

RETURN WITH US

The Radio Historical
Association of Colorado, Inc.

NOW...



Volume 20, Number 6

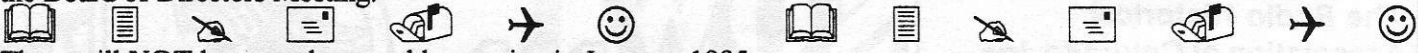
January, 1995



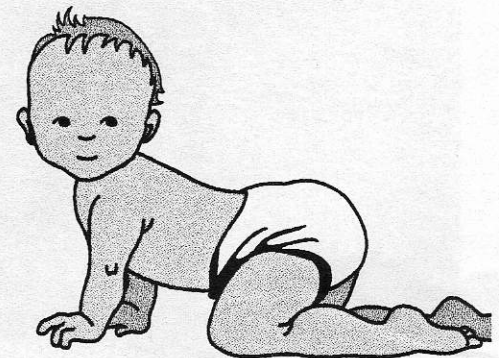
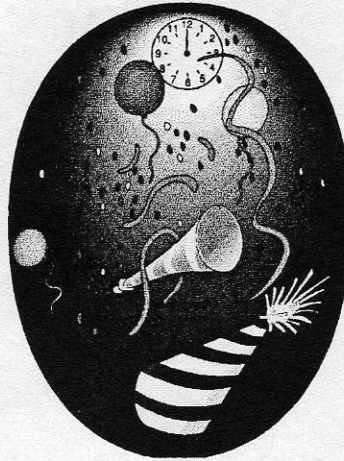
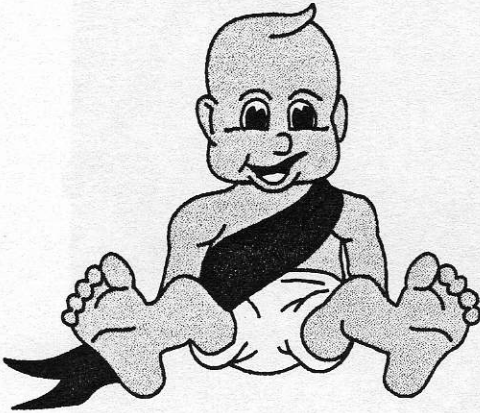
Ed Gardner created the role of Archie in "Duffy's Tavern,"
a popular show of the 1940's.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: There will be a board meeting January 5, 1995, 7:30 p.m., at the home of John Adams, 2811 S Valentia St, Denver CO 80231. ALL MEMBERS are welcome and invited to attend and participate at the Board of Directors Meeting.



There will **NOT** be a regular monthly meeting in January, 1995



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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- CORRESPONDING SECRETARY: David L Michael (as above)

From the

King's Roost

Before we get into other things, we would like to warn other clubs about a person who has checked out tapes from our library and is now delinquent. He is Jeff Hagerty of Grants Pass, Oregon. Authorities in Grants Pass tell us they are looking for him and that he has skipped town. In case you know where he is now, please let us know, or tell him we want our tapes returned.

Christmas week brought us Fall-like weather and we were able to get a lot of outside work done. We have our last fencing set so the concrete around the posts won't be damaged when the winter snows come and the ground freezes.

As we were relaxing in the warm sun on Christmas day, we had ten deer watching us. All of the horses were alert and telling us about the deer, but the deer really didn't have any concern about the horses.

We had a note from one of our Canadian members:

He said he enjoyed listening to OTR cassettes while riding on the dwindling Canadian Railroad system. It was the perfect setting for radio programs of that era.

Another member wanted to know the status of John Dunning's book. We called John to ask. He has the manuscript back for about a 25% reduction in volume. So, it'll take time to revise it and figure out what to delete. Our newsletter editor has the same problem every month but he is only working with a few pages.

The RHAC twentieth anniversary is coming in June. Hence, we are asking members to forward various items of interest about the industry and the people that brought us so much good entertainment for so many years. RHAC is planning a major edition of the newsletter and needs some help. Just phone Glenn Ritter at (303)377-4798 or mail articles to him at 750 Niagara St., Denver CO 80220-5556. IF you want your article returned, you MUST request it.

Members Mary Ryan and David Gatch presented a delightful play about the true meaning of Christmas for our club gathering on December 10th. Again we had Fall weather with no sign of snow and no problem in getting there.

We hope to have the new postal rates for our library mailings for the next board meeting January 5th. We have **NOT** made any increases in our rental charges for the past two postal rate increases. This time we may have to have a minor increase to cover postal fees. As most of you know, the club pays the postage for outgoing reel and cassette rentals and the member pays the return postage. We know that most clubs ask the member to pay postage both ways in addition to the rental fees. We have tried to avoid increasing the cost of enjoying the shows for our members.

We will get this off to the editor so he can get the newsletter off in the mail before the new rates apply.

Duffy's Tavern

Tuesday, 8:30 p.m., Blue Network

Prithee, fellow aesthetes, hast noticed a subtle new delicacy of tone in our fair Southland's culture these last few weeks? Should it, ere next December, soar to heights heretofore unattained, one might easily see as the cause the erudite presence of the Blue Network's "Archie." However, if, instead, it should reel, collapse and flicker out completely, we'd be there before rigor mortis set in, to stand over the corpse and chant, "We told you so!"

"Archie" had been here long enough to lose a lingering aroma of the corned beef and cabbage he serves in "Duffy's Tavern" before we appointed ourselves a sort of second-string reception committee. So we speak with some authority.

Ed Gardner in real life, "Archie," was in process of toasting himself when he fell victim to Radio Life. It was one of those hot days when visions of ice cream sodas, Arctic wastes and sea-blue swimming pools kept projecting themselves into our mind. That appointment with Gardner turned the swimming pool into real stuff. He confesses a liking for lolling in the sun and that's what he was working at on the plot of grass in front of his cabana. It's virtually on the rim of the Hollywood Garden of Allah Hotel's swank swimming pool.

Stretched out in a beach chair, while his friendly, blonde wife frisked about, "Archie," in

swimming trunks, looked cooler than anybody has any right to in such weather. So we immediately opened fire.

"Which of your guests on 'Duffy's Tavern' this year made the biggest hit?"

"Aw, now!" protested Gardner, with his characteristic grin, "You're gonna put me on the spot!"

The dialect may be layed on a bit thick, for the press, but it sounded much like "Archie's" own to our western ears. He was "Archie" to us in appearance, too — long, lean, rugged-featured, with prominent cheekbones, blue eyes, and a dimple in his chin.

Gardner was reluctant to pin the orchids on any one of his program guests, to the exclusion of the others. "They were all wonderful," he opined, sidestepping. "For some strange reason, they all come on the show to get insulted and yet they wind up as our friends.

"It's too bad they behaved themselves so well. I wish I'd had more trouble with guests on the show. It's so much easier to rap somebody than to do Pollyanna.

"We've certainly had a wide variety of them."

He mentioned Martinelli, Jane Cowl, Tallulah Bankhead, Clifton Fadiman, Oscar Levant, Ray Milland, Mary Martin, Akim Tamiroff, Kate Smith, Deems Taylor, Ilka Chase, Milton Berle.

"When Berle was booked, I thought 'Here comes Berle! Here comes trouble!' He usually hogs the laughs. But I was wrong. He went out of his way to point up our best lines.

"The night Herbert Marshall was on, we were doing a Greek Relief benefit show afterward at Madison Square Garden. I started out in show business as a writer and director, not as an actor, you know. When I got into this 'Archie' part accidentally, it took me a while to get used to it. At first, the sight of a studio audience terrified me, and when I get out on the stage without a mike in front of me, I get positively sick.

"At that Greek Relief benefit, I stood up there ten or twenty minutes without getting a single laugh. Marshall didn't get any either. He was reading as serious telegram and 'Archie' was telling jokes. But we both got the same number of chuckles—none. So we went out afterward and had ourselves a hilarious celebration."

"And what kind of pal did Marshall turn out to be? Witty?" asked Radio Life.

"A very fine partner," grinned "Archie." "But I don't know about his wit. Mine got so good I didn't give him a chance to let me find out."

We darkly suspected "Archie" of seizing an opportunity to spread the butter a bit thicker on his bread, but after much wrinkling of the brow, he finally presented the poisies for the best guest performance to the sponsor of "Duffy's Tavern."

"Lee Bristol, the sponsor, put a lot of professionals to shame as a guest," he confided. "He came on the last show this year and gave such a good performance everybody thought he was an actor. The fact is, I have two reasons to be in Hollywood. One

is to make the movie version of 'Duffy's Tavern.' The other is to agent Bristol for pictures. All I have to do after I land him a contract is to sell him on signing! It shouldn't take more than five or ten years."

"Don't be surprised if you walk down Hollywood Boulevard some night and see some theater marquee all ablaze with 'The Minute Rubs of 1944' or 'Sal Hepatica Nights,' starring Lee Bristol.

"The idea of the program the night Bristol was on was to kid the sponsors," continued Gardner. "Every so often, the agency comes up with some kind of a chart reminding us that what we think doesn't matter; it's what the average listener thinks that counts in putting over the show.

"Well, it a generally-recognized fact that just as soon as the average listener becomes consciously a critic, his opinion isn't worth a darn. As our 'average listener,' we used 'Finnegan, the jerk.' We auditioned the show for him. According to that 'scientific test,' the trombone player was the most popular guy in the whole show! To make the 'audition' smell just as bad as possible, we wrote in a lot of bum jokes. It turned out that those were the cracks that got the biggest laughs!"

Unless a problem is solved, it appears the atmosphere of refinement at "Duffy's Tavern" ("where the elite meet t' eat") may not be quite up to par for a time. In the past "Archie" and "Miss Duffy" have jointly shared the back-breaking responsibility for maintaining that aura of culture.

At the time of our interview, Gardner had been unable to find a successor to Shirley Booth, his ex-wife, for the role of 'Duffy's' daughter."

The actor (producer, director, writer; ex-stenographer, train dispatcher and salesman) was pessimistic about the possibility of finding a worthy successor anywhere.

"That part was written around Shirley originally," he reminded us. "I've auditioned about 100 girls in New York and here. If, by the grace of good luck, the right one comes along, fine. But we don't want to sell the part short. We'll probably have to develop a new girl character and write 'Miss Duffy' out of the script."

It seems "Miss Duffy's" Brooklynese is the hurdle the applicants can't surmount.

When Little Nell lisps, 'Everybody says I sound exactly like Shirley Booth,' I say, "Then let them all chip in and pay your salary, because I'm the guy that doesn't think so." That Brooklyn dialect is murder." (His pronunciation didn't quite make it "moider.") A Southern drawl or almost any other dialect can be faked. But that Brooklyn twist just about has to be real. If girls who want to play 'Miss Duffy' say they graduated from the Sorbonne or Radcliffe, I ask them where they went to grade school. That's what counts in the way they do the lingo."

"Is that where you got it down so pat?" we giggled.

"That's right," said "Archie." "I went to Public School No. 4 in Astoria, Long Island, where I was born. They talk the same language

there as they do in Brooklyn—and the same goats walk in the alleys."

Gardner recalls that he skipped several grades at that school and was the youngest lad in his graduation class. His report cards gave him "A" for effort and studies but "C" in conduct. That he was an only child may have been partly the reason. He was especially bright in music and gave a concert on the piano, sponsored by his music school, when he was only seven years old.

Possibly Archie's oft-admitted interest in the arts stems from that early training and his lifelong, but entirely untaught, dabbling in art. The mention of music brought us to the realization that we had not asked "Archie" a single question relating to the finer things in life.

We can't let this opportunity pass without asking you something about your preferences in the field of art, Mr. Gardner," we said. "Who, by the way, is your favorite conductor of symphonic music? Tchaikowsky? Damaroff? Jansen?"

"There was a conductor on the old Steinway line out of Astoria I liked better than any of 'em—Harry Theis. I'm not quite sure whether he was symphonic or Presbyterian."

We endeavored further to draw him out on the subject of culture. He spoke readily and fluently on the subject.

"I imagine if I knew what it was, I'd probably think it was a very fine thing if I didn't overdo it. I always wondered where it began and ended.

"It's just about the same with culture as it is with a guy who's drinking whiskey. If you put it up

to the normal guy, he doesn't know where either one of them starts or stops. If he's been drinking and you ask him whether he's drunk or sober, he always says, 'I'm sober.' If you talk to people about culture, they always say, 'I'm cultured'—or try to give you that impression—if they don't know where it starts. Me, I think it's more fun to write a book than to read it."

Gardner had just finished writing "Duffy's First Reader," which is coming out in the fall.

Had he any plans for the general uplift of culture in Southern California during his stay?

"If there's anything I can do to tear it down, I'll be very happy to," said he, and settled his six-feet, one and a half inches more comfortably in the beach chair.

RADIO LIFE, September 5, 1943

NEW YORK HICK

A score of U.S. celebrities have gone as guests to *Duffy's Tavern* (Blue Network, Tues., 8:30 p.m., E.W.T.) and come away thoroughly buffooned. The buffoon is Bar-keep Archie, a likable mug strictly from Brooklyn, who shares the great American love of irreverent ribbing.

Last week Archie toyed with the uncommunicative Cinecomic Roland Young ("I think his mother was frightened by a clam"). In its time *Duffy's* has found similar salutes for shapely dancer Vera Zorina ("The terpsicorpse from

the ballet"), *Information Please's* Clifton Fatiman ("What do you know—besides everything?"), portly Elsa Maxwell ("Speaking of the Four Hundred, how are you and the other 398?"), and the Lone Ranger, whom Archie steadily addressed as Lone ("Lone, say hello to little Wilfred").

Archie is a lean mischievous, battered six-footer named Ed Gardner, who declares: "Your true New York mug doesn't say toity-toid or erl. He's about half way between oyster and erster." Gardner's indignities are delivered with a kazoo-voiced good nature which keeps everybody happy, including his victims. Three writers turn out the original script, but the final version is practically all Gardner ("The boys do a rough draft and I tear it down"). The result is grade-A American foolery.

In two years *Duffy's* has acquired about 7,000,000 steady listeners. Prisoners at San Quentin (their warden's name is Duffy) like the show so much that they call their jail *Duffy's Tavern*. The program contains some of radio's oddest characters. Duffy, proprietor of a Third Avenue saloon where "the elite meet to eat," never shows up, is merely a stubborn Irish character on the telephone. Another off-stage character is a man with two heads named Two-Top Grushkin, who once attended a masquerade as a pair of book ends holding a book entitled *My Son, My Son*. Man-crazy Miss Duffy, the boss's daughter and pure Tenth Avenue, is Gardner's pretty, redheaded ex-wife, actress Shirley Booth

(*My Sister Eileen, Tomorrow the World*).

Ed Gardner was born Eddie Poggenburg over a butcher shop in Astoria, L.I., 39 years ago, the only child of Irish-German parents. His father was an ornamental plasterer and semi-pro baseball player. Eddie's first job was playing piano in a saloon. He quit school at 16 because his parents did not want him overeducated.

Gardner was selling pianos when he met Shirley Booth at a friend's house. His opening was typical: "Little girl, you need awakening." She replied that apparently he needed sleep. They were soon married. Mrs. Gardner joined a stock company in Springfield, Mass., and her husband sold miniature golf courses. Mrs. Gardner began making money and a name for herself. Ed was distressed ("I'm a very buck-concious fellow"). To one "dizzy dame" who tittered "And is this Mr. Booth?" He snarled: "Yes, John Wilkes."

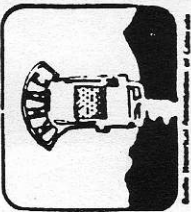
But marriage introduced Gardner to the inside of show business. Gradually he worked into producing, directing and writing radio shows. Now the sole owner of *Duffy's* (where they catch the "after bingo crowd"), he nets about \$2,000 a week. Gardner admits that he himself is indistinguishable from his character Archie. After a recent broadcast a woman towed her young son up to Gardner and pleaded: "Talk to him like Archie." Said the astonished Gardner: "How else?"

TIME, June 21, 1943

RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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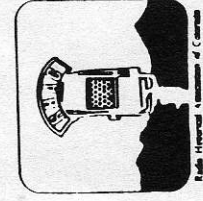
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HAPPY NEW YEAR!



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