



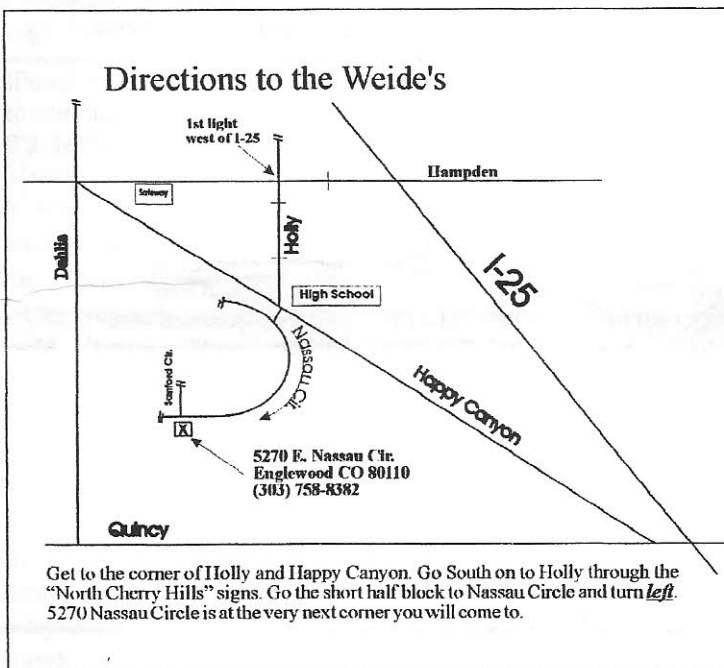
RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO

Volume 26, Number 13

*** Member Meeting in September - see Pg 2 ***

August, 2001



RHAC Annual Picnic
Saturday, August 18 - 1:00pm
For reservations or information, call:

Larry Weide
(303) 758-8382
lweide@attglobal.net

This year the RHAC annual picnic will again be held at Larry Weide's home. The club provides paper goods, soft drinks and 'burgers with all the trimmings. The "party goers" are asked to bring a pot luck dish to share, such as a side dish, salad or dessert - please include serving utensils. There's grass, shade and a covered deck. You'll want to bring your own lawn chair.

The Weide's pool will be open, so remember to bring your bathing suit. Kids are welcome, but parents and guardians must remain responsible for the children at all times - particularly because of safety issues and the fact that there will not be a life guard present.

DON'T BE SQUARE - BE THERE!

THE JACK BENNY SHOW BEHIND THE SCENES

by Dr. Charles Beckett © 2001

"Hello again. This is Jack Benny talking!" Comedian Jack Benny entertained us on the radio for 23 years with his dry humor, and slow paced delivery. His first radio show was as master of ceremonies on the May 2, 1932 Canada Dry show. He was 38 years old. Amazingly, in 23 years on radio, he only aged one year. In his words, "39 is a funny number, 40 isn't."

Why write about Jack Benny? What can be said about him that hasn't been said before? We all know that he was a vain, stingy bachelor, who lied about his age, played the

violin badly, and wore a toupee. But, was that the real Jack Benny?

Of course not! The real Jack Benny was quite the opposite of his radio character. In "real life" he was a generous and giving person, a violin prodigy as a child, wasn't vain or conceited, didn't lie about his age, and was married to Mary Livingston for 37 years. OK, so he did occasionally wear a small hairpiece for a movie role. If an unkind word was ever said about Benny, no one remembers.

Admittedly, We know a lot about Jack Benny. Much less is known about his talented cast members, how they got their jobs, their relationships with their boss, and their opinions of him. (Cont'd Pg 3)

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 Member's Meeting & *Election of Officers* - Thursday, September 20th

The Country Buffet Restaurant, 301 W. Girard Ave.

2blks N. of Hampden, 2blks W. of Broadway

Dinner at 7:00pm, Meeting at 7:30pm

Think you're lucky enough to win a door prize?

Old-Time Radio is Alive in Denver!

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

| | | | | |
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| Tape Donations: | Bill McCracken | 7101 W. Yale Ave. #503 Denver, CO 80227 | (303) 986-9863 | |
| | Herb Duniven | 4184 S. Syracuse St. Denver, CO 80237 | | |
| Directors | David L. Michael | | | |
| at Large: | Herb Duniven | | | |
| | Dick King | | | |

LIBRARIES

| | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Reference Material: | Bill McCracken | 7101 W. Yale Ave #502 | Denver, CO 80227 | (303) 986-9863 |
| Logs & Scripts: | Fred Hinz | c/o RHAC PO Box 1908 | Englewood, CO 80150 | |
| Open Reel Tape: | Maletha King | 900 W. Quincy Ave. | Englewood, CO 80110 | |
| Ccassette Tape: | | | | |
| #1 (1-499) | Ron Gallagher | 888 S. Dextrer #607 | Denver, CO 80246 | (303) 692-0531 |
| #2 (500-999) | David Gatch | PO Box 70 | Glen Haven, CO 80532 | (970) 577-0805 |
| #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

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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All the Jack Benny Show performers are gone now. But, interviews through the years with some of the major cast members help to reveal the "real" Jack Benny. Most of the plots of his shows had something to do with one or more of the following: Announcer Don Wilson's weight, bandleader Phil Harris' drinking and flirting, Dennis Day's total confusion and off-beat view of the world, Mary Livingston's sarcasm, Eddie Anderson's (Rochester) ability to regularly outsmart his boss (except in getting a raise in salary), Mel Blanc's sound effects and sympathetic characters, and Frank Nelson's snobbishness and supposed dislike of Benny.

Don Wilson worked for Benny, in radio and television, for more than 35 years. He joined the show April 6, 1934 -- the same year the Benny's adopted their daughter, Joan. Don, a radio sportscaster before joining Jack, when asked how he was selected as the show's new announcer, said "I got awfully lucky. I happened to laugh at the right places in the audition while reading the script with Jack and one of his writers, and I got the Job."

Asked how much influence Benny had in putting the shows together, Wilson said "the shows were put together by Jack and the writers, Jack was the idea man. He would give the writers suggestions and they would develop them. Jack also had good judgment in editing scripts. His judgment of what was good for the show and for him was downright infallible." Wilson also said that "supporting cast members were routinely built up by Jack. He was shrewd enough to realize that the

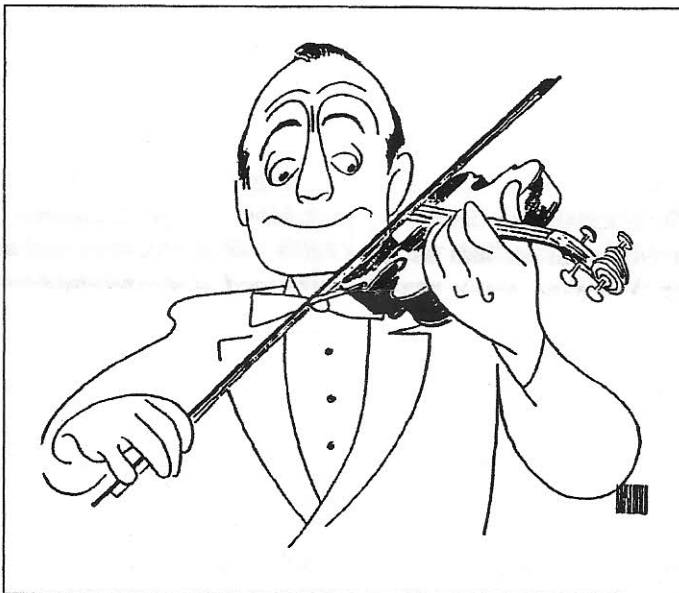
better he could make his cast members look, the better the show would be -- which would reflect favorably on him, Jack gave most of the funny material to the other cast members, and routinely played straight man to them."

During the show's run, Don Wilson was asked if the constant jokes about his weight bothered him? His reply, "I don't mind it at all, as long as they pay for it."

Phil Harris joined the show in 1936, and except for a short stint in the Merchant Marine during World War II, remained with it until he was replaced by Bob Crosby in September 1952. Asked what it was like working for Benny, Harris said that "Everybody who worked for Jack Benny was "exclusive," which meant they couldn't work for anybody else without Jack's permission." (which Benny generally gave, when asked). When asked about Jack's radio reputation as a stingy person, Phil said just the opposite was true, that Benny was very generous. He said

that "me and the other cast members were making so much money we didn't know what to do with it. we didn't have to work for anyone else. About every six months, Jack would tell Blume (his manager) to give me more money. I said I didn't need any more money, that I appreciated Jack's getting me off the road (from one night stands with his band), I would have three lines on a show, and Jack would say 'go tell Blume to give you some more money'". (Dennis Day, Phil Harris, and Mel Blanc went on to star in successful radio shows of their own.)

Mary Livingston, off-stage, was a very private person. She had been working as a stocking sales clerk in a New York Department store when Jack met her. They were married January 14, 1927, when she was 18 and Jack was 33. She first appeared on the show July 27, 1932. She was never cast as Jack's wife or steady girl friend, but was a central character on most of the shows. She always played his friend -- and was, on rare occasion, a low-key romantic interest. She was the only cast member who could repeatedly insult Benny and get away with it.



Mary never really had much desire to be a performer. Jack explained it this way; "Mary often became very nervous before a program. She frequently became ill the day of the show -- or the day before -- and other actresses would have to be called to fill in for her. A couple times a year, after completing a show, she would walk off stage and collapse in a faint." Her nerves never seemed to affect her during the broadcasts -- but she occasionally read her lines with her back to the studio audience, due to stage fright from facing

them. Her extreme nervousness was a major factor in her eventual retirement from show business. She was particularly uncomfortable about doing television.

Dennis Day joined the show October 8, 1939. He had recently graduated from Manhattan College in New York city, where he was president of the glee club. He had made a few records, but had planned to go to law school, since he didn't think he could make a living singing. Kenny Baker had left the show, and Jack was auditioning for a replacement tenor. Mary Livingston heard a couple of the records Dennis had sent to Jack's agent, and recommended that Jack audition Dennis. Dennis explained that "during the audition, after I had sung for about half an hour, a rest break was called. I was talking to my accompanist about what number to do next. Over the loudspeaker, I heard a voice say "Oh, 'Dennis! I turned and said 'Yes, please?'" Jack told me later that was one of the deciding factors in my

being hired." Jack not only liked Day's voice, but also his approach and manners. As Dennis expressed it, "I guess it pays to be polite."

Dennis stayed with Benny on radio and television for 25 years, missing only two years while in the navy during World War II. His description of Jack Benny was that he was "a great, great and wonderful and warm individual. Not only was he a great comedian, but I think that he was one of the warmest individuals I've known."

Eddie Anderson, a little known vaudeville song and dance man, first appeared on the Jack Benny Show March 28, 1937. Jack needed a black actor who could do comedy, for a one time part as a Pullman train porter. Anderson was hired and proved to be such a hit that he was given other small parts, and soon became a regular cast member, named Rochester van Jones. He performed on most of the programs until the show ended May 22, 1955. He played Penny's butler, valet, cook, maid, chauffeur, nurse, and jack of all trades -- continuing on with Benny into television and movies.

Mel Blanc was "the man of a thousand voices" and sound effects. Jack had heard Mel's voice on cartoons and called him to see if he could do the growl of a bear. On the February 12, 1939 show, Jack introduced the character of Carmichael the bear -- whose job was to guard Penny's vault. After doing the occasional growl for about six months on the show, Blanc jokingly said "You know Mr. Benny, I can also talk." so, Jack had a part written in for him as a train announcer (Train leaving for Anaheim, Azusa, and Cuc ... amonga).

Later, Blanc also did the sound effects of Jack's Maxwell car engine, and the voice of Polly the parrot, plus a variety of characters -- department store clerk, telephone repairman, train announcer, violin teacher, gas station attendant, and many others. He was able to do whatever characters and sound effects the script called for. Blanc continued as a regular until the show's end. His "Si, Sy, Sue" routine, a classic, broke Jack up every time Blanc did it. In Mel's words, "Jack would literally fall on the floor laughing." Sometimes on the show, there would be a pause while Benny regained his composure, which was covered by the audience's laughter at the laughing comedian.

Frank Nelson was first hired for the June 1, 1934 show, to do a one time spot as a stranger Jack meets on a train. Later, Nelson occasionally was given other small parts, but no particular character was developed for him. Later, in a skit, he was given a "yes" line. Instead of just responding to Jack with a "yes?". Nelson stretched it to y-e-e-e-e-s-s? After that, he began to be written into more scripts, and his "personality" began to develop. The "yes" reply became a semi-regular part of the show, and Nelson began playing the "yes" character in a variety of parts -- doctor, dentist, news stand operator, floorwalker, train conductor, ticket seller, etc.

But, Nelson said he felt he had been typecast and had gotten trapped by the "yes" character. He recalled that he once was called by an agent who asked if he did anything other than the "Yes" part on the Benny Show. Nelson got so mad, he said "No, that's all I do," and hung up. For a number of years before appearing on the Jack Benny program, Nelson had been a leading man in radio dramas. Asked why he had gone to comedy, he said "because there was more money in it"

Jack Benny died December 26, 1974, of pancreatic cancer, at age 80. Bob Hope did his eulogy. Hope captured Benny's character when he said, "Perhaps what made Jack Benny such a great laugh maker was that he himself loved to laugh. He was the greatest audience a comedian could want. Jack felt a great joy in the joy he brought to others."

The true Jack Penny can probably best be summed up by the inscription on his mausoleum in the Hillside Memorial Park Cemetery in Los Angeles, which reads "A Gentle Man". In his will, he arranged for delivery of one red rose to his wife Mary, each day, for the rest of her life.

What more can be said about Jack Penny? Very little -- but never enough!

Dr. Beckett was first introduced to OTR in 1940, as he sat in front of his own living room radio. Even while he was studying for his doctoral dissertation he was listening to OTR. Demanding work and other interest took him away from listening between WWII and the mid 1980's. But, has the good doctor says, "Once OTR is in your blood, it stays there forever."

REPS SHOWCASE IX

June 29 & 30, 2001 Seattle, WA

By Stewart Wright © 2001

This was my fourth consecutive Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound (REPS) Showcase. Each year the Showcase just gets better and better. Showcase co-chairs Joy Jackson and Mike Sprague put together a truly incredible program featuring a great combination of guest celebrities, activities, and recreations.

REPS has a fine location for its Showcase: the Seattle Center. It's just a short walk to the Space Needle. The convention hotel, the Comfort Suites, is only a few blocks from the Seattle Center. At the Comfort Suites, I had the opportunity to have breakfast and talk about Old-Time Radio with several of the guests including: Harry Bartell, Herb and Sylvia Ellis, Dick Beals, Gil Stratton, and Ray Erlenborn.

The Showcase started at 2:00 P.M. on Friday and went until about 10:15 P.M. and then resumed for a full day on Saturday from 8:30 A.M. until about 9:45 P.M.

Each Showcase has a theme: this year's was Radio Mirror. The Showcase featured excerpts from this classic entertainment magazine reported by Larry Albert, REPS

member and professional writer, director, and actor. Larry reported each Radio Mirror segment in a different style.

REPS always has a great group of Old-Time - and New-Time Radio personalities in attendance. This year's first-time Showcase guests were True Boardman, Terry McManus, Dick Van Patten, and Elliott Reid. Returning guests were Arthur Anderson, Harry Bartell, Dick Beals, Frank Buxton, Tommy Cook, Sam Edwards, Herb Ellis, Ray Erlenborn, Jim and Pat French, Art Gilmore, Paul and Ilona Herlinger, Peggy Jordan, Jo Anna March, Norma Jean Nilsson, Anne Whitfield Phillips, Gil Stratton Jr., Ginny Tyler, Rhoda Williams, and Douglas Young. Several REPS members including Joy Jackson, Marge Lutton, David Persson, Anna Denton, and Bill Brooks acted and/or did sound effects. PANELS

This year's panels included Inside Story - *Imagination Theater* with Jim French that was hosted by Seattle actor Larry Albert and "My Name's Friday" on the newly published *Dragnet* book with author Michael J. Hayde and series frequent guest stars Harry Bartell, Herb Ellis, and Sam Edwards.

INTERVIEWS

First-time guests True Boardman, Dick Van Patten, and Elliott Reid were interviewed. JUST SITTING AROUND VISITING

This year, the very popular Just Sittin' Around Visiting with the OTR guests was a single one and a half hour session. Lots of great stories and anecdotes.

RE-CREATIONS

This year's recreations were especially diverse and included: *Young Widder Brown*, *Frontier Gentleman* - "Belljoy's Prisoner", *Vic & Sade*, *Yours Truly*, *Johnny Dollar* - "The Midnight Flight Matter", and *Let's Pretend* - "Cinderella".

Short segments from *The Bickersons* and *Fibber McGee and Molly* featuring Peggy Jordan, granddaughter of Marian and Jim Jordan, playing Teeny were presented as surprises.

There was a contemporary radio program recreation, *Adventures In Odyssey* - "The Painting", that drew a very large crowd of young AIO fans and featured Paul Herlinger in his regular starring role as Whit.

A very special recreation of a radio classic, *Escape* - "Three Skeleton Key," ended in a prolonged standing ovation. Radio drama doesn't get any better than this!! Harry Bartell and Elliott Reid brought down the house as they reprised their original roles from the November 15, 1949 production as Auguste and Jean respectively. They were ably joined in the cast by Herb Ellis as Louis and the Announcer and Christopher Conrad, son of William Conrad, as the Voice of *Escape*. Frank Buxton directed, music was performed by Randy McMillan, and sound effects were

produced by Cheryl Jacobs and David Pair. Incredible performances by one and all!

The final recreation of the Showcase, *Silver Theatre* "Child, Save My Fireman", was directed by its writer, True Boardman. Ray Erlenborn did the sound effects not only for the evening's recreation, but also for the original broadcast on January 5, 1941. This radio play was written especially for actor Jimmy Stewart. Stewart's role was performed by Terry McManus who is well-known for his marvelous impersonations of this fine actor.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

This year's non-recreation activities included a "Live Big Band Remote" by Brian Swanson and The 88th Street Band, Ray Erlenborn's game show spoof - "So-o-o You Want to be a Mockingbird?," an OTR commercial sing-along led by Arthur Anderson and a presentation on Alan Young which included a video of an episode of the early 1950's Alan Young television show. Somehow, Ray Erlenborn got me to participate in his game show spoof.

VENDORS

There were several vendors of Old-Time Radio shows with CDs' and cassette and reel-to-reel tapes. There were also booths selling nostalgia items such as old fan magazines, record albums, and radio premiums. I purchased autographed copies of the books "Let's Pretend" from Arthur Anderson and "My Name Is Friday" from Michael J. Hayde.

SILENT AUCTION

This was the third year that REPS had a silent auction. There were many autographed pictures, scripts, and books available for bidding. The auction raised about \$1400 that is used to help pay Showcase expenses.

DINNER & AWARDS

Another REPS Showcase tradition is a dinner at which convention goers are seated with one or more of the celebrity guests. You had a great chance to converse with them and other convention goers. This year, I was seated at the table with Norma Jean Nilsson.

During the dinner, awards to the performers and REPS volunteers were given.

The John Archer Volunteer of the Year Award - Lynda and Cliff Glaspey.

The Achievement Award went to Herb Ellis. First called was the name of the longest standing recipient in attendance, Ray Erlenborn, and he moved to the table of the next Harry Bartell, they went to Art Gilmore, all three went to Sam Edwards and then four to Dick Beals. Some brief comments were being shared about each past recipient.

Then all five slowly moved around the room and settled at Herb's table as the introduction was finished. Naturally, he was very popular choice, and he was a bit emotional.

PHOTO SESSION

The last event of each Showcase is a group photo session.

SUMMARY

The REPS Showcase is probably the friendliest of all the OTR conventions. All of the guest celebrities at the Showcase were very friendly and approachable. During the breaks and the Saturday night Social Hour, there were many chances to talk with guests, get autographs and take pictures.

The Trivial Matter of Some of OTR's More Obscure Sponsors

By Carol Tiffany

Match the Sponsors with the OTR shows listed below:
(hint...many were Juveniles)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| __ Blue Coal | A. <i>Nick Carter, Master Detective</i> |
| __ Swift's Premium Franks | B. <i>Ozzie and Harriet</i> |
| __ Maxwell House Coffee | C. <i>Jack Armstrong</i> |
| __ Wildroot Crème Oil | D. <i>Chandu, The Magician</i> |
| __ Luster Crème Shampoo | E. <i>Little Orphan Annie</i> |
| __ Old Dutch Cleanser | F. <i>Richard Diamond, Private Detective</i> |
| __ Quaker Puffed Wheat & Rice | G. <i>The Shadow</i> |
| __ Wheaties | H. <i>Archie Andrews</i> |
| __ Ovaltine | I. <i>Captain Midnight</i> |
| __ Rio Grande Oil Co. | J. <i>Gene Autry's Melody Ranch</i> |
| __ Skelley Oil | K. <i>The Jack Benny Program</i> |
| __ White King Soap | L. <i>The Adventures of Sam Spade</i> |
| __ Camel Cigarettes | M. <i>Our Miss Brooks</i> |
| __ JELLO | N. <i>The Challenge of the Yukon</i> |
| __ Wrigley's Gum | O. <i>The Burns and Allen Show</i> |
| __ Rogers Brothers Sliver | P. <i>Calling All Cars</i> |

New in the Tape Library

by Maletha & Dick King

This month we conclude the Masters' India shows in the Contributors Library. These stories continue to detail the many problems the British had in India and the many provinces, their very individual Sultans and the laws they ruled their people by.

RETURN WITH US NOW...

We continue by offering five tapes, two 60 or 90 minute stereo shows each of various British dramas that cover a wide variety of subjects, and certainly have something to please everyone. Our favorite was the last reel with two very good shows, "You Only Live Twice" and "King Solomon's Mines". This series is for the members seeking shows or adventure shows, most of them set in a more civilized world than India.

Thank you!

Mary Grigg of Humble Texas

We want to thank Mary for her very generous donation of her library primarily consisting of famous radio star biographies and histories of OTR. Many of these books are out of print and are difficult to find.

This donation helps to enlarge the club's capability of finding reference material, and insures that those who know and appreciate the value in these books will keep them in a safe and accessible place.

| Answers to to "The Trivial Matter" | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| B. Blue Coal | A. <i>Nick Carter, Master Detective</i> |
| H. Swift's Premium Franks | B. <i>Ozzie and Harriet</i> |
| O. Maxwell House Coffee | C. <i>Jack Armstrong</i> |
| L. Wildroot Crème Oil | D. <i>Chandu, The Magician</i> |
| M. Luster Crème Shampoo | E. <i>Little Orphan Annie</i> |
| A. Old Dutch Cleanser | F. <i>Richard Diamond, Private Detective</i> |
| N. Quaker Puffed Wheat & Rice | G. <i>The Shadow</i> |
| C. Wheaties | H. <i>Archie Andrews</i> |
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| F. Rio Grande Oil Co. | J. <i>Gene Autry's Melody Ranch</i> |
| I. Skelley Oil | K. <i>The Jack Benny Program</i> |
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| F. Camel Cigarettes | M. <i>Our Miss Brooks</i> |
| K. JELLO | N. <i>The Challenge of the Yukon</i> |
| J. Wrigley's Gum | O. <i>The Burns and Allen Show</i> |
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