on a billboard that Jimmy  
Durate was appearing so I  
bought a ticket. It was a good  
show but at the end Durante  
completely tore up a grand  
piano. It must have been  
made to come apart and was  
put back together for the next  
show.  
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# RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION of COLORADO

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Enclosed is my check or money order for the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to cover the one month rental charge of **\$2.50 per set** for the cassettes ordered. You are allowed to order 5 cassette sets at one time although you may only have 5 cassette sets from this library at one time. **Minimum order is \$7.50.**

Cassette number.

Title

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