The Radio Historical Association of Colorado, Inc.

Volume 17 Number 9

April 1992



"One Man's Family." Minetta Ellen (extreme left) played Fanny and J. Anthony Smythe (extreme right) played Father Barbour through the 27-year run of this classic.

RETURN WITH US NOW... is the official publication of the Radio Historical Association of Colorado, Inc., a non-profit organization. Cost of membership is \$20.00 for the first year with \$15.00 for annual renewal. Each member has full use of the Club resources. For further information contact anyone listed below.

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THERE WILL BE A BOARD MEETING IN APRIL!

ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME AND INVITED TO ATTEND AND PARTICIPATE AT THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING. The April 2nd meeting is at home of Glenn Ritter at 7:30 P.M.

THE APRIL 1992 MEETING WILL BE APRIL 16TH AT THE CHURCH OF THE MASTER, LOCATED AT 17TH AVENUE AND FILBERT COURT.

Merwin Smith, KLZ Radio & TV personality and veteran, has put together a special presentation of radio and TV goofs and assorted humorous outtakes carefully collected from many years of Denver broadcasting.



CORRECTION: Last month we incorrectly reported that "Your Hit Parade" could be heard Sunday morning at 8 AM. What CAN be heard Sunday, 8 AM, KEZW, is "The Makebelieve Ballroom" followed by two hours of "Big Band Jump." Try it!

N-OW H-E-A-R T-H-I-S!! Earn FIVE FREE tape rentals for EACH NEW MEMBER signed up, paid and forwarded to R.H.A.C. during APRIL 1992. See the added application page at back of newsletter. Your mailing label on the reverse of the application will identify you to earn your credit. If one application form is not enough, then photocopy the one in the newsletter, write your name on the back of the form and you'll receive added credit. REMEMBER, this is ONLY NEW members, signed and paid during April 1992.

FROM THE KING'S ROOST

By Dick and Maletha King



SHIPMENTS FROM THE REEL-TO-REEL LIBRARY WILL BE HELD FOR ALMOST SIX WEEKS WHILE THE KING'S DO ANOTHER BIT OF TOURING, INCLUDING CINCINNATI'S CONVENTION. WE WILL BE GONE APRIL 20TH UNTIL ?? LATE MAY.

One of our members asked about the reels listed in our catalog that do not have a "C" behind the number. He wanted to order some of these, but does not have a Reel-To-Reel and was under the understanding that they were not available on cassette. Rest assured that ALL reels offered by RHAC are

available on cassette. We dropped the "C" designation after Elmer Westbrook completed the cassettes of all of the original reels.

We have received several notes from members that agree with our thoughts about the benefits of the Reel-to-Reel format, but we do realize that many of our members do not have time to search out the stores that offer Reel-to-Reel machines, and some don't want to go to the expense of having their machines repaired and have switched to cassettes. That is only a few of the reasons that we offer the same materials in both forms.

We received a nice note from Ted Davenport of Little Rock, ARK. expressing his preference for the Reel-to-Reel format and assuring us that it is still the form to get the best sound and the most practical for storage of shows. Our personal collection is on Reel-to-Reel. Need I say more?

We are delighted to welcome new members and were pleased to learn that the Metro Washington OTR Club ran a copy of our membership application in their newsletter, "RADIO RECALL." We will let you know more about the Metro Washington club in the future.

We send out information packets each week and sent one to London England last week. We have a volunteer that will help dub, if he joins.

We were recently called upon to bring a little bit of pleasure to the people at an Adult Day Care center. Many were not able to pay enough attention to realize what we were playing, but most of the people had smiles and thanked us for bringing back memories. What do we have if we don't have memories?

If any of you have occasion to do something similar, we suggest that you keep it to about 1/2 hour, and have quite a few cuts from comedy programs. One gentleman who did not seem to pay attention, perked up and asked "What team" when Gene Autry's baseball team was mentioned and he asked which baseball team Autry owned. Several ladies enjoyed the soap cuts, and smiles were bright. Makes it all worthwhile.

OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

Neighboring

Southwest lowa is softly contoured; when you drive the roads between the east and west streams of the Nishnabotna River, past rows of corn and along pastures and vales where cattle graze, the undulation of the highway begins to feel like a gentle geological rocking chair. On a spring evening after a good rain, you can stand in a field on a hill and gaze across acres of soft earth and hear nothing but distant squeals and moos and inhale the loamy fragrance of the black dirt called loess topsoil. The land's richness inspired settlers not only to farm but also start nursery businesses and provide growing plants and trees to farmers and householders. KMA, which called itself "The Cornbelt Station in the Heart of the Nation," began broadcasting in 1925, and by that time Shenandoah (it was named in 1870 by Civil War veterans who thought it resembled the lush terrain of the Shenandoah Valley, in Virginia) was well on its way to becoming the seed-and-nursery capital of the world.

Earl May, the owner of Shenandoah's Earl May Seed & Nursery Company, believed that a radio station would be a good way to encourage people to buy his products, for it could intersperse news, music, and religious sevices with instructive talks about agriculture and horticulture. He had seen business double for one of his competitors in Shenandoah, the Henry Field Seed Company, in the year since February 22, 1924, when Field's five-hundred-watt KFNF, "The Friendly Farmer Station," began broadcasting songs by the Seedhouse Girls and the Cornfield Canaries and also discussions of subjects like "Flowers and Their Influence on the Home." On several occasions in 1924, May had taken busloads of his employees to Omaha's station WOAW (a fifty-mile trip on roads where the mud was sometimes axle-deep) to do live radio shows: they sang "Rose in the Bud," discussed chicken production and gardening, and convened the first radio camp meeting of the fraternal order of Woodmen of the World. At the time, federal regulations prohibited advertising on the air, but May offered free iris roots to the first ten thousand listeners who sent him a card for his mailing list, and also offered a fifteen-dollar prize to the listener who sent him a telegram from the farthest away. (The winner had heard the broadcast in Blythe, California.)

Radio was still so new and receivers were so scarce that May helped equip several buildings in Shanandoah with receiving sets and folding chairs, so townspeople could hear the broadcasts that originated in Omaha, and then he set up a remote studio in the May flower-and-garden-seed room, in Shenandoah, and connected it to WOAW by a transmitting wire. Shenandoans eager to hear the programs crowded into the May company seed house, and also into the Benedict Piano Studio, the Delmonico Hotel, and the Woodmen of the World hall, and were provided with free crackers, cheese, candy, and apples by Earl May as they listened to broadcasts by the Mandolin Musicians, the How-Do-You-Do Boys (also known as the Apple-Sauce Twins), J.V.Barborka ("The Bohemian Harpist," who performed "Glow Worm"), and a rousing version of the alfalfa song of Pennington County, Minnesota.

"Radio is the greatest factor in modern life today," Earl May told listeners on one of his last WOAW broadcasts, and on September 1, 1925, his own station, KMA, officially went on the air, using its call letters as an acronym for the slogan "Keeps Millions Advised." Like KFNF, it was only a five-hundred-watt station (WOAW was bigger: a thousand watts), but on a clear night in the mid-twenties, unimpeded by static from big-city electrical fields and under a sky still fairly uncluttered by other transmissions, KMA and KFNF signals -- sometimes boosted far beyond the five-hundred-watt limit -- bounced around the globe. In 1985, Evelyn Birkby's son Bob wrote a history called "KMA Radio: The First Sixty Years," in which he noted that Henry Field had said of KFNF, "We would pour on the kilowatts and really tear a hole across the Midwest." Earl May was thrilled to receive a letter from a Hawaiian listener, who had enjoyed hearing the Delmonico Dreamers (a group of local farmer and businessmen) sing "Aloha, Oe"; and a radio operator in Balclotha, New Zealand, reported listening with pleasure to Mary Chase, a secretary from one of Shenandoah's nurseries, operate her typewriter for three minutes. (The listener who guessed how many words she typed won a prize.) Henry Ford wrote from Detroit to tell May that he thought the flower-and-garden talks were "wonderfully instructive." Passengers on a radio-equipped Canadian National Railways transcontinental express heard Earl May's lecture on "The Liming of Your Yard."

During KMA's first year on the air, the Earl May Seed & Nursery Company added a million names to its mailing list. Radio in its early years was especially appreciated by the isolated farm families of the rural Midwest, for whom solitude was a constant problem; it not only brought music and fun and information and weather reports but also provided an easy way to enjoy the pleasure of other people's company. Actually visiting another farm was a special event, with quests often putting on dress clothes and the host and hostess serving cakes and lemonade in the parlor, and bad weather or the press of chores could make such visits impossible. But with a radio women could listen to friendly voice as they went on with their housework, and men working in the barn had access to weather reports and farm programs. And not only that: to all those settlers who had come to the American Midwest from Germany, Central Europe, and Scandinavia, and who yearned to speak English well, the radio's roster of well-spoken homemakers,

lecturers, and announcers provided continuous daily examples of the fine art of conversing in the language of the New World. Whether they huddled close to a homemade crystal set on a kitchen table or sat politely around a mahogany console in the parlor, KMA's far-flung listeners began to think of the signal coming out of Shenandoah as a beacon that could guide them through their days. "The radio was the outside world to us," Nadine Elwars recalled during the conversation in the pharmacy. It was entertainment, enlightenment, and a knowledge that the horizon was not the end of things."

As KMA's audience grew and its regular on-the-air personalities became familiar voices for miles around, many regular listeners came to think of themselves as members of a big radio family. Earl May encouraged this idea, and found a way to bring this radio family together. In November of 1926, he organized the first KMA Jubilee -- an event that became an annual tradition in Shenandoah and continued until the Second World War. The Jubilees, week-long gatherings in Shenandoah of friendly stangers who shared an enjoyment of the radio, were a chance to visit on the grandest scale. They were an opportunity to eat free pancakes in a big circus tent equipped with griddles, tables, and chairs, visit the famous seed houses and admire perfect roses, squashess, and tomatoes on display there, enjoy live music outdoors and at the radio station, and see favorite radio personalities in the flesh. In 1930, over four hundred thousand pancakes were served at the Jubilee, and within a few years it was featuring carnival rides, an eighteen-hole miniature golf course, fiddle and accordian contests, and competitions in nail pounding, potato peeling, and husband calling -- a handy skill for anyone whose duties include hollering "Dinner's ready!" to somebody in a distant field.

Even before Shenandoah became known for its radio stations and its Jubilees, seed-and-nursery businesses had made an important destination for the region's farmers: they came to buy seeds, sell some of their best seedlings, and stock up on flour, coffee, and perhaps even a loaf of factory-made bread. "I thought it was the most glamorous place in the world, because there were always flowers," one woman has said of her childhood trips from Nehawka, Nebraska, to Shenandoah in the nineteen-thirties. "When the seed houses had too many plants, sometimes they just let people have them. Free Roses -roses everywhere." Sixty years ago, Shenandoah was about the same size and shape it is now -- with a population of six thousand, and the downtown ranging along a broad main street and providing the necessary apparel and appliance stores, a town cafe (then run by Earl May), a movie theatre, a drugstore with a soda fountain. Once KMA and KFNF had begun broadcasting, the town also attracted musicians. orators, and storytellers as performers on their programs. The boarding houses on Sycamore Street were occupied by hot-blooded accordionists, handsome harmonizing quartets, guitar-playing gypsies, and lovely songbirds -- a whole swarm of entertainers who made their living in the early days of broadcasting by traveling from one small station to another, staying as long as their repertoire lasted, and then moving on to another station or to a barn daance or a state fair. (Lawrence Welk began this way, in North Dakota in the ninteen-twenties, with a group called the Hotsy Totsy Boys.) Among the ones who came to KMA in its first few years were the Dixie Girls (sisters who sang and played guitar); the Southland Jubilee Singers (four black men who harmonized); the Ray-O-Vac Twins, of Wisconsin (who later became the Farm Belt Paint Boys); William Cunningham (the Farmer Scotsman, a balladeer); Joe Fox (a vaudevillian with a concertina); Maja, Son of India (conducted radio seances); the flamenco dancer Rosa Rosario (who told a Shenandoah reporter that her two ambitions in life were to appear in Movietone films and to raise chickens); and the Ruby Trio (who played banjo, trumpet and piano). In addition to such itinerants, Shenandoah's radio stations became a magnet for local talent, including professional and semi-professional musicians like Hugo Heyn (a marimba and xylophone artist from Omaha), William Powell (lowa's champion old-time fiddler), Estella Murray (trumpet solos and whistling), the Elk's Municipal Band, and the singing Pancake Sisters.

Forty thousand people visited Shenandoah in 1926; in 1927, to encourage even more to come to town, socialize with other citizens of radioland, and tour the nursery, Earl May built Mayfair. It was a radio hall -- the largest one between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains -- which featured an auditorium with a stage that could be made into a soundproof broadcasting studio by lowering a three-ton sheet of glass between performers and audience. Above the seats, a vapor machine produced indoor clouds, and miniature electric lights twinkled in a dark-blue canopy ceiling. Like many of the grandiose movie palaces built during the nineteen-twenties, Mayfair resembled a mosque, with minarets outside and its interior modelled on a Mediterranean garden, complete with decorative columns, balconies, niches, fountains, hanging vines, and twin white stuffed pigeons soaring above the proscenium arch.

Earl May knew what appealed to the farmers and other workers who listened to KMA and bought his seeds. An extraordinary showman, and a prosperous one, he strove to present himself as a friend of the average man. He was not only the owner of the radio station but also its "official announcer" and its most recognizable personality; in fact, he was chosen by the readers of *Radio Digest*, a semimonthly national publication, as the world's most popular radio announcer in 1926. He was described in early KMA publicity booklets as "the happy voice of the air," known for "the informal manner of his announcing, coupled with a

natural pleasantness of voice and accompanied by a hearty laugh." A visitor to Mayfair described him as having long been an "unseen friend" and wrote this account for the first souvenir booklet: "While I am still milling around and wondering how it is possible to attract such a large number of common and uncommon folks...I'm attracted by a familiar voice and my hand just starts itching for a handshake and a howdydo. Many times have I sat by the hour and listened to this same voice -- and that laugh, who could mistake it! Earl May himself, as I live!" Photographs of May at this time show him at a desk in front of a large microphone: he has a scrubbed round face, a bright smile, large hands, and a tight three-piece suit.

KMA built its reputation as a station that catered to the tastes of farmers, townsfolk, tradesmen, new wives in humble bungalows, and elderly shutins. Probably its most popular show in the early years was one called "The KMA Country School, District No.9," broadcast six days a week from Mayfair. The stage was decorated to resemble a one-room schoolhouse and was filled with adult KMA performers dressed as yokel schoolchildren, in outsize overalls and floppy shoes, with hay in their hair and untamed cowlicks. With Earl May playing the schoolmaster, the mischievous pupils sang, told jokes, and, in general, behaved like unruly country bumpkins. It resembled an early Midwestern version of "Hee Haw," and audiences relished the caricature of their own rural lives.CONTINUED.......

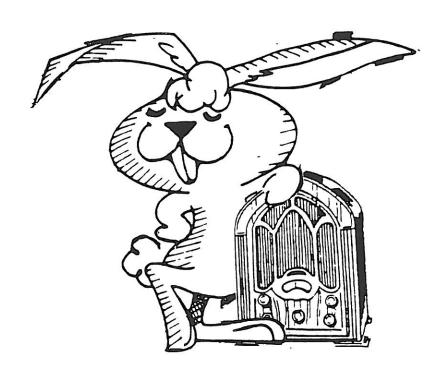
THE NEW YORKER, Jane and Michael Stem, April 15, 1991

CRANKSHAFT









AFRS MUSIC AND VARIETY PROGRAMS Tapes 5213 and 5214

Some additional AFRS programs were donated after the narrative on Page 63 was published.

The programs were donated by RHAC members Jerry Piacentine, John Adams and Glenn Ritter, plus RHAC transcription discs not credited by name on the indexes that were dubbed by John Adams.

Timings to the nearest minute are on the index sent with each tape.

TAPE 5213 HERE'S TO VETERANS (AFRS) 1200							
1L		#690 #691 #692 #693	Nat King Cole Lou Monte Bobby Hackett The Three Suns				
2L		#694 #695 #696 #697					
1R		#698 #699 #700 #701	Sam Butera and the Witnesses				
2R		#702 #708 #709 #1006	Si Zentner Orchestra Nelson Riddle Orchestra, Mavis Rivers				
TAPE 5214 MISC. AFRS PROGRAMS 1200'							
1L	5-26-43 12-10-43		TREASURY STAR PARADE: Kenny Baker TSP: Sammy Kaye Orchestra PERSONAL ALBUM: Gordon Jenkins Orchestra, Helen Forrest PA: Gordon Jenkins Orchestra, Helen Forrest				
2L	2-4-45 10-23-55 10-29-55	#87 #167 #168	SUNDAY SERENADE: Sammy Kaye Orchestra SERENADE ROOM: Sammy Kaye Orchestra, Dolores Hawkins SR: Sammy Kaye Orchestra, Ken Remo				
1R	3-27-44 3-28-44 -44	#322 #323 #58	FRED WARING SHOW: First song, Sky Anchors Aweigh FWS: First, Take Me Down to the Sea G.I. JOURNAL: Jack Carson, Elvia Allman, Johnny Mercer, the Pie Pipers, Linda Darnell, Jimmy Durante, Connie Haines	ed			
2R	7 - 28 - 45	#98	GIJ: Joan Blondell, Mel Blanc, Gloria Blondell, Ella Mae Morse, Robert Benchley, Arthur Treacher, Connie Haines, Mel Torme, the Meltones	,			
	9-15-45	#105	GIJ: Bing Crosby, Claudette Colbert, Frank Sinatra, GeGe Pearso Mel Blanc	on,			

VARIOUS MUSIC PROGRAMS Tapes 5215 through 5223

This section includes mostly syndicated, transcribed programs. Pinto Pete and his Ranch Boys (Tapes 5215-5217) feature western songs and was probably aired in the late 1930's. The Smiley Burnette Show (5218-5220) was produced in Hollywood by RadiOzark Enterprises and broadcast in the early 1950's. Smiley Burnette (1911-1967) appeared in over 200 western movies with such stars as Gene Autry, Alan Ladd and Charles Starrett. The program features the Whippoorwills, Sweet Georgia Brown and the Gay Rancheros, with announcer Jack Slattery.

The Sammy Kaye Showroom (5221 and 5222) was sponsored by Chrysler-Plymouth, and was one of many formats used by bandleader Sammy Kaye (1910-1987) on radio and television. This show included Don Cornell, Laura Leslie, the Kaydets and Tony Alamo, with announcer Jay Jackson, and aired around 1950. Coke Time (5223), starring Eddie Fisher, was broadcast twice a week in 1954 and 1955, with Fred Robbins, the Axel Stordahl Orchestra and announcer Ed Stokes. Eddie Fisher (b. 1928) did Coke Time on NBC television 1953 to 1957, then a full-hour variety program, the Eddie Fisher Show, on NBC television 1957 to 1959.

Donations for this section are from RHAC members Dick King (Pinto Pete), William Snyder (Smiley Burnette) and John Adams (Coke Time), plus RHAC transcription discs not credited by name on the indexes. Timings to the nearest minute are on the index sent with each tape.

TAPE 5215 PINTO PETE AND HIS RANCH BOYS

1800'

Programs #25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30
First songs: The Old Gray Mare; She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain;
Pretty Red Wing; Nancy Brown; Old Time Religion; and Casey Jones

Programs #31, 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36
First songs: An Educated Man; the Flying Trapeze; Sweet Betsy from Pike;
Back on the Texas Range; Nothin' Else to Do; and Be True Dear

Programs #37, 38, 39, 40, 41 and 42
First songs: Strawberry Roan; Chime Bells; Goodbye My Lover, Goodbye;
Pearly Gates; Roamin' Cowboy; and Little Boy

Programs #43, 44, 45, 46, 47 and 48
First songs: She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain; Old Man of the Mountain; Picnic Party; Ridge Runnin' Roan; the Railroad Crossing; and the Sunshine Trail

TAPE 5216 PINTO PETE AND HIS RANCH BOYS

1800'

Programs #49, 50, 51, 52, 53 and 54
First songs: All God's Children; the Hen House Door; Sweet Angeline; the Sunshine Trail; El Rancho Grande; and Little Liza Jane

Programs #55, 56, 57, 58, 59 and 60
First songs: Blue Mountain Shack; Little Cow Pony; Dear Charlie;
I'll Whistle and Wait for Katie; When the Sunset Bids the Day Goodbye; and Smoky Mountain Home

(Issued April, 1992)

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RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO, INC P O BOX 1908 ENGLEWOOD, CO 80150

303 761 4139



APPLICATION for MEMBERSHIP

(PLEASE PRINT)	PHON	1E #		
ADDRESS	STREET	-	APT.	UNIT
CITY	STA	TE -	ZIP C	ODE
I do hereby to abide by the Radio Colorado club rules, By Laws and RHAC materials (reel to reel tape logs and reference materials or a available) is strictly for my perfor commercial and/or monetary ga	d Regulations es, cassette any other ite	tapes	y use , scr	of ipts,
Signat As a member of the Radio Historic (a Non Profit Corporation) you arthe clubs resources, a monthly number of the clubs and participation in corelated activities.	cal Associati Te entitled t Newsletter.	o ful	l use	rado of
We take this opportunity to welco Historical Association of Colorad Collectors and enthusiast.	me you to th o group of o	e Rad: ld tir	io me rad	lio
I am presently employed in broadc	asting			
I was formerly employed in broadc	asting			
Cost of membership is just \$20.00 make checks payable to: Radio His Colorado (RHAC) P O Box 1908 Engl	torical Asso	ciatio	ar. F	Please

We welcome you to RHAC and it's group of OTR listeners and collectors.

PINE CO 80470 P O BOX 507 BARRETT E BENSON

01-01-1993





ENGLEWOOD, CO. 80150 POST OFFICE BOX 1908 (A non-profit organization) RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO, INC.

MERWIN SMITH
WILL BE OUR
GUEST SPEAKER THURSDAY,
APRIL 16TH, 7:30 PM AT THE
CHURCH OF THE MASTER 17TH AVE AND FILBERT COURT

