



RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO

Volume 26, Number 12

July, 2001

Flash ... We Have A New Newsletter Editor!

We're very excited to announce that we are fortunate indeed to have Carol Tiffany come on board as our new RWUN newsletter editor. Carol has been a long time member of RHAC, and brings a wealth of OTR background and experiences to the task of continuing to build on the accomplishments of our newsletter. I know you'll all want to join me in wishing Carol all the success in the world. However, as with our past editors, she can not do the job alone and needs your contribution of stories of all kinds.

youLarry Weide

A Brief Biography by Carol Tiffany

Hello everyone. Well, to start, I was born in 1941 and raised in Ohio, I was first exposed to OTR while living with my grandparents in Ft. Wayne, Indiana during WWII. I graduated from college with a Fine Arts degree and became a professional portrait photographer for three years in Cincinnati. I then received a diploma in nursing and worked for the next 32 years as an Operating Room Nurse at Stanford Medical Center in Palo Alto, Wheeler Hospital in Gilroy Calif. and the North Colorado Medical Center in Greeley Colorado. Following an interest in politics, I served as City Councilman and Mayor-pro-tem, in Evans, Co. 1990-98. In October of 1998, I moved to Palm Bay, Florida to care for my mother.

An avid listener to the radio when I was young, my early favorites were The Lone Ranger, Bobby Benson and the B-Bar-B Riders, Don Winslow of the Navy, and Henry Aldrich. I still remember listening to Broadway is My Beat after my bedtime mainly because I loved the wonderful words and descriptions. When I later became an omnivorous reader, my early exposure to writers like Elliott Lewis and Norman Corwin tended to influence my taste in authors.

While living in the Bay Area in the 60s and 70s, I rediscovered OTR when I happened onto a San Francisco station which played all the old shows. Soon, I was recording the programs and avidly collecting more from

various sources. Thinking myself alone in my passion, I did not discover the OTR clubs until the mid -1980s, when I heard about RHAC and joined.

I was fortunate while living in the Greeley area to meet and become friends with Dick Williamson, a long-time RHAC member who has been keeping the flame of OTR alive on the radio in Greeley, first on KGRE and now on KFKA. Dick was kind enough to allow me to co-host his show on occasion and to fill in for him when he was laid up.

With Dick for my inspiration, I am currently putting together an OTR program for WMEL here in Florida. I am also involved in setting up a lending library of cassette tapes for Leisure of the Blind, a local organization here on the Space Coast. Finally, I am looking forward to working with other RHAC members to carry on Stewart Wright's great work in editing "Return with Us Now". I hope I can maintain the standards he set during his tenure as editor.

With Stewart's standards in mind, I would like to ask all of our readers for their input. We need YOUR ideas, suggestions, articles and cartoons to keep our newsletter new and fresh. In the next few issues there will be some requests for reader input for some columns. Please feel free to submit any and all ideas; they will be more than welcome.

My very best to you all, Carol

RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

PO BOX 1908, Englewood CO 80150 (303) 761-4139 - Dedicated to the preservation of old-time radio programs,
and to making those programs available to our members

RHAC Board Meeting Thursday, September 6th at 7:30 P.M.
At Maletha and Dick King's - 900 W. Quincy Ave., Englewood (303) 761-4139

Old-Time Radio is Alive in Denver!

| | | |
|----------------|--|-----------------------------|
| KLVZ 1220 AM | Music of the 1930's - 60's with John Rayburn | 2 PM - 6 PM, Weekdays |
| KRMA Channel 6 | Secondary Audio Program, Tribute to OTR | Sunday 2:00 PM |
| KEZW 1430 AM | When Radio Was weekdays | 7:00 - 8:00 PM |
| KFKA 1310 AM | Radio Memories Sundays (Greeley) | 6:00 to 12:00 PM |
| KUVU 89.3 FM | Destination Freedom | Tuesday, March 20th 9:00 PM |

RHAC WEB SITE <http://www.rhac.org>

RHAC OTR WEB PAGE <http://www.old-time.com/rhac.html>

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 1st year with \$15.00 for renewal. Each member in good standing has full use of the club resources. For further information contact anyone listed below. Any mention of a product in **RETURN WITH US NOW...** does not constitute an endorsement by RHAC.

| | | | | |
|------------------|------------------|---|----------------|---------------------------|
| President: | Larry Weide | 5270 E. Nassau Cir. Englewood, CO 80110 | (303) 758-8382 | lweide@attglobal.net |
| Vice-President: | Esther Campbell | 4128 W. 50th Ave. Denver, CO 80212 | (303) 477-2257 | mesther@uswest.net |
| Secretary: | Kathy Melies | 1280 Dayton St. Aurora, CO 80010 | | oslc915@juno.com |
| Treasurer: | Maletha King | 900 W. Quincy Ave. Englewood, CO 80110 | (303) 761-4139 | dickking@ecentral.com |
| Newsletter: | Carol Tiffany | | | ctiffany@worldnet.att.net |
| Historian: | Vacant | | | |
| RHAC Players: | Helen Lowynsky | | (303) 782-5387 | |
| Talking Nwslter: | Mike Fields | 243 S. 1100 E. Greentown, IN 46936 | | |
| Membership: | Dick King | PO BOX 1908 Englewood, CO 80150 | (303) 761-4139 | dickking@ecentral.com |
| Tape Donations: | Bill McCracken | 7101 W. Yale Ave. #503 Denver, CO 80227 | (303) 986-9863 | |
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LIBRARIES

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| Reference Material: | Bill McCracken | | 7101 W. Yale Ave #502 Denver, CO 80227 | (303) 986-9863 |
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| #3 (1000-2000) | Dave Logan | 5557 S. Sherman Cir. | Littleton, CO 80121 | (303) 730-1430 |
| #4 (5001-up) | Mika Rhoden | 3950 W. Dartmouth Ave. | Denver, CO 80236 | (303) 937-9476 |

RHAC Calendar

Watch here for upcoming events

August 18, 2001

RHAC Picnic - Pot luck, in the shade or fun in the sun, at Larry Weide's home

December, 2001 (TBA)

RHAC Christmas Party - Dinner, Raffle and show

2001 Conventions

National Audio Theater Workshop June 18-19, 2001 Willam Wood Univ., Fulton, MO
Contact: Sue Zizza, 115 Dikeman St., Hempstead, NY 11550 (516) 483-8321 suemedial@aol.com

Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound Radio Showcase IX June 29-30, 2001 Seattle Center, Seattle WA
Contact: Mike Sprague, Box 723, Bothell, WA 98041 (425) 488-9518 hrrmikes@aol.com

26th Friends of Old-Time Radio Convention Oct 25-28, 2001 Holiday Inn-North, Newark NJ
Contact: Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514 (203) 248-2887 jayhick@aol.com

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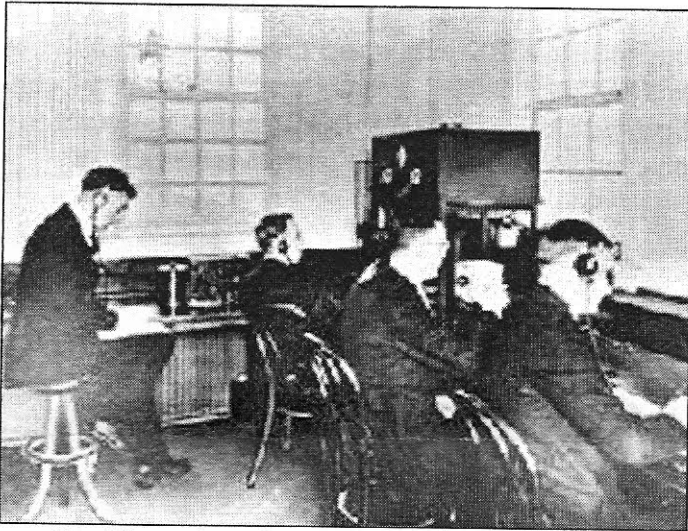
July, 2001

KDKA

The World's First Radio Station

By John Lazarus © 2000

KDKA was issued the nation's first radio license on October 27, 1920. But their broadcasts date back to 1916 when Dr. Frank Conrad, an Assistant Chief Engineer for the Westinghouse Electric Company, set up shop with a home-made transmitter housed in the second floor of his garage in Wilksburg, Pennsylvania. Conrad played music records for two hours each night on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The records were supplied by the Hamilton Music Store in Wilksburg in exchange for on air promotion, thus becoming the nation's first paid radio program.



On November 2, 1920, KDKA officially began broadcasting as four men in a shack atop one of the Westinghouse buildings in Pittsburgh reported the election returns of the Warren Harding vs James Cox Presidential race.

Harold W. Arlin became the world's first full-time radio announcer in January 1921. During these early years, KDKA broadcasted from churches, theaters and hotels. Then that May they erected a tent atop the Westinghouse roof next to the transmitter room. Listeners came to expect the whistle of a passing train as a regular feature on KDKA each evening at 8:30, no matter what the program was.

In January of 1923, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company began linking radio stations across the country. KDKA became one of the four original stations in the AT&T Network. One network broadcast came on March 7, 1924 when WJZ in New York aired from the Ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria. KDKA picked up the program by short wave and relayed the signal to KFKX in Hastings, Nebraska,

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which in turn relayed it to KGO in San Francisco, California.

1921 marked a number of firsts for KDKA. January 2 began the first regularly scheduled church service. March 10 was the first broadcast from a theater as Ruth Royce sang from the Davis Theater in Pittsburgh. April 11 was the first broadcast of a sporting event as Johnny Ray and Johnny Dundee fought to a ten-round no-decision finish from Pittsburgh's Motor Square Garden.

The first broadcast of a World Heavyweight Boxing Championship came on July 2 as Jack Dempsey took on Georges Carpentier. August 5 was radio's first play-by-play of a professional baseball game as the Pittsburgh Pirates beat the Philadelphia Phillies 8 to 5. KDKA began the world's first radio newsroom on September 20 when it aired a remote newscast from the Pittsburgh Post.

The first play-by-play of a football game came on October 8 as Pittsburgh defeated West Virginia University. The year came to a finish with the first musical group established exclusively for radio with the KDKA Little Symphony.

KDKA has grown through many changes over the years. They aired their last song on April of 1992 when the station switched to an all-talk format. Today KDKA can be heard on 1020AM as they continue their tradition as Pittsburgh's number one rated radio station. A fact that makes them as proud as that of being the world's first radio station.

WWJ

America's First Radio Station

By John Lazarus © 2000

"This is 8MK calling." said a voice broadcasting from the second floor of The Detroit News on August 20, 1920. Thus began WWJ's claim as to being the first commercial radio station in the U.S. The call letters changed from 8MK to WBL and settled as WWJ of Detroit, Michigan. Using a DeForest Radiophone type OT-10, installed in a "radio phone room" within The Detroit News Building, WWJ aired "radiophone concerts" daily at 11:30 am and 7:00 pm.

On August 31, 1920, WWJ began the first radio newscasts. The Detroit News ran the event on their front page by saying, "The sending of election results by The Detroit News radiophone Tuesday night was fraught with romance and must go down in the history of man's conquest of the elements as a gigantic step in his progress."

Among the many "firsts" WWJ lays claim to is the first radio sportscast on September 1, 1920 of baseball news. And the hosting of the first dancing party to be supplied exclusively with music by radio. The party was in the home of Mrs. Charles F. Hammond and was attended by several of Detroit's distinguished citizens.

1920 was a busy year for the station as it broadcasted the results of the Dempsey-Miske fight within thirty seconds of receiving the bulletin by wire on September 6. The results of the Gold Cup Races were aired immediately after they arrived by wireless code from the judge's platform on September 11. A "vocal concert" was performed on September 22 by Miss Mabel Norton Ayers. The national election returns of November 2 between Harding and Cox were broadcasted. And Detroit attorney Louis Colombo ended the year on December 31 by singing a New Year's melody of cheer at midnight.

Among the famous firsts include the radio debut of Fannie Brice on December 21, 1921 as she sang with the Old Newsboy's Band and the radio debut of Will Rogers on March 15, 1922.

March 15, 1922 was also the first radio broadcast of a "missing persons" report as the station assisted the Detroit Police in finding William Dora, a young boy who had been missing for ten days. As a result of the broadcast, the boy was promptly found in Ohio.

Radio's first church wedding came from St. Paul's Cathedral in Detroit on June 18, 1922. The bridegroom was Wendall Hall, the "red-headed music maker" and composer of "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More."



WWJ was also the first to broadcast the World Series on October 4, 1922 as they reported the first

game between the New York Giants and the New York Yankees.

The first remote play-by-play football game was aired by E.L. "Ty" Tyson on October 25, 1924 as the University of Michigan played host to the University of Wisconsin at Ferry Field in Ann Arbor. Ty also reported the first remote play-by-play baseball game on April 19, 1927 as the Detroit Tigers took on the Cleveland Indians at Navin Field.

On September 16, 1936 WWJ began broadcasting from its new five-story radio studio building. Four days later they aired the first known broadcast of a full-length stage play. Charles Rann Kennedy's *The Servant In The House* featured Walter Humpden and Ethel Barrymore.

Today, WWJ Newsradio 950 is owned and operated by CBS which also owns their sister station, WYST-FM 97.1. Promotions Director Debbie Spatafora says of WWJ, "Our tradition is exceeded only by our commitment to continued service."

*From the Desk of
the Editor
by Carol Tiffany*



A few further thoughts for future issues would seem to be in order. Our Newsletter should be just that, OUR newsletter. In keeping with this thought, I would like to invite ALL of our readers to submit your ideas, requests, suggestions and opinions to us.

Do you have favorite characters or shows you would like to learn more about? Do you have interesting bits of OTR trivia to share? Would you like to see a certain type of continuing feature (a Letters column, perhaps)? We would like to hear from you about what you would like to see in our upcoming issues.

Thanks for your interest, and I'll see you next month....

Carol

**The Trivial Matter of the Last Names of
Radio's Famous Families
(Courtesy of Dick Williamson's
Radio Memories - May 1995)**

Match the last names with the OTR couples listed below:

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| _____ Ozzie and Harriet | A. Barber |
| _____ Cathy and Elliott | B. Arbuckle |
| _____ Nick and Nora | C. North |
| _____ George and Sapphire | D. Charles |
| _____ Larry and Mary | E. Gook |
| _____ John and Blanche | F. Hall |
| _____ Blondie and Dagwood | G. Nelson |
| _____ Henry and Fanny | H. Lewis |
| _____ Ethel and Albert | I. Bickerson |
| _____ Wallace and Sweetieface | J. Bumstead |
| _____ Jerry and Pam | K. Stevens |
| _____ William (Toddy) and Victoria | L. Noble |
| _____ Vic and Sade | M. Wimple |

(Answers on page 6)

**Ladies and Gentlemen - Easy Aces!
Revisiting Radio's Distinctive
Laugh Novelty**

By Elizabeth McLeod © 2000

"Distinctive" is an unusual word to use in describing a radio show -- but that was the word used for fifteen years in introducing one of the medium's true forgotten classics. It was never a ratings success -- and in fact was far more successful as a syndicated rerun than it ever was as a live show. Its creator may be better known as one of the leading scriptwriters of early television, as a commentator for such erudite magazines as the Saturday Review of Literature, or even as a dour-voiced essayist over National Public Radio in the 1970s. But make no bones about it -- in any medium, Goodman Ace was a brilliant writer, and "Easy Aces" is a show which, perhaps more than any other of its time, is long overdue for rediscovery.

"Easy Aces" was, for most of its run, a fifteen minute comedy serial -- and was generally overshadowed by its many other competitors in that crowded genre. But it was as unique -- as **distinctive** -- in that field as a show could possibly be. "Easy Aces" had none of the morality-play melodrama of "Amos 'n' Andy," nor the warm-hearted rural nostalgia of "Lum and Abner," nor even the baroque absurdity of "Vic and Sade." Instead, Goodman and Jane Ace gave audiences a serial that owes its style to the screwball-comedy tradition of 1930s movies, to the works of comic-strip authors like Harry J. Tuthill ("The Bungle

Family") and Sol Hess ("The Nebbs"), and to whimsical novelists like Thorne Smith ("Topper.") In its acerbic take on upper-middle-class life, "Easy Aces" is the closest radio ever came to a true comedy-of-manners.

It's the story of Mr. Ace (his first name was never used), a typical 1930s white-collar type, and his gently-batty wife Jane -- who live in childless domestic harmony in a pleasant suburban bungalow. Ace is the straightest of straight men -- a serious-minded, middlebrow American who pays his bills on time, belongs to the Rotary Club, reads the newspaper from front to back every day, wears a collar and tie while mowing the lawn -- and can't, for the life of him, understand what makes his wife tick.

And that's understandable -- because Jane Ace lives in a world all her own. She's often described as an uptown version of Gracie Allen, but that's not quite right. Jane's dizziness is of a different sort than that of Gracie -- and it most often manifests itself in an almost Freudian misuse of the language.

"You can't judge a book by its lover."

"You've got to take the bitter with the better."

"Time wounds all heels."

And on and on - Jane's malapropisms were the most famous feature of the show, and she purposefully keeps them coming, episode after episode -- sometimes flitting by too quickly to grasp on the first listening. Her nasal Kansas City voice is perfectly suited to the character -- vague, but not dumb, innocent, yet often positively devious -- and a perfect complement to her husband's own midwestern drawl.

As if Jane alone wasn't bewildering enough, Mr. Ace must endure other continuing aggravations in his quest for a quiet evening. Rooming with the Aces is Jane's childhood friend Marge -- who is often a reluctant sidekick in Jane's ill- advised meddling. There is also the elderly busybody Mrs. Benton, always good for some neighborhood gossip. There is Jane's horrifying Aunt Louise -- whose hatred of Mr. Ace burns as an eternal flame. And, of course, there's Johnny - one of radio's most unjustly-forgotten characters.

Johnny Sherwood is Jane's brother -- and may be the most perfectly-delineated example of a sponging, loafing, no-good relative that you'll ever encounter. Johnny has made a career out of avoiding work. His laziness is an art, a craft -- a calling. Thrown out of his home by his long-suffering parents, Johnny boards with the Aces for two long years, smoking Mr. Ace's cigars, wearing his shirts, and failing to make any meaningful contribution to the household. And then, miraculously, Johnny strikes it rich - not by honest labor but by marriage to the wealthy local heiress Alice Everett. This event, one must imagine, shakes the very foundation of Mr. Ace's conservative world view, and his denunciations of Johnny's slothfulness are ever after tinged by an obvious note of jealousy. Johnny is brilliantly brought to life, by the way, by a very young Frank Lovejoy -- who

long before his typecasting in hardboiled roles proves himself a first-rate comic actor. The plots of "Easy Aces" owe a lot to the family-comedy comic strips of the day, and generally turn on the theme of Jane's bumbling interference in one or another of Ace's business deals or on the often-strained relationships encountered by the various members of this extended family. In one memorable sequence, Jane decides to adopt an orphan -- and comes home with a sullen twenty-year-old behemoth named "Cokie", who does nothing but sit on the couch and glare menacingly at Mr. Ace, finally rising only to knock the goading Ace unconscious with a single blow. Such were the sort of family values encountered in this strange little household, and such was the astringent, anti-sentimental outlook that set "Easy Aces" apart from any other show on the air.

For a decade and a half, the Aces quietly continued on their way, an obscure bright spot on the schedule, until a dispute with long-time sponsor Anacin led to cancellation in 1945. But Goodman Ace, in a brilliantly-executed business move, sold three years worth of transcriptions, containing episodes from 1938 thru 1941, to the Frederick W. Ziv Company of Cincinnati -- which edited the recordings and reissued selected story lines for syndication. The show proved an unlikely hit in rerun form - and the venture made the Aces, at last, a wealthy couple. It's these reruns that are available to collectors today -- often in unfortunately mediocre sound quality. In addition to the three hundred or so episodes that were released in the Ziv package, the Library of Congress holds nearly two full years of pristine original transcriptions of the network run, from February 1935 to December 1937 -- complete with Ford Bond's Anacin commercials, and the distinctive (there's that word again!) accordion version of "Manhattan Serenade" that opens and closes each episode. Perhaps someday, these episodes might be licensed and re-released -- but I wouldn't count on it.

"Easy Aces" isn't a show likely to attract the interest of mass marketers -- because it isn't a show that lends itself to nostalgia. It's not the least bit heartwarming -- it's often abrasive, and even downright hostile -- and it reminds us, perhaps, that the world of the Old Time Radio era wasn't quite as idealized as we might like to think it was. It's a show, in short, that isn't for everyone. But if you're willing to give it a try -- it just might be for you.

Elizabeth McLeod is a journalist, researcher, and freelance writer specializing in radio of the 1930s. She is a regular contributor to "Nostalgia Digest" magazine and the Internet OldRadio Mailing List, maintains a website, Broadcasting History Resources, and is presently researching a book on Depression-era broadcasting. Elizabeth is always looking for 1930s radio recordings in all formats -- uncoated aluminum or lacquer-coated discs,

vinyl or shellac pressings, or low-generation tape copies. You can contact her at lizmcl@midcoast.com

New in the Tape Library

by *Maletha & Dick King*

This month we have just one more of the "Whispering Streets" tapes. These are very heart warming stories that can give us all a boot when we begin to wonder what has been happening to our society.

We begin a series of stories about the lives of the British in India during the 1800's While Americans were settling our country, the British had their problems in India, a more civilized but crowded country, or rather a group of regimes with many leaders, principalities, and political alliances that never were united under the British rule. The Indians of India were skilled and organized against the British and the whole occupation by the British was a losing cause. But, that was the thinking when they built their empire.

These stories include a lot of robbery and murder that may have well been the norm, but the Indians never completely subjugated to the British. Be sure to read Bill McCracken's review of these entries. These are stories about a whole different world.

During the summer, some of librarians prove that they are just as normal as the rest of us and may well take some time off. So, please keep this in mind when the tapes you have on order are just a bit late.

(Answers to Last Names Quiz:)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| <u>G</u> Ozzie and Harriet | A. Barber |
| <u>H</u> Cathy and Elliott | B. Arbuckle |
| <u>D</u> Nick and Nora | C. North |
| <u>K</u> George and Sapphire | D. Charles |
| <u>L</u> Larry and Mary | E. Gook |
| <u>I</u> John and Blanche | F. Hall |
| <u>J</u> Blondie and Dagwood | G. Nelson |
| <u>A</u> Henry and Fanny | H. Lewis |
| <u>B</u> Ethel and Alber | I. Bickerson |
| <u>M</u> Wallace and Sweetieface | J. Bumstead |
| <u>C</u> Jerry and Pam | K. Stevens |
| <u>F</u> William (Toddy) and Victoria | L. Noble |
| <u>E</u> Vic and Sade | M. Wimple |