

# RETURN WITH US

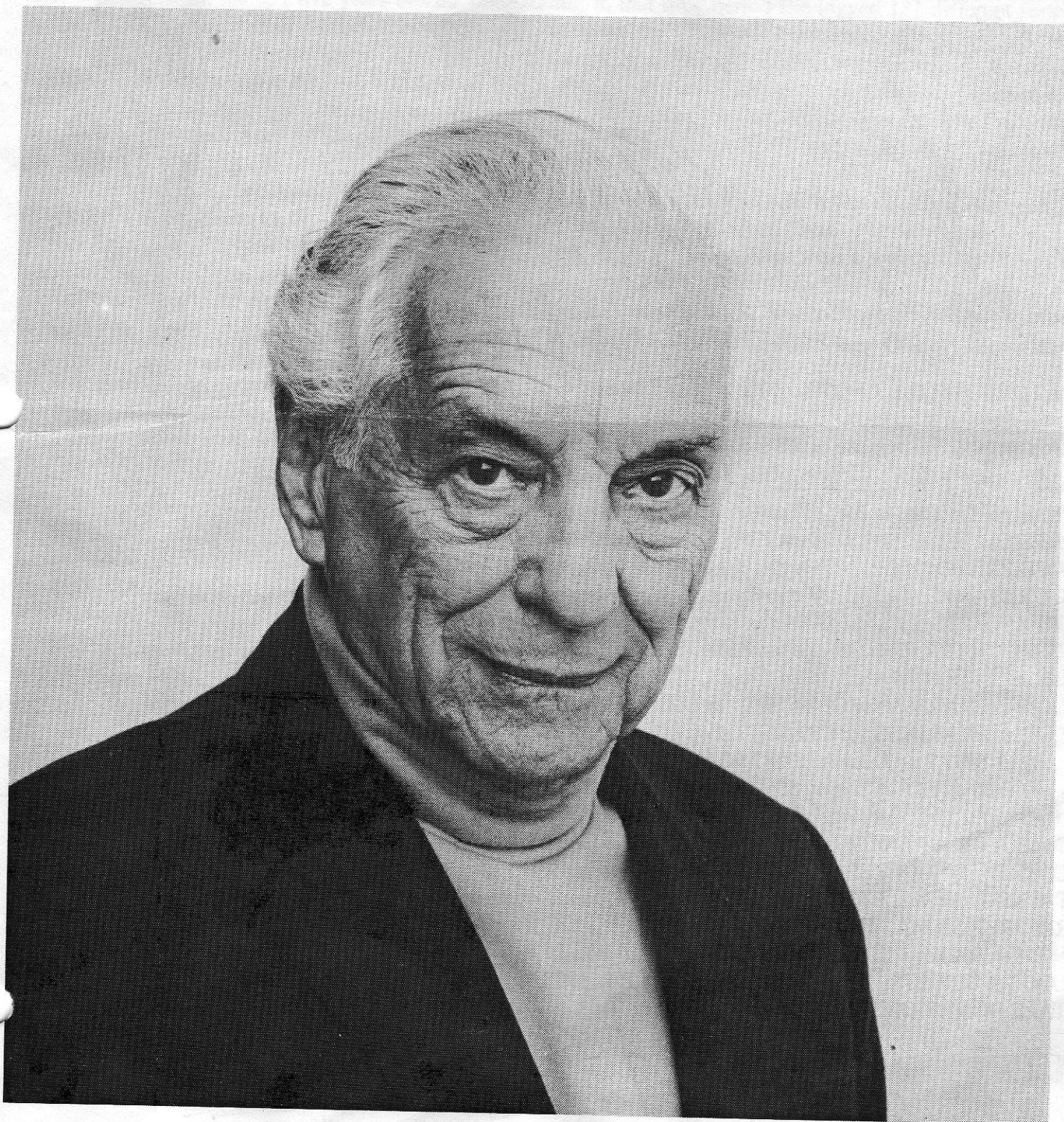
The Radio Historical  
Association of Colorado, Inc.

# NOW...



Volume 19 Number 10

May, 1994



Harry Bartell



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING:** There will be a board meeting in May, 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 May 19, 1994!** 7:30 p.m. The Church of the Master at 17th Avenue & Filbert Court (Filbert Ct is between Forest & Fairfax Sts). We plan to have a surprise guest speaker !



**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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## Harry Bartell comes to Denver

to share his memories of thousands of radio shows

over more than forty-five years !

Harry Bartell was born in New Orleans and grew up in Houston. He began working in radio in 1930 and worked at it for 45 years. His problem today is that he cannot recall many of the shows with which he worked. He got an assist from his daughter.

Last year his daughter was digging around in some memorabilia and came across his engagement books for 1943-1957, missing the last five years of Old Time Radio. In that time period she logged 181 different series. In that group, the number of performances per series varied widely. Some were one-shots. Others spread over the years. Among the most frequent were *Suspense*, *Escape*, *Gunsmoke*, *Dragnet*, *Man Called X*, *Romance*, *Hollywood Star Playhouse*, *Yours Truly*, *Johnny Dollar*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *Doctor Christian*, *Fort Laramie*, *My Friend Irma*. But there were others like *Maisie*, *Lux Radio Theater*, *Corliss Archer*, *Roy Rogers*, *The Saint*, *The Six Shooter*, *Case Book of Gregory Hood*, *Crime Classics*, *Dear Abby*, *Fort Laramie*, *Frontier Gentleman*, *Let George Do It*, *On Stage*.

In TV Harry made appearances in 77 different series, the most prominent of which was *Dragnet*. Also during the era of TV there were 45 shows at the Pasadena Playhouse, and about a dozen films.

Harry considers himself very fortunate to have survived all these experiences with a wonderful wife of 53 years and two wonderful adult children. Harry's wife will be with him while he visits Denver.

The Radio Historical Association of Colorado takes great pleasure in being able to have the Bartell's visit us **May 19th, 1994**, 7:30 p.m. at **The Church of The Master** at 17th Avenue and Filbert Court (Filbert Court is between Foster and Fairfax Streets).

Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound

### **REPS RADIO SHOWCASE II**

**A Great OTR Experience in SEATTLE - JUNE 24-25, 1994**

**MR. CONKLIN MEETS THE GREAT GILDERSLEEVE MEETS NICK CARTER MEETS MY LITTLE MARGIE ... AND SO IT GOES.** First time visitors include **JACK KRUSCHEN**, **RAY ERLÉN-BORN**, **JUNE FORAY** and **RHODA WILLIAMS**.

We invite you to come to one of the most beautiful cities in America... at one of the most beautiful times of year! Re-creations, panels and an intimate first-class setting. There will be another of the well received "Just Sittin' Around and Visiting" segments. Attendees really get to know the great guests.

Other GUESTS in attendance: John Archer, Frank Buxton, Lon Clark, Stewart Conway, Jeanette Cullison, Jim French, Gale Gordon, Merrill Mael, David Ossman, Willard Watterman, Anne Whitfield, Rhoda Williams, and Doug Young.

When: **June 24-25, 1994** Where: **Overlake Hospital Conference Center**, Bellevue, Washington.

Hotel: **West Coast-Bellevue**, 3 blocks from conference center, \$70 per room. (800)445-9444.

REPS Radio Showcase II **Registration**: Complete Day, including evening banquet \$49.

For more information, please call our Gary Litwin (206)643-7641.

Please send CHECKS or MONEY ORDERS payable to **REPS**, to:

REPS RADIO SHOWCASE II, c/o Lloyd Jones, 6166 92nd Ave. SE, Mercer Island, WA 98040

From the

## King's Roost

This month there is so much to write about, I feel sure I'll have to start this and come back to it later when I remember all the things I forget the first time around.

First of all, Dusty Saunders' column in the *Rocky Mountain News* in mid-April advises Denver area listeners that KEZW (AM 1430) is airing *Radio Theater Classics*, a series of old-time comedy and drama series on weeknights at 9 p.m. These programs vary from *Jack Benny* to *X Minus One* and everything in between.

Again it is time to remind our blind members of the service offered by Mike Fields. Send Mike five 90-minute cassettes and in return he will send you a copy of the RHAC catalog on tape. Similarly, if you send him an exchange cassette in a mailer each month he will return the tape with the audio version of the RHAC Newsletter. Mike Fields has been offering these services for many years and it has been a great help to those members who avail themselves of these services. Mike Fields' address is always available on page two of the newsletter.

We want to call your attention to the article about Harry Bartell, our May guest. This distinguished performer of Old Time Radio will honor us by being our guest speaker on May 19th. We urge all of you to make a special effort to come to this meeting to hear this man that has credits on so many of the programs that we enjoy.

We hear that the convention had a record number of attendees. This has caused us to give some thought to trying a RHAC Denver

convention again in 1995. RHAC will be celebrating its twentieth anniversary! However, the decision as to whether or not RHAC has a 1995 convention would depend on the attendance we get when we bring in special guest speakers like Harry Bartell.

Last Saturday we had a great evening ride in the park and were able to point out the Great Blue Heron nests that have been occupied by this year's tenants, and also enjoyed watching the first nest of Canada goslings on one of the lakes. It was a beautiful evening and we all enjoyed it. I was able to point out the tiny sand lilies and some other flowers that I have to look up again. This week we have directed our attention to other matters while it has been snowing outside. Our Spring flowers all had a dusting of snow again this morning. Our horses have been loafing in their sheds and getting sassy with the advent of the snow.

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**Denver: KEZW (AM-1430)** is airing *Radio Theater Classics*, a series of old-time comedy and drama series, on weekdays at 9 p.m.

The lineup:

Mon: *Dragnet* and

*The Third Man*,

Tue: *Jack Benny Show* and

*Abbott & Costello*,

Wed: *Burns & Allen* and

*Texas Rangers*,

Thu: *The Green Hornet* and

*X Minus One*,

Fri: *Sherlock Holmes* and

*The Black Museum*.

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## Rudy Vallee, Perennial: His 500th Broadcast Over NBC

### Finds Him Going Strong

Crooners have come and gone on the radio; so have saxophonists, orchestra leaders, and heads of variety shows. But a Vermont-born and Maine-reared boy, serving in all four capacities, has clung on for a phenomenal record. Next week, when the customary "Heigh-Ho, everybody," opens his regular Thursday night program, Rudy Vallee will be marking his 500th consecutive broadcast on an NBC network — a broadcasting record that is the more remarkable, in these sponsor-switching days, for Vallee has been appearing for Standard Brands (Fleischmann's Yeast, Royal Deserts) during the whole period.

Vallee's start as a musician dates back to his high-school days at Westbrook, Maine. He wanted to play the saxophone but was unable to find a teacher there so he wrote the famous saxophonist Rudy Wiedoeft and wangled some correspondence lessons (he likewise took his radio first name from Wiedoeft, for Vallee was born Hubert Prior Vallee). While a student at the University of Maine and also at Yale he pursued saxophone playing and got together the nucleus of the orchestra which became the Connecticut Yankees.

Then, in 1926, the singer-player took his band to London. The organization broke up in 1927, and Vallee joined Vincent Lopez' orchestra as third saxophonist. The following year, however, he reassembled his players and appeared at the Heigh-Ho Club, a New York night spot;

and the same year he went on the air with his first commercial program, plugging Herbert's Blue White Diamonds. It was on Oct. 24, 1929, that Vallee's big commercial run started—the NBC program that still claims him.

Since that date, scores of important artists and comedians have been featured performers on the Vallee hour — Grace Moore, Beatrice Lillie, Ethel Waters, Katharine Hepburn, Helen Hayes, Gertrude Lawrence, Joe Cook, Fanny Brice, and a host of other top-notchers.

But the thing that fills Vallee with particular pride is the record he has made as a discoverer of unknown talent. Alice Faye, who has since climbed to movie fame, was just a chorus girl in George White's "Scandals" when Vallee introduced her. Frances Langford was doing obscure broadcasts on a little Florida station when Vallee found her. Joe Penner was a small-time vaudevillian in 1933 when Vallee shot the comedian to fame on a national hookup. In 1935 Bob Burns beat his way across the continent to remind Vallee of a promise made on the West Coast and so won a network debut.

Of all of Vallee's discoveries, however, the greatest was apparently the most preposterous — a ventriloquist. In fact, Edgar Bergen — who took his network bow with Charlie McCarthy on Dec. 17, 1936 — had to be shoved up to the microphone when Vallee insisted on a repeat performance. Bergen didn't want to go on a second time. "I only have two routines. If I use them both, it will ruin me in the night clubs."

Bergen got approximately \$250 per week for his night-club appearances then. He now makes an

estimated \$3,600 per week for his radio work alone, to say nothing of the substantial sums he receives from movies and royalties.

*Newsweek, May 15, 1939*

## What are Rudy Vallee's Plans ?

"I feel like a fellow that's been going to college a good deal longer than the usual four years," Rudy Vallee said. "I'm sorry to say goodbye to the old Alma Mater, but I'm glad to be getting out, because it's high time.

And that just about sums up Rudy Vallee's reasons for leaving the Thursday night NBC program on which he pioneered almost ten years ago — the program that started more stars on the road to fame than any other single radio hour. September 28th marks his last broadcast.

It's no secret, nor any reflection on Rudy's ability either, that his program has lost some of its popularity in the last few years. Other variety programs began aping the formula he originated, spending more money on higher-priced stars. It got harder and harder to find fresh comedy and dramatic material.

I don't think it was much of a surprise to Rudy when he and his sponsor decided to call it quits. He'd been on the air for almost ten years, and he was tired. All in all, he isn't unhappy about leaving the air for a while.

I saw him and talked to him at one of his last rehearsals, and he wasn't exactly the old Vallee. He was more cheerful, more relaxed.

When I asked him what his plans for the future were, he grinned and said frankly, "I haven't any. I'd like to take a rest, at least for a month, and after that I'll probably be out in Hollywood. Maybe I'll have a program from out there. Maybe I'll be doing some picture work, for Republic Pictures. Eventually, I'd like to study motion pictures and learn to be a director. And I know one thing— I'd like to live in Hollywood nine months of the year and spend the summers in Maine."

To lend point to Rudy's statement about his future, there is the fact that he owns a house in Hollywood, which he bought last spring.

Will he be back on the air at all? Well, your guess is as good as anyone's. Right now, the trend in radio seems to be away from Hollywood, which is a point against his return. If he does go out there, and becomes interested in the making of pictures, developing the talent for directing which he undoubtedly feels he possesses, maybe he won't even be interested in singing on the air any more. On the other hand, if a sponsor offered him a program he liked, he might accept it.

He's a strange mixture of egotism and humility, this Vallee, who has been for more than a decade one of America's famous men. His pride won't let him think of himself as a singer, and no more than a singer. It urges him on to being an actor, a producer, a director.

He stands at the crossroads, as the last strains of his last program for Royal Gelatin fade away. He can go on to wider fields of activity — or he can stay in radio, as a singer and master-of-ceremonies. Many a sponsor would be glad to have him in that capacity. But would it satisfy Rudy? I don't think it would.

*Radio Mirror, November 1939*

## TAILORS OF SONGS

Eliot Daniel, Joe Lilley and  
Rudy Knit Tune Hits Together

Gilbert & Sullivan were pikers. They didn't have to roll tunes off creative production lines like cars in a Ford plant at Dearborn.

Eliot Daniel and Joe Lilley do that and please 20,000,000 listeners, too—20,000,000 and Rudy Vallee.

Eliot, a Harvard Bostonian, and Joe, a Providence blue-blood, are composers and lyricists of the fast moving, tuneful, lustily funny Rudy Vallee-John Barrymore program broadcast each Thursday night by the National Broadcasting Company in the interest of Sealtest products in the east, Kraft products west of the Rockies.

Daniel and Lilley's job is to take the measurements of the guest star, fit them into the framework of a thematic idea, then turn up with tunes that fill Producer Dick Mack for utility and the public's bill for entertainment.

When Marjorie Rambeau was Vallee's guest star, Eliot & Joe were assigned to write a special "Tugboat Annie" song. What Miss Rambeau thought of the song was evident. She promptly acquired performing rights to it.

When Joe E. Brown came to the guest mike, Daniel and Lilley had a play-ball song up their sleeve. "Why," yawned Joe, "that sounds better than 'Take Me Out to the Ball Game.' How would you like to dedicate it to Connie Mack and let me present it to him?"

But the best recommendation for Daniel and Lilley is that 52 weeks in the year they please Rudy Vallee.

When the Vagabond Lover sings a song, it has to be able to stand on its own musical legs, regardless of how well it might fit into the pattern of the script, how well it might set the mood for the action, how well it might bridge the gap of transition, or how well it might advance the plot.

Few stars have a better sense of song value than Rudy.

Even school boys know that Vallee discovered Bergen and McCarthy, Bob Burns, Alice Faye, Tommy Riggs, Frances Langford, forty or fifty other. What few know people is that Vallee is a member of ASCAP, having belonged to the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers since 1929, and that he is the author of several songs that have sold over a million copies each.

Among them are "Vagabond Lover," "Goodnight, Sweetheart" (the American version was Vallee's) and "The Maine Stein Song." There are also other songs that sold everywhere from two to five hundred thousand sheet copies, including "Deep Night," "Vieni, Vieni," "If I Had a Girl Like You," "Betty, Coed," "Tavern in the Town," and "Still Caring."

Rudy is a self styled guinea pig, musically speaking. If he likes a number, the public is fairly certain to like it, he found out through the years of testing numbers on himself as a show-world perennial. It's the ear of Vallee, the judge of music, that Daniel and Lilley have to please.

Each Friday, the day after a broadcast, Dick Mack, the gag-writer-producer, who used to dream up jokes for Charlie McCarthy as Bergen's No. 1 idea man before joining forces with the Vagabond Lover and the Great Profile, calls Daniel and Lilley into his office.

"Our guest star next Thursday," Dick will say, "is Joe E. Brown. He used to play baseball, you know. Now we're going to build a baseball broadcast around him. What I want from you is an opening theme along a 'Play Ball' idea. Then we'll also need something romantic for Rudy. You might try 'You've Made a Hit with Me' for a title to play with. Now dig into it, and I've got to see the stuff not later than Monday."

Eliot Daniel and Joe Lilley go to work.

Eliot makes a bee-line for his bachelor home near Griffith Park, takes a longing look in passing at the 80-odd miles of mountain bridle path that twist through Hollywood Hills, but promptly goes into

the living room, puts his briefcase on the grand piano, changes his clothes, saddles his horse, and goes out riding.

Lilley responds for the call of duty just as readily. He, too, parks his briefcase on the piano and changes clothes. Then he steps out of the door and over to the golf course and tries once more to break that eighty.

The clock catches up with Eliot and Joe on Sunday night. They get together at Eliot's or Joe's. No matter who else is there, Eliot and Joe step to the piano with notebooks in hand. It is time for the Muse. They throw ideas at each other, jot them down, Eliot at the piano selecting melodies he has been forming in the back of his mind during hours on horseback. Joe's lyrics leap out to match them. On Monday morning, Dick Mack has his music and lyrics, signed, sealed, delivered.

That's Daniel and Lilley routine week after week.

Composer Daniel, in his early thirties, is one of Vallee's closest friends. He has been with Rudy Vallee for seven years now and is bound to stay with the Vagabond Lover many years if the efforts that Rudy exerted to get him are any criterion. They first met in New York when Daniel was accompanying Doris Rhodes at a radio audition. Rudy happened to be there, and with characteristic decision, asked Daniel to go to work for him. Daniel declined. He had promised Doris to stick with her.

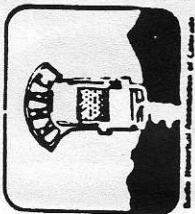
The Doris Rhodes arrangement didn't work out, and Daniel remembered Rudy's offer to hire him any time. He went looking for Rudy at Vallee's New York office. Rudy was out of town and the office was empty. So Daniel joined Freddy Martin's band and went on tour. Back in New York, he heard from Rudy again. This time he said yes, and he's been Rudy's accompanist-composer ever since.

Joe Lilly's path to the Vallee show is equally interesting. He was a staff conductor at NBC in New York, conducting for Dorothy Lamour, when Ed Gardiner, who for almost a year wrote and produced the Vallee-Barrymore show, offered him a job writing music and lyrics on a commercial program. That was five years ago and Lilley's been doing that in radio ever since. Joe and Eliot were boyhood friends, but neither knew the other was being hired for the Sealtest-Kraft series until they got together for the first script session in Hollywood.

# RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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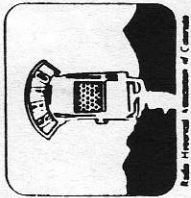
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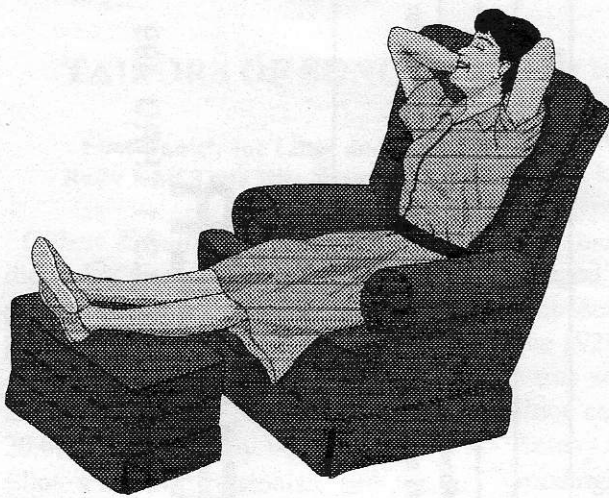
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