

RETURN WITH US

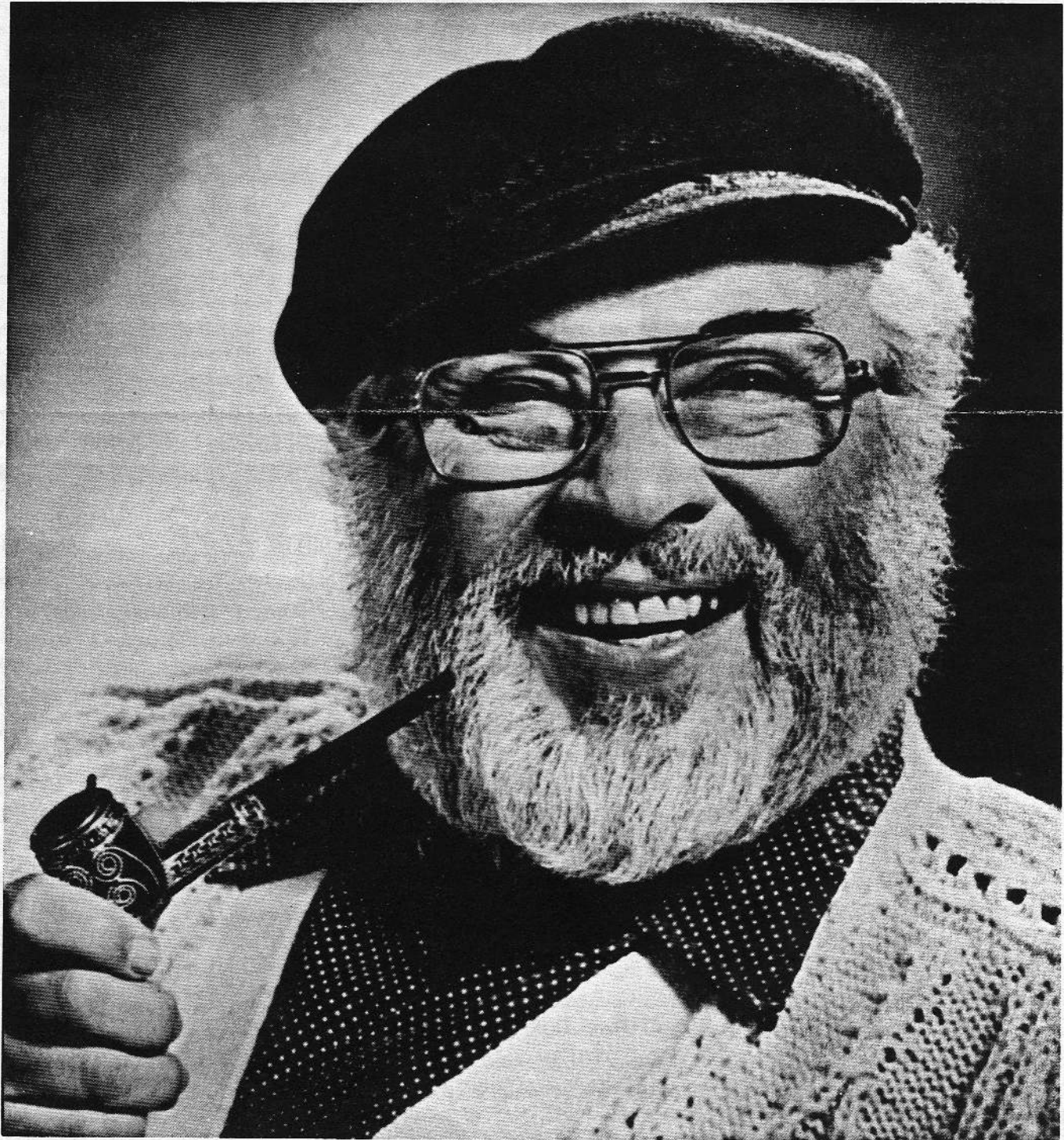
The Radio Historical
Association of Colorado, Inc.

NOW...



Volume 19 Number 9

April, 1994



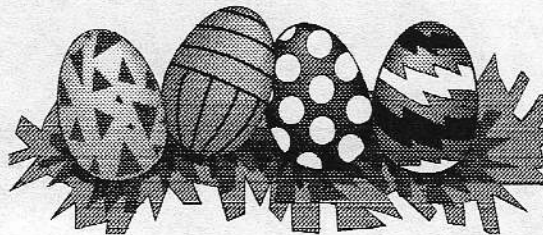
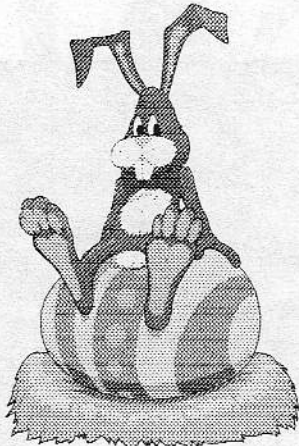
EZRA STONE 1917-1994



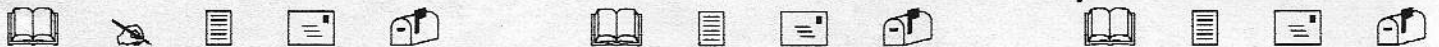
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: There will **NOT** be a board meeting in April, 1994.
 ALL MEMBERS are welcome and invited to attend and participate at the Board of Directors Meeting.
 The May 5th board meeting will be at the home of John Adams at 7:30 PM.



There will be a members **MEETING on April 21, 1994!** Our video guest will be Jack Benny!!



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 renewal. Each member has full use of the club resources. For further information contact anyone listed below.



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From the

King's Roost

Shush!! February and March (or most of March) were beautiful in our area with lots of sunshine and mild weather, but we read of severe storms in Northeastern states and lots of cold weather. We hope that our members in the colder parts of the country had lots of tapes of shows to listen to and not worry about what was going on outside. We are now getting one of our Spring snows that often breaks the "extra" branches out of the trees, but most of the trees have not leafed out yet, so damage will be minimal. Interesting thought: Our Spring snows may get deep but only last for a day or so; or it'll snow heavily on the warm ground and thaw as quickly as it falls.

We have been seeing lots of coyotes in the park lately, and most of them are in pretty good condition, indicating that there are plenty of rabbits and field mice for them to feed on. The deer are now in small bands of three to five, and we have yet to see any new additions this Spring. I guess they know better, but we see a lot of new calves in the herds of cattle near here.

We have seen a great blue heron back from the South, so the whole flock should soon arrive for their Spring nesting. The rookery at Chatfield State Park is one of the largest in our area, and it is interesting to watch the fledglings stick their heads up for feeding and later climb to the edges of their nests and get dinner as it comes to them.

We have been busy making cassettes for the new shows being added to the library. It's like we're getting the indoor work done now so that when the weather gets better we will be able to spend more time outdoors. So many great shows are coming up! The *Fibber & Molly* 15-minute shows that we mentioned before are out on cassettes now and we have a couple of orders waiting for them.

Fibber will be followed by *Tales of the Texas Rangers* in the Contributors series. The regular library will have a great assortment of shows from the detectives, comedy and dramas. The Quiz Kids just amaze us, and remind us that, at the Newark convention, we met a former Quiz Kid who is still actively working in the entertainment business. We are now working on *This Is Your FBI*, which will probably be

added to the library next year. We have so many *Supermans* that they will just about fill the remainder of 1994 openings.

Now is the time to begin thinking about the conventions being offered this Spring. The first one that pops up for us is the Cincinnati convention April 15th & 16th. For info phone Bob Burchett at (606)282-0333. We doubt that we will be there, but they are planning such a great show that we hate to say no. The next convention of note for us is the Puget Sound group with their convention in Seattle on June 24th and 25th. For information on that convention phone Gary Litwin at (206)643-7641.

We would like to suggest John Rayburn's *Thrilling Days of Yesteryear*. This is offered bi-monthly for \$15 a year. Send orders to:

Carol Rayburn
7222 W Stanford Ave
Littleton CO 80123

John helped our club a great deal while he was on the air recently in Denver and we have several new members whom first heard of RHAC on John's show.

EZRA STONE 1917 - 1994

Despite his most popular role on radio as *Henry Aldrich*, Ezra Stone was most proud of his most recent role - President and Director of the *David Library of The American Revolution* in Washington Crossing, Bucks County, Pennsylvania. This library was made possible by Mr. Stone's father, an immigrant and patriot that was able to pass on his love of his country through his family.

Ezra Stone served his country in WWII and the many years since by writing, directing, and starring in training films and documentaries. He has most recently listed as a producer, director, actor, writer and framer, all of which were secondary to his primary role as Director of The David Library of the American Revolution.

Early in his career, Ezra Stone did commercials for the *Children's Hour* and *Young America*. As he advanced into his acting career, he was on *The Rudy Vallee Show*, *The Kate Smith Show*, *Eddie Cantor Show*, *Fred Allen Show*, *Lux Radio Theater*, and many others. He created the role of HENRY ALDRICH in 1938, which continued for over 600 shows. At the age of only 20, he held eight important drama jobs at the same time, one of which was the role of HENRY ALDRICH.

Ezra was well schooled in the theater and spent many years on the stage as well as on the movie and TV screens. He assembled and staged the original production of *This Is The Army*, opening July 4, 1942 at the Broadway Theater in New York. He performed in the Command Performance of that play for President Roosevelt on October 8, 1942 at the National Theater in Washington, D.C.

Ezra Stone never retired from his active career, he had just become more selective about the activities he spent his time on. We shall miss him.

MOLLY and ME

Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., NBC

"You could feel the let-down in the studio, and you just knew the listeners at home were experiencing the same disappointment," one of "Fibber and Molly's" NBC co-workers related. He was referring to a Tuesday a few weeks ago when Marian "Molly" Jordan was unable to join husband Jim—the fabulous "Fibber"—at the microphone for the weekly Tuesday night frolics of the "McGees."

Everyone was disappointed—but, most of all, "Molly" herself. She was home in bed, listening to the show and enjoying it as much as any other dialer—"but all the time," she added wistfully, "I was wishing I could be there!"

Whether it be at the microphone or at home, the Jordans are seldom apart—only during the "break" in their radio rehearsal, when they emerge on Vine Street to partake of a light lunch. Marian usually favors the Brown Derby, while Jim customarily heads for "George's," the sandwich shop just across from the NBC studios. After the broadcast, the couple enjoys a leisurely dinner together at the Derby.

It's interesting to note that the fans and autograph-seekers who throng outside the studio gates seldom recognize Marian and Jim as the famous "Fibber and Molly." Most of their public know the Jordans only as the lovable, laughable residents of "79 Wistful Vista."

Actually, too, the Jordans are not very different from the McGees. Their private life is normal and wholesome, wholly

devoid of any Hollywood artificiality.

Away from the microphone, their life centers in their Encino home. There is a housekeeper, but Marian still likes to do many of the household tasks herself and on the woman's day off, she delights in doing the family cooking. In the same manner, although they have a hired man, Jim enjoys performing the variety of odd jobs around the house and yard. A handy man with his hands Mr. Jordan has built the attractive lawn furniture that is placed invitingly in the spacious grounds surrounding their two-story California Monterey type house.

Recently, his labors have turned toward the care of the shrubs in his nursery and the building of some hundred redwood flats in which to place the newborn plants. He is also working on a playpen for little Diane, the comparative newcomer who occupies the choicest spot in the Jordan's hearts.

In real life, Marian and Jim have two children, Kathryn and Jim, Jr. The latter has lately been appearing on the "McGees" show doing a variety of character roles. He is a contract player at RKO film studios. His wife, Carmela Bergstrom, is a Paramount film player.

Daughter Kathryn is married to Adrian Goodman, a lieutenant in the medical corps of the Navy. He is now stationed ashore, but was on duty in the Pacific up until the birth of their daughter, the aforementioned little Diane, and arrived back in the States on the very day of her birth, May 18th, which also happens to be the Goodman's wedding anniversary.

Diane, of course, has become the Jordan's pride and joy. Mrs. Jordan greatly enjoys the times when she has complete care of her. The baby, dark-haired, blue-eyed, good-natured, looks a good deal like her mother and Marian.

The Jordan's weekly schedule has them occupied with their airshow almost steadily from Saturday until Tuesday. On Wednesday, they frequently take themselves to their ranch near Bakersfield. "I notice Jim, Jr. likes to come up there, too," grinned "Molly." "I think it's the fresh eggs and BUTTER that gets him!"

It is these pleasant family get-togethers which both Marian and Jim enjoy the most—happy times when the entire family, and often several of their close friends gather at the Jordan home, sit around the piano while Marian plays and everybody joins in an old-fashioned song-fest.

"Just being together," smiled "Molly" warmly, with an affectionate glance at "McGee." "That's what's fun!"

RADIO LIFE, March 31, 1946

Fibber's Closet

And Thousands of Other Effects Originate in This Behind-Scenes Department

An ocean without a roar?
A snake without a rattle?
Fibber McGee without his closet?

A radio show without sound effects!

In radio's salad days, most of the effects were achieved by hand. In recent years, recordings have supplanted manual effects and the Sound Effects Department like Radio City's now has

more than 3000 records imprinted with sounds. These run the gamut from the whimper of a new-born baby to the streaking wham of a jet-propelled plane. The department has just acquired one of the new RCA experimental wire-recorders on which it plans to snatch any wanted sound innovations.

Twenty sound effects experts service the noise needs of Radio City's scores of shows. Of several girls who became interested in this work when the majority of the departments men went into service, blonde Dorothy Waknitz (former secretary in NBC's publicity department) is the lone survivor. Dorothy, who had to undergo stringent training and work six months on studio shows before being allowed to handle a commercial program, now supplies sound for some of NBC's most important programs (Rudy Vallee, "Date With Judy"). Conforming to radio's irregular hours, sound effects engineers put in a hodge-podge working week of forty hours.

Assembling the effects for a big time program is handled with the same care as script or music. Several days before broadcast time, the sound man obtains a copy of the script and studies it to learn what is expected by way of sound. Some of the effects, like opening doors or ringing telephones, will be manual. Others, like barking dogs or screams of persons will be recorded and to select the precise effect wanted, the sound man will consult a fat catalogue which tabulates and describes all available effects. As deadline for rehearsal time approaches, the sound man will recheck the script, load the

truck with his miscellany of items, and shove down the hall, ready to put sound into a Skelton or Kyser script.

Typical lead for a recent Bob Hope show included effects for: car door, house door, elevator door, guns and ammunition, slide whistle, glass crates, feather duster, glove, glass crash, platform, wood crash.

Often the department is called upon to figure out an effect for which there is no recording or manual procedure. Recently, Ed Ludas of NBC's Sound Department rigged up a motor and built the effect of a model T. Controlling the contraption by hand, Ed can supply the effect of a tin lizzie starting, chugging up a hill, sailing along a stretch, and of killing the engine. By manipulation, the invention also is made to sound like an elevator or a motor boat.

The department is bursting its buttons over two newly-acquired slot machines. For the past few years it has been using a tree-like stand of tin into which small coins were dropped by hand. Another new gimmick is the rattle of a snake, achieved by vibrating a real rattler's by means of a tiny motor. One which vibrates intensely has been labeled "vicious rattler."

Fibber's fabulous closet is still a point of interest, for the articles, ranged precariously on a tier of steps, are as varied as ever (old shoes, dumb-bells, tin pie pans). Now that the war is over, no one feels too badly about the dishes which have to be broken to accentuate a script. NBC buys dishes out of the mold, before glazing, and all are "rejects." Red Skelton's script often calls for

breaking of dishes, and when it does, six plates, six cups and saucers, and six soup plates are the victims.

An average of twenty sets of dinnerware a month is purposefully smashed to put a bang into routines of NBCComics.

"All the King's Men"

Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., NBC

When the King's Men, for the past ten years a featured quartet on NBC's "Fibber and Molly" program, took over that show's Tuesday night spot for the summer, the opening program marked not only the group's twentieth year together, but also the quartet's first starring spot on a transcontinental program.

The King's Men were organized more or less by accident at Chapman College in Los Angeles. Short, irrepressible Buddy Linn, a member of a fraternity quartet at Chapman, was asked by a friend for a try out in an audition for quartets at Paramount. After the audition, Buddy informed the Paramount musical director that he belonged to a quartet which could out-sing any he'd heard that day. A few weeks later, Buddy got a call: "Bring your quartet over to Paramount!"

Buddy said, "Sure!" and then started worrying, for summer vacations had just started, and two members of the quartet were miles away. Buddy and Jon Dodson, another member of the fraternity quartet and student director of the men's glee club, started phoning college friends trying to line up two other singers.

Ken Darby, an accomplished pianist, said he'd play for the

quartet, but couldn't sing. "Of course you can," Buddy and Jon insisted. "You just haven't tried." Ken was finally persuaded and discovered, to his great surprise, that he really could sing. Then the three found a fourth. The quartet practiced practically all night, showed up next morning at Paramount, auditioned, and were promptly signed for "Sweetie," a college picture.

At this time, Ken was torn between music and the ministry. Buddy had also been studying for the ministry, but recently had switched to sociology. Jon, who was taking post-graduate work at the University of Southern California while directing the glee club at Chapman, intended to teach music. Rad Robinson, the fourth member of the quartet, was going to be a physical-education instructor.

With their success in "Sweetie," they decided to quit their studies and become singers, which they were *not* for a very long time. Over a period of some two years, the boys appeared in about three Jeanette MacDonald musicals, "and in between time starved on the beach."

The quartet's first radio job resulted from a series of summer plays they did in 1930 for the late John Steven McGroarty, historian and poet laureate of California.

The King's Men doubled as singers and actors, and each received eighteen dollars a week. From that association they were signed for Bill Sharples's "Breakfast Club."

Then KTM offered the boys a job as staff singers at thirty-five per week, and another Los Angeles station offered them a staff job at only twenty-five. The

quartet accepted the latter offer, for which they claim great foresight, because three weeks afterwards, KTM folded.

As staff men, they were busy all day long. Their salaries were raised a little, and then a little more, and then again, until finally Buddy, Jon and Rad were making fifty dollars weekly each, and leader Ken was receiving seventy-five.

Don Clark, saxophone player with Paul Whiteman's band and a close friend of the group, had them make a record, which he dispatched to Whiteman in New York. A week later, they received a phone call from Whiteman alerting them to stand by at 10:00 p.m. for a phone call. They stood by.

Their first job with Whiteman was singing at Manhattan Beach, next to Coney Island, in the afternoon, and at the Biltmore Hotel at night.

They were with Whiteman four years. Then, on an impulse, the quartet hit the road, in Ken's car, of course, for Hollywood. They were signed by Fred Allen for an eight week stint and then weren't able to get a job anywhere. Finally Rudy Vallee came to their rescue.

He already had a quartet singing with his orchestra but he signed the King's Men too. They were with Rudy almost two years, singing on the air at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, and in San Francisco.

In 1939, Harry Sherman engaged the quartet for a series of "Hopalong Cassidy" pictures. They were the screen's first, and very possibly last, singing bad men. Rad was the leading man, playing the role of "Smiley."

Just about January 1, 1940, they happened to hear that "Fibber McGee," Jim Jordan in private life, liked quartets, so they sent him a record of "In the Good Old Summertime." The evening he received the record Jim played it about a dozen times, and finally his wife, Marian, who is "Molly McGee" to some 20,000,000-plus radio listeners, suggested that if he liked it so much he should arrange to hear the King's Men in person.

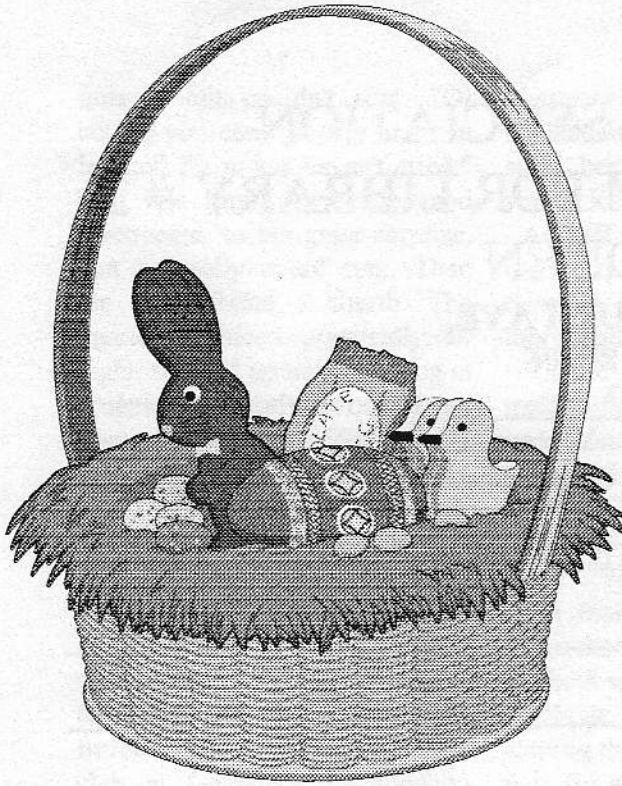
"A great idea," said Jim. "Maybe Johnson's Wax will put 'em on the air with us, and then I'll get to hear them every Tuesday night."

Just a few weeks later the King's Men made their debut with "Fibber McGee and Molly." They have been a fixture with the show ever since.

The quartet has backed many famous vocalists during the past ten years. They recorded their own "King's Men" album, and sang in the Hollywood Bowl with Meredith Willson. They were one of the hits of the season, out-drawing even Lily Pons and Andre Kostelanetz.

Tall, lanky Ken was born in Hebron, Nebraska, and moved to California as a small child. After writing his Santa Monica High School alma mater's song, he went on to become a member of ASCAP and composed several songs, including "Make Mine Music" for Walt Disney's picture of the same name. He also set to music "The Night Before Christmas," and this arrangement has been featured for several years on NBC's "Fibber and Molly" program.

RADIO LIFE, July 10, 1949



HAPPY

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