



RETURN WITH US NOW...



RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO

Volume 33, Number 8

August, 2008

Those Quiz Kids - Old radio and TV show was a smash hit!

(from RWUN 3/91, reprint from Milwaukee Journal 1/11/91)

Well, it looks like we're going to have to give our Publisher, Carol Tiffany, one more month to get her green eyeshade and sleeve bands back on - as it were. So in the mean time we hope you're enjoying revisiting some of the reprints from our past newsletters.

What Would I be carrying home if I brought ... an apteryx?" the announcer asked. Child prodigy Geraix! Darrow faltered for a few seconds, fidgeted nervously, then tossed back a response.

When 7-year-old Gerard (not directly related to famed lawyer Clarence Darrow) hit the answer squarely on the mark before radio audiences on June 28, 1940, "Quiz Kids" became a swift success.

Each week a substantial part of America listened to the radio show, featuring the voices of boys and girls who sounded exactly like the kids next door — but oh, were they smart! Throw anything at them and hear them bat it out of the ballpark, whether it was chemistry,

sociology, agriculture, philosophy, literature, mineralogy or sports.

An apteryx? "That's a small bird with hardly any wings at all," proclaimed a confident Gerard Darrow, fully recovered from his momentary lapse. "And it has no tail, and it lives in New Zealand."

The quiz program, which made the transition to television while continuing on radio, came along when children's intellectual powers were generally underrated. Its widespread popularity half a century ago contributed to the feeling that gifted children were a sign of a successful democracy.

2600 Fan Letters

The first week, the show got 2,600 fan letter and raves in Variety and Billboard. Life magazine reported, "On the air barely a month, the five bright youngsters ... have amazed their elders with their popularity, quickness on the uptake, their encyclopedic knowledge." (Pg. 3 ->)



RUTH RICHARD JOE KELLY PAT HARVE JOEL
Quiz Kids SPONSORED BY ONE-A-DAY (BRAND) VITAMINS AND
ALKA-SELTZER ... BLUE NETWORK-SUNDAY EVENINGS

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

Old-Time Radio is Alive and Well in Colorado!

KEZW 1430 AM	"When Radio Was", with Chuck Schaden	Weekdays, 7:00 - 8:00 PM
Pirate Radio 104.7 FM and www.pirate1047.com	"Radio Memories" (Greeley)	Sunday, 6:30 - 12:00 PM
KNUS 710 AM	"Radio Revisited"	Weekdays, 10:00 - 11:00 PM
KRMA TV Channel 6	Secondary Audio Program (SAP), "Tribute to OTR"	Sunday, 2:00 PM

Hear RHAC on the web, 4th Saturday of every month, at 9:30pm Mountain time at;
<http://www.yesterdayusa.com/saturdaylive.htm>

**RHAC Web Site - <http://www.rhac.org> RHAC Email - rhac_otr@yahoo.com
RHAC POD-Cast of Internet Shows - www.rhac.libsyn.com - any day, any time!**

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2008 Convention Schedules

33rd Friends of Old-time Radio Convention, Oct 23 – 26, 2008 Holiday Inn, Newark, NJ; For info: Jay Hickerson, 27436 Desert Rose Ct, Leesburg, FL 34748 (352) 727-6731, JayHick@aol.com, web site: <http://www.fotr.net>

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August, 2008



"Quiz Kids," which was broadcast by NBC, attracted a faithful following of 10 million to 20 million listeners. Some 20,000 letters came in each week, along with 50 applications for a spot on the program. Recommendations for contestants arrived from teachers, friends and parents. Some kids recommended themselves.

Ruth Duskin Feldman, who as Ruthie Duskin, a fixture on the show, recalls in her book, "Whatever Happened to the Quiz Kids?" that it was her mother who wrote in on her behalf; "We have a daughter who will be 7 in June. She has been reading and writing since 4 years of age and already has about 40 poems to her credit. - . "

Back came a questionnaire for Ruthie herself to complete; she also had to provide a 250-word essay on why she should be a Quiz Kid. "I love to play guessing games, do riddles and answer questions," she wrote. "I have an excellent memory, a very good vocabulary, and I am at ease in front of strangers. I love knowledge and when I begin working at something, I will not stop until I have finished."

The final test was an audition. More than brains and book leaning was needed. As Feldman puts it: "Poise, quickness, originality, humor, modesty and mike sense were more important than profundity... Showmanship was crucial."

1 in 20 Made Show

The show emanated from Chicago, and hundreds of schoolchildren from the area showed up for auditions. One in 20 made it, and most of these lasted only one or two programs. Some children appeared on hundreds of programs, and left only when they reached the cutoff age of 16. Tidy sums (a \$100 US Savings Bond for each appearance) were set aside for the Kids' education.

EDGAR BERGEN TELLS The True Story of Charlie McCarthy Where, and how, was Charlie McCarthy Born? In whose image was he created? (from RWUN 5/91, reprint True Story Magazine 10/38)



Mack looked at Edgar's sketches, counted for a few minutes on his fingers, and said he'd charge Edgar thirty-five dollars.

Edgar Bergen didn't have thirty-five dollars. He had seventeen dollars-four dollars of which he had earned the Saturday night before, giving a very bad exhibition of ventriloquism at the Elks' Club on Ladies' Night, and thirteen dollars which he had saved from his allowance over a six months' period of painful prudence. Edgar's allowance was two dollars a week.

Edgar counted on his fingers. If he gave up movies, and his daily soda at the drug store, he could pay Mack a dollar and a half a week. Twelve weeks of paying off; but maybe he could do it sooner if he could land another club date. Edgar swallowed hard and turned back to Mack.

"Go ahead", said Edgar.

That was the beginning of Charlie McCarthy.

Mack was a wood carver, who had a little shop in the north end of Chicago. Most of his work was prosaic cabinet making, but he had a way with a piece of wood and a knife, and Edgar had stopped by his place many times on his way home from school to watch Mack work before he ever thought of Charlie.

Edgar had been experimenting with ventriloquism for three years. That he possessed the ventriloquist's peculiar voice construction burst upon him when he was thirteen. He rose in history class one afternoon to tackle a particularly embarrassing question about the War of the Roses, cleared his throat to get his bearings, and when he started to talk his voice bounded shrilly from another corner of the room. Edgar sat down and thought it over.

That night at dinner Edgar Bergen frightened his mother nearly out of her wits by tossing ejaculations at her from the center of a fresh cherry pie. And the next day he spent twenty-five cents on a beautifully illustrated booklet called "The Art of Ventriloquism " "The Art" was the only instruction he ever had in "the art "

Edgar made his first dummy. He was a little colored boy named Rastus, whose personality was never enough to cope with his paper-mache rustle. Despite this handicap, Rastus delighted Edgar's pals in Lakeview High School. And his mother's friends used to feign admiration for his cleverness to the point of inviting Rastus and Bergen to perform at Saturday night church suppers.

It was those first public appearances that fostered the urge for Charlie McCarthy. Bergen wasn't much of an actor, and Rastus' Dixie dialect had more than a tinge of the Swedish accent. Bergen began casting about for a model for a new dummy, determined that this time it should be the real thing. He'd be professional if it cost him his allowance for a year.

The face which puts the lie to Charlie McCarthy's top had and tails grinned at Edgar Bergen originally from a little newsboy who used to peddle papers at a street corner near Edgar's house. His name was Charlie - Edgar never learned the rest of it-and the map of Ireland was on his face. He never stopped grinning. If he lost a tooth you were conscious of a definite change in the landscape at his particular corner. He was forever involved in fantastic financial calculations. "Gee," he would complain after a thorough check of five different pockets, "I'm three cents short." His namesake had the same trouble.

Edgar sat on the curbing one afternoon and made sketches of Charlie at his work. Tough sales were his meat.

"'Smatter, mister? D' your old woman catch you out late last night?" He sized up a prospect with uncanny shrewdness. The sight of a bowler on an approaching customer prompted "Stock market goes up to-da-y-ee", while a loud-checked coat evoked "Black Fox wins at Latonia!" When the sale was completed, he would turn to Edgar and wink.

Edgar often wonder what ever happened to that game little guy. Edgar was sure he was very poor. He never spent the pennies he collected from his sales, but tied the day's earning in a dirty handkerchief, and started off home with them. Edgar supposed he's still in Chicago, grown up and married, perhaps-and grinding away at some uninspiring job. "But I'll bet he still knows all the answers". Edgar said.

Edgar Bergen's sketches of Charlie didn't do him justice-despite the fact that Edgar's father, a draftsman himself, had considered Edgar a bit of an artist. But with the Irish in Edgar's impressions of Charlie, the newsboy, and the Irish in Mack's heart, Charlie McCarthy couldn't fail. He emerged with an impudent Irish profile, and the Irish spunk.

LUX Radio Theater

(from RWUN 11/91, reprint from Radio Mirror 6/39)



LRT Director Cecil B. DeMille with returning stars, Claudette Colbert and Fred McMurray

Lux Radio Theater, CBS, 9-10 PM (EDT), Monday nights has repeatedly been voted America's favorite dramatic air show.

The Lux Radio Theater has been a weekly program, except for short vacations, ever since Oct. 1, 1934, when it made its debut from New York. One year and three months later, Jan. 1, 1936, it moved to Hollywood, and has come from there, under the direction of Cecil B. DeMille, ever since.

Practically every great personality of Hollywood has at one time or another broadcast for Lux from the stage of Columbia's Music Box Theater, on Hollywood Boulevard two blocks north of Columbia Square. It's a handsome theater of Spanish design, seating a thousand people.

Producing Lux Radio Theater is the biggest undertaking in the radio business, and more persons contribute to the program than to any other on the air, because it is built partly in New York and partly in Hollywood. Ideas and plans cross the country by telephone and telegraph every day in the week.

First, the play is selected, and producing rights are purchased -- a job that sometimes involves long legal and business negotiations. Then writers George Wells and Sanford Barnett adapt the play to radio. This is no cinch either, because a play that runs two hours and forty minutes on the stage has to be reduced to forty-three minutes on the air. The script is then read by DeMille, Frank Woodruff, and Danny Danker. Woodruff is DeMille's assistant director, and Danker represents the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency. Danny Danker is a Hollywood institution, who knows the entire film colony so well he carries the unofficial title of "Mayor of Hollywood." He's the man who signs up the important stars. Probably no one else could wheedle, coax and bully so many famous people into signing on the dotted line. For a Lux guest-shot is fun, but it is also work -- Lux contracts call for a minimum of 25 hours of rehearsal, in order to insure those fine broadcasts.

There are usually about fifty people on the stage at a Lux broadcast; the stars, DeMille, the supporting cast, Lou Silvers' orchestra of 25 men, sound-effects men and technicians. Occasionally, as many as 73 persons are in the actual cast. Supporting players on Lux plays are veteran actors of stage, screen and radio, all of them competent themselves to play the leading roles in case of emergency. Some of them are: Lurene Tuttle, Lou Merrill, Edward Marr, Frank Nelson, James Eagles, Sara Selby, Florence Lake and Margaret Brayton.

Besides the play itself, the Lux Theater each week presents guests of honor in interviews with Cecil B. DeMille. These interviews are written by Sandy Barnett.

The Lux Radio Theater is an international institution now. On March 16 DeMille formally opened the Lux Radio Theater of Australia by broadcasting greetings from Hollywood to Sydney, 8080 miles away



New in the Tape and CD Libraries

by Maletha King

This month we will enjoy the antics of Riley in "The Life of Riley" for 31 CD's that will remind us of simpler times and situations on the lighter side of life.

We are also offering 17 CD's of adventure in the show "Dangerous Assignment". This will give a good mix for most everyone's interests keep all of you busy for many hours of easy listening.

As most of you know, it has been very hot outside and listening to OTR shows while staying in the house on these hot days has certainly made time fly. It is a great way to spend a pleasant afternoon instead of melting in the heat outside.

Did You Know Department What when on during the 20 years of Lux Radio Theater?

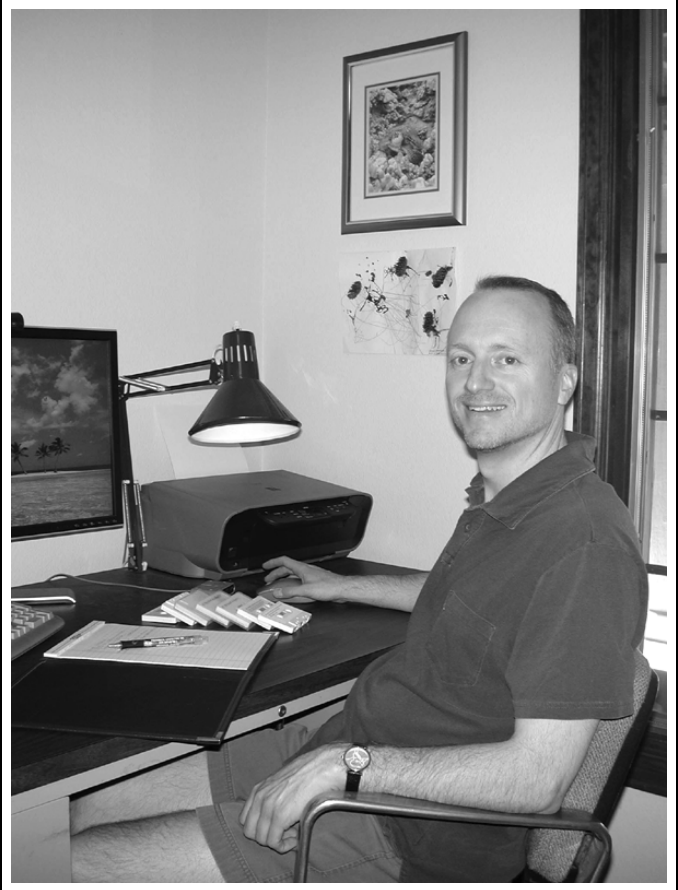
893 shows were presented with 733 of them radio adaptations of films. This constituted 606,667 man hours of writing and rehearsing. Approximately 496 motion picture stars have appeared on the program, many of them re-creating their original screen roles. In fact, those who have appeared over 20 times on "Lux Radio Theater" include Fred MacMurray (26); Loretta Young (26); Claudette Colbert (24); Barbara Stanwyck (23); Cary Grant (22); Don Ameche (21); Brian Aherne, George Brent and Ray Milland all 20 times. Approximately 40 stars have appeared more than ten times.

During the past twenty years 10,400,00 words have been written on 52,000 pages of scripts. 18,667 music cues have been given and 22,667 sound cues.

(reprint from TV-Radio Life, 9/10/54)

Meet the Librarian This Month David Gatch

By Larry Weide, Pres. RHAC



When I interviewed David and asked him what he thought would be something significant that he could tell our readers about his service to RHAC, I was amazed at what he told me; He was the youngest member at the time, a mere 14 or 15, and has been a member for nearly 30 years!

Well, I can tell you that our club relies heavily on David's expertise. He manages two cassette libraries that contain 1000 boxes of tapes and over 8,000 shows. He's the busiest librarian of them all.

This Minneapolis native's interest in OTR started when his family moved to Denver and he heard John Dunning's show. Already involved in theater and competitive speech, OTR just seemed to be a natural extension of his artistic interests.

Today David is a financial consultant, lives near Estes Park and, thank goodness for us, still finds the time to serve RHAC - Thanks David!

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