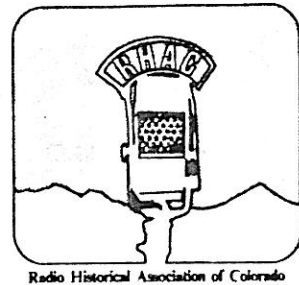


# Return with us now...

The Radio Historical Association of Colorado

September 1977  
Vol. 3, Number 3



Radio Historical Association of Colorado

## The Andrews Sisters



## RADIO NEWS

The Andrews Sisters-- Patti, Maxine and LaVerne-- got their start in Minneapolis' Orpheum Theatre, playing amateur "kiddie revues." Patti was only 10. After many road tours-- seven years of them-- with Ted Mack and others, they got their big break in 1937. Broke and ready to return home, they were playing on a local New York radio station for \$15 a week. That's when Dave Kapp heard them, listening to their music in a taxi. He looked them up and signed them up and they recorded their first big record, "Bei Mir Bist du Schon," for which they were paid the amazing sum of \$50. The hit was the B side of the record.

With the advent of WW II, the Andrews Sisters began to hit the big time, with USO tours, guest spots, their own network radio show and movies. Toward the end of their career, they even appeared on TV. Their last big hit was "There Will Never Be Another You," released in 1950.

The late sixties saw them make a come-back to the New stage in a musical, "Follow The Boys," but this was short-lived. LaVerne died of cancer in 1967. Maxine turned to helping drug addicts and delinquents through her own foundation, and Patti became "available" as a singer and comedienne.

Although radio censors would not allow playing of two of their songs, "Strip Polka" and "Rum & Coca Cola," the records still hit the top of the charts. For a while, the Pointer Sisters capitalized on the Andrew Sisters' style, and that brought them too to the top-- for a while.

Pictured are Maxine (bottom), Patti and LaVerne. John Adams had the picture sent to him while on duty in the Pacific in 1943. It took only six weeks to arrive.  
-by John Adams

## MEETING

Our next meeting is Thursday, September 22 at Majestic Savings, 2807 S. Colorado Boulevard, from 7:30 pm to 10.

## OTR DENVER

If you missed our last meeting, you missed an hour-and-a-half-long discussion of our finances. To continue not only to survive but to grow and prosper, our dues regrettably have been increased to \$8 per year. (Those are due, by the way, Oct. 1.)

We're confident that actions taken at the meeting will solve our money problems, and that we won't have to discuss the subject again for some time.

# KF/ML

Here's John Dunning's schedule for September 1977:

9/4 CANDID MICROPHONE  
8/31/47

SUSPENSE  
"Three O'Clock" with Van Heflin  
3/10/49

DRAGNET  
"Rich Man for Ransom"  
7/26/51

9/11 SCATTERGOOD BAINES  
9/21/39

SUPERMAN  
Bigotry Broadcast  
mid 40's

SIX SHOOTER  
"The Silver Belt Buckle" with J.  
Stewart  
1951-1952?

DRAGNET  
"The Rose Baker Story"  
3/27/52

9/18 LUX RADIO THEATRE  
"All About Eve" with Bette Davis  
and Ann Baxter  
10/1/51

DRAGNET  
"10-Year-Old Boy Disappears"  
6/7/51

JULIUS LA ROSA GETS FIRED ON AIR  
(probably will be time to play)

9/25 THE COLUMBIA WORKSHOP  
"Slim"  
3/2/46

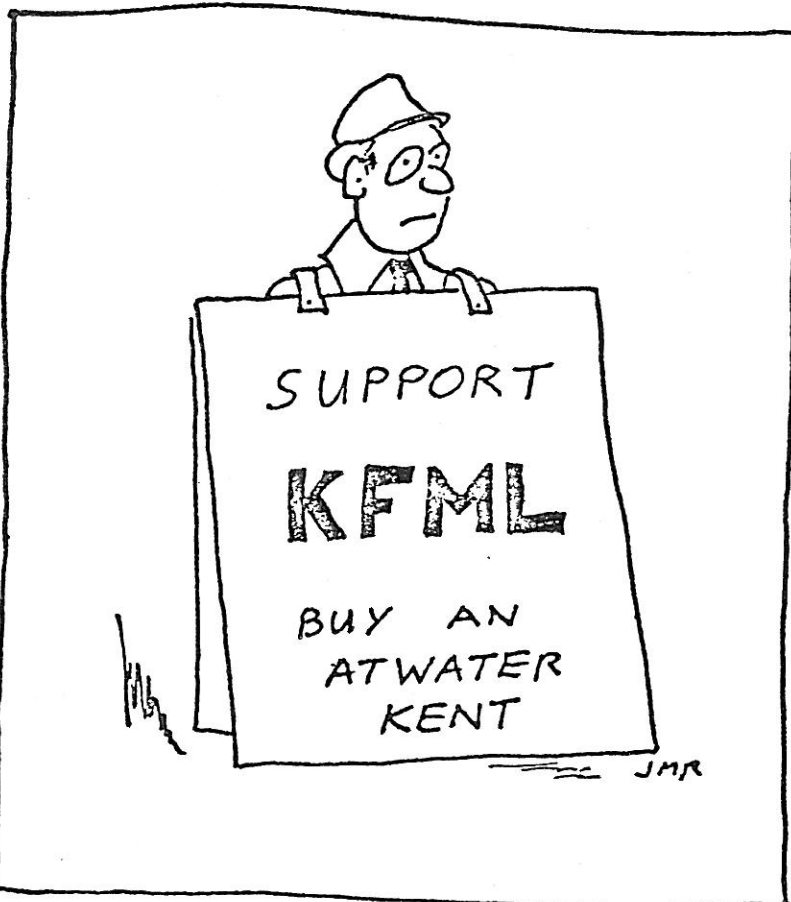
WE TAKE YOU BACK  
with Bob Trout, Ed Murrow and others  
3/13/58 (25th Anniv. of CBS News)

KRAFT MUSIC HALL  
with Al Jolson and Jimmy Durante  
4/1/48 (first of four)

Again, your Editor appeals to you for your contributions to RETURN WITH US NOW... so that we can avoid having another sparse issue such as this one. Do a little research and then write an article on your favorite show or star. Do a book review. Send in clippings. (We assume that all members see the Post and News, so find your clippings elsewhere.) Suggest ideas for stories. We have a budget of enough to fill five pages. Let's do it!

Our attachment this month is from the May 1931 issue of "Radio News." The conclusion of the article will appear next month. Again, thanks to Jack Richards for letting us use his old radio magazines.

**Return With Us Now...** is published monthly by the Radio Historical Association of Colorado. Subscriptions are \$8 per year and include membership in the Association. Address all manuscripts, inquiries and donations to: Dan Danbom, Editor, 2339 S. Ogden St., Denver, CO 80210

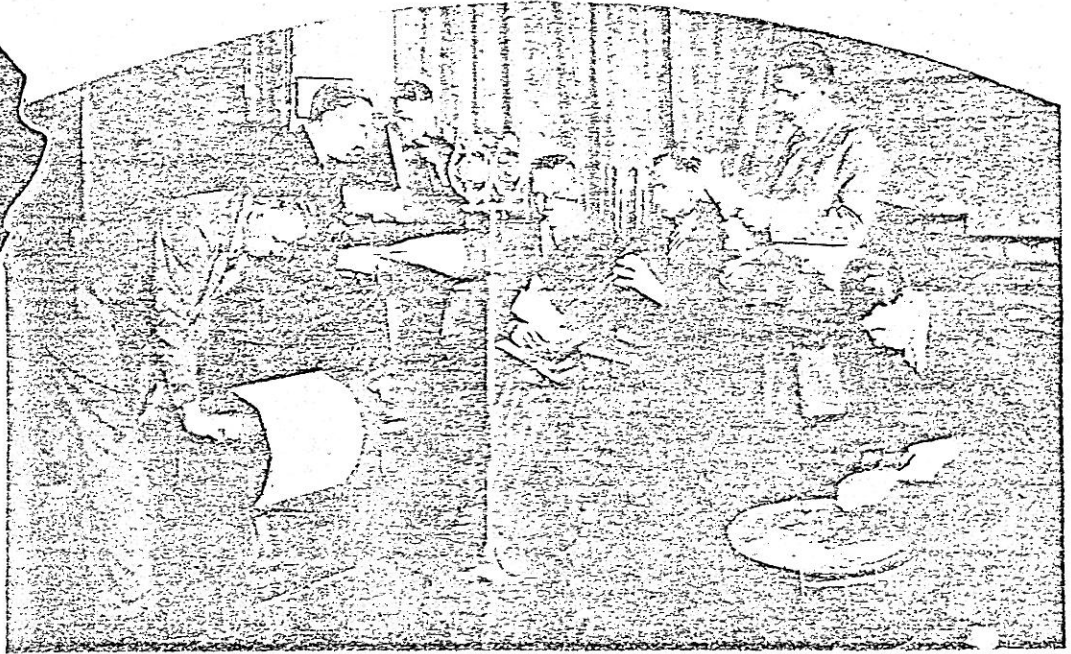


# Producing a

*The producers, as well as the writers of radio dramas, technique is still in the process of development and limit. The successful direction of a radio play demands script, microphone technique, sound effects, monitoring, dramatic production in the theatre of the air and undoubtedly develop a greater radio drama of*



William S. Rainey, who heads the production department at the National Broadcasting Company. At the right is a scene from a play "S O S" being enacted by company engineers who staged the production. As is quite evident, numerous sound effects were employed



**T**HE radio drama is still an experiment. As a separate and distinct art form, the drama written only for the medium of broadcasting has scarcely been born.

When one makes a brief and necessarily hasty survey of the history of broadcasting these statements appear somewhat less astonishing. In the first place, radio is a mere infant of ten, but it has a world-wide voice and a coast-to-coast physique. The rapid growth of radio engineering, crowded as it has been with achievement after achievement, has almost precluded any attempt to maintain the art of producing in the theatre of the air at a similar pace. And though radio is ten years old this year, the first plays were not put on the air until 1926! Worse than that—radio programs had no prepared continuity until 1926!

Radio was very much a novelty in the early days. It would be difficult to say whether some of the programs were more of a novelty to the listener or to the announcer and artists in the studio. The few announcers, whose initials have gone down in broadcast history, were artists in the art of ad lib. They "doubled"—sometimes literally in brass—but more often as readers of "Gunga Dhin" or singers of such familiar ditties as "The Road to Mandalay." WEAf had one or two small studios in those days and that guiding genius, the announcer, would often congregate there with his little flock of artists, with not much more than a good idea of what they would do during the broadcast. Sometimes they did what they thought they were going to do—and sometimes they didn't. At any rate, they made as merry as possible until the clock gave silent permission for them to "cease firing."

One of the first writers for the new medium of broadcasting was Katherine Seymour, who is today assistant head of NBC's continuity department. Miss Seymour gives us a fascinating story of those hectic days which later evolved the "continuity script," the radio play and the production technique of the present. "Back in the Dark Ages of radio—in 1925—none of

us was sure just where radio was headed, but we were sure it was going somewhere pretty fast. When our programs ran short or when broadcasters did not arrive at the studio, our cry of 'Help!' was usually answered by the switchboard operator who deserted her post for the piano—and jazz. Quite often I would have to read speeches or special announcements. It was not until late in 1925 that WEAf took the step that served as the basis of our present-day broadcasting.

"The post of special sales representative was created for Roosevelt Clark, who believed that advertisers could be sold prepared programs based on a central theme or program idea. I assisted Mr. Clark and we soon found that the task of supplying clients with scripts was going to develop into a much greater one than we imagined. The Clicquot and Ipana hours were among the first to be written. Writing for radio was evidently destined to be a big job. The idea of calling Mr. Clark a continuity writer was obtained from the movies.

"It was not until the middle of 1926," continued Miss Seymour, "that we thought of producing a radio drama. Among the earliest dramatized programs was Henry Carlton's feature, *Great Moments in History*, based on various episodes in American history. Then came William Manley's *Bible Stories*. Both of these followed the same general pattern—about half of the script was actually dramatization and the other half was given over to expository material delivered by a narrator. In the first series, the narrator was made the father of two inquisitive children.

"There were no production men in those days," Miss Seymour remarked, with a slight smile. "In the case of my own dramatization of *Scheherazade*, which ran eight or nine weeks, we had no production man and consequently had quite a time trying to get a proper balance between the music and the singers. The orchestra, deciding that they had been hired to play, were equally sure that they ought to be heard. So they played that way. There was one microphone. The orchestral accom-

# Radio Drama

are dealing with a new and unique medium whose whose artistic possibilities are apparently without more than adequate rehearsals, interpretation of the In this article are outlined some of the problems of the encouraging spirit of experimentation that will tomorrow on the basis of today's knowledge

By Albert Pfaltz

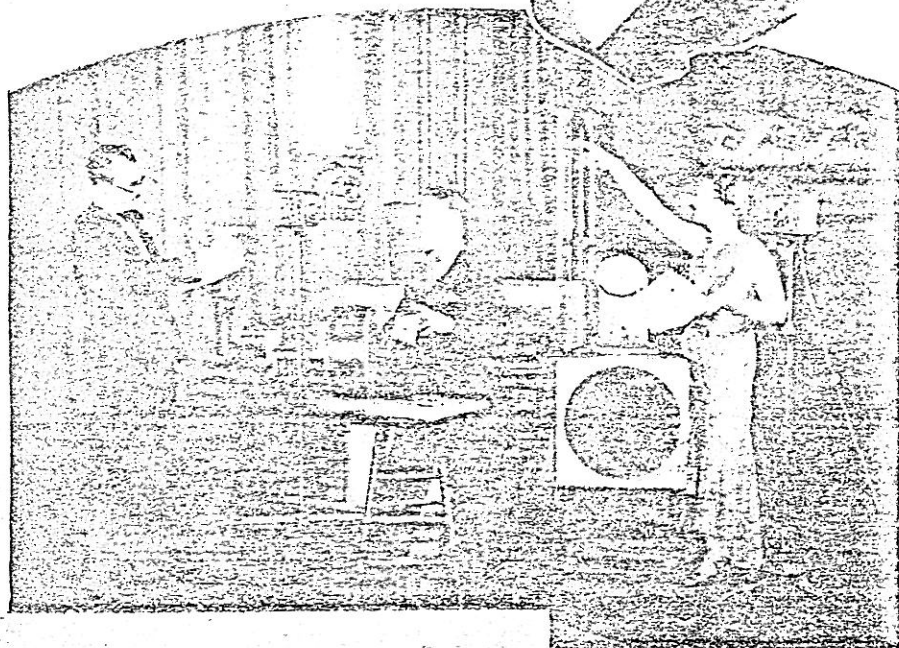
paniment was not faded down. Occasionally the single control-room man would dash into the studio to make some minor change, but we had neither the understanding of the necessity for maintaining a properly balanced effect on the air nor the technical facilities for doing so."

Speaking of the same program, William S. Rainey, production manager of the National Broadcasting Company, said, "The script was excellent, but the production of it was not. They hadn't learned, in those days, how to balance speaking voices against an orchestra, with the result that the music and actors indulged in a sort of cat-and-dog fight." Mr. Rainey went on to tell of some of the early radio dramatizations—the *Retold Tales*, in which Carlton and Manley dramatized O. Henry, de Maupassant, Hawthorne and others, adaptations of Shakespeare and an occasional one-act play. These few attempts made up the dramatic record of the primitive days.

"Sound effects were sparingly used—and rightly so—because most of them came through the loud speaker as unidentified noises," Mr. Rainey continued.

"Then came the *Melodrama Hour* in which the famous old thrillers were revived. At first these were 'spoofer' and deliberately overplayed for laughs, but the audience resented this, especially in

Vernon Radcliffe, who produces the "Radio Guild," "Real Folks" and "Harbor Lights" hours. His views on the radio drama are presented in this article



Shown above is Raymond Knight directing a scene in the "Empire Builders"—one of the regular dramatic weekly programs. The others are Harry Edeson and Virginia Gardiner



The Radio Guild has presented in the past year more than a hundred of the world's great plays. Adapted for broadcasting and directed by Vernon Radcliffe, they are heard each Friday at four o'clock on the Blue network. At the left is a scene from one of the Guild's plays. Included in the cast are (left to right) Charles Warburton, Sheila Hayes, Jeanne Owens, Florence Malone, Charles Webster, Leo Stark, Harry Neville and Vernon Radcliffe, who is timing the action of the play



Above is a scene from the "Rise of the Goldbergs." Left to right are Roslyn Silber, James Waters, Gertrude Berg and Alfred Corn

At the right is C. L. Menser, one of the outstanding radio producers. He directs the "RCA-Victor" hour and "Campus" and is also narrator on the former



the metropolitan areas, so that they were played straight, after that, to relatively small but enthusiastic audiences. I say a relatively small audience because the drama audience three or four years ago was just that. It has taken a long and intensive training in listening to build up the wide and greatly interested audience of today. Amos 'n' Andy taught people the art of listening to talking programs."

Radio today has three general types of broadcast plays—adapted stage plays, adaptations of novels, and plays written for broadcasting.

During the past year some of the more important offerings of the first group known as the Radio Guild, were *Journey's End*, on Armistice Day, with the cast from the Henry Miller Theatre; *Iphigenia in Aulis*, with Margaret Anglin; *Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, with Mrs. Pat Campbell; *Milestones*, with Tom Powers; *Doll's House*, with Eva Le Gallienne and Dudley Digges; *Servant in the House*, with Charles Rann Kennedy; *Jane Clegg*, with Margaret Wycherley, Ernest Cossart and Henry Travers.

Included in the second group, the *Penrod* series and the dramatizations of Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* are outstanding.

The third, and of course the most significant group, includes plays written for broadcasting—some of the most successful of these, all belonging to the episodic-series pattern so dear to the radio auditor: *Mystery House*, by Finis Farr; *Silver Flute*, by Gregory Williamson; *Soconylund Sketches*, by Carlton and Marley; *Big Guns*, by Lawrence Holcomb; *Jolly Roger*, by George P. Ludlam; *Wayside Inn*, by Burke Boyce, and one of the most successful of all, *Moonshine and Honey-suckle*, by Lulu Vollmer.

And another interesting experiment that should be noted—the six-day murder trial—*The Trial of Vicienne Ware*—aroused unusual interest.

Who are the men directing these plays and how do they work? Today the National Broadcasting Company has a producing staff of some eighteen or twenty men. Their names and the hours they direct are listed elsewhere in this article.

The radio production man is, of course, somewhat analogous to the director of the legitimate theatre. In the theatre of the air, however, the producer solves the problem of casting a show in an entirely different way. He must be "ear-minded." Radio types are determined solely by their voices, so it makes not the slightest difference what the actor or actress looks like.

Some women in their thirties have the voice of an eighteen-year-old girl; some youngster may sound like an advertising account executive or a racketeer. In either case, the voice must determine the choice for the rôle.

While each of the production men at NBC has his own ideas, production methods follow certain general rules. When a script has been received the producer's first problem is casting. Although auditions sometimes number well over a hundred a week, they are seldom productive of any real talent. The result is that production men have a group of well-established, trained and competent actors and actresses to call upon whose voice types are definitely marked and who are accustomed to broadcasting in several shows each week.

When the cast has been assembled the first rehearsal usually takes the form of a "play-reading" session. The producer gives his interpretation of the script and indicates how each of the scenes is to be handled. The actors then read through the show.

The dress rehearsal for each play is held immediately preceding the broadcast and in the same studio to be used when it goes on the air. Sound effects are "cued" into the script at this rehearsal for the first and only time. The producer also times the show, making whatever cuts may be necessary or arranging for longer musical interludes if they are indicated. (Cont'd on page 1018)

While the law-breakers were trying to escape across the ice during a thunderstorm these boys in the studio of a Canadian broadcasting station gave listeners a first ear-account of how the Northwest Mounted sound when getting their man



