

# RETURN WITH US NOW...

The Radio Historical  
Association of Colorado, Inc.



Volume 20, Number 11

June, 1995



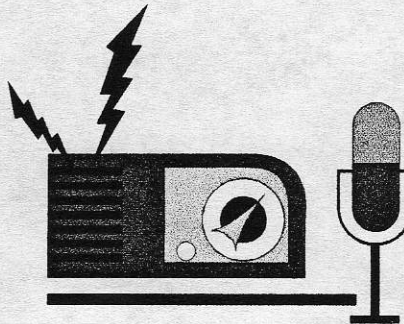
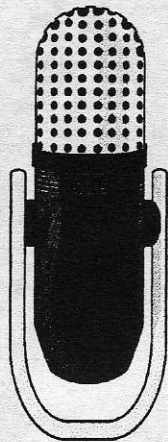
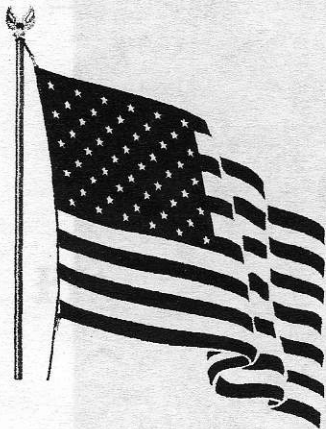
**Phil Harris and Alice Faye, married in 1941, starred together in *The Fitch Bandwagon* 1946-1948, before beginning *The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show*, 1948-1954.**



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING:** There will be a board meeting June 1, 1995, at the Dick King horse farm at 6 p.m., 9470 W Titan Rd. Take Santa Fe south and it becomes US 85 as it goes south of Littleton. Continue south of Littleton 4 to 5 miles to traffic light at westbound Titan Road. 2-1/2 miles west. Farm is on south side of Titan Road. All members are invited and encouraged to attend.



There will NOT be a regular monthly meeting in June, 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 \$25.00 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 Boost

We are very pleased that May has finally come to an end. We can only hope that we will now have some spring or summer weather.

Our May RHAC meeting had a good turnout of members to meet our guests, Jeanne Bates and Alice Backes. John Rayburn did another great job of interviewing the ladies and getting them to talk about their various experiences during the earlier parts of their careers in radio, TV, and the screen. I say "earlier parts" of their careers since both ladies are still active and gave us a few days of their busy schedules to come to Denver for RHAC.

Like all others that managed to make a living in the entertainment

industry, both ladies had great personalities and our club members enjoyed meeting them and talking with them one-on-one.

We heard that the Denver area had a whole eight days without rain during the month of May. It was a lovely sunny day when we took our guests to visit Red Rocks Amphitheater and the Royal Gorge. The following day we visited the Leadville area through a snowstorm. Nevermind, it was warm in the car. That should serve as a good example as to why some refer to the high country as "Never Summer Country."

Between rains at our horse farm we have managed to get another pasture planted with summer forage.

Our construction company is trying to put up additional buildings. Their progress has been very slow because of the rain and mud. We

still have not had it dry enough to complete our tree planting project. However, the Forest Service has protected the trees in styrofoam blocks that should protect them until planting time. When the ground firms enough, we will get equipment in for digging holes for the trees. No, we will not do that task with shovels. We don't intend to let our hobby make us physically miserable!

We certainly wish we could advise you of July Anniversary activities, but we cannot. Hoped for activities just have not developed and cannot be counted upon for July. If anything does develop for later in the summer, we will keep you informed.

John Rayburn advises us that John Dunning hopes to have his new Old Time Radio Encyclopedia published early next year.



# All the World Loves a Bandleader

By Betty Mills

Wednesday, 7 p.m., NBC

Looking for Phil Harris on a Columbia Picture set last week was like looking for a steak in the butcher shop. Grips, technicians, and the director were quite prominently on display, but no Phil. At last he strolled into view, garbed in a well-cut tuxedo, reading a newspaper—with a blindfold on his eyes. It was a very strange sight, indeed.

"It's a nice trick if you can do it," Phil confided. The bandleader who substitutes for Kay Kyser this summer, flashed his famous Harris smile. "But I was really peeking. See, like this," said he, popping the blindfold back on his eyes. "I look like I'm all decked out to play blind-man's bluff with my kids."

Phil was in the midst of shooting a scene for his latest picture, "I Love A Bandleader"—"That's me," laughed Harris referring to the title. "All the world loves a bandleader—I hope."

For the past fifteen years it *has* looked as if all the world loves a bandleader. At least Phil Harris has gratefully found it so. Starting his tenth season next fall with *Jack Benny*, he seems well on his way to another fifteen years (or as many as he desires) as the brash, brazen—but oh, so likeable—guy with the baton.

When *Radio Life* called upon Phil we weren't at all surprised to find a soft-spoken, well-mannered, almost shy man in place of the wise-acre

with whom we like to laugh on radio. By his associates, we had been told countless stories of Harris' kindness, easy-going temperament, and unfailing sense of humor.

"He's a great guy," Phil's business manager related to us. "Everybody likes him. The grips on the set, even the kid who sweeps the floor thinks he's a king. I've been with him for twenty years and I've never seen Phil be unreasonable or refuse to listen to both sides of a question."

As we watched Phil, we noticed he seemed to radiate happiness. He laughed and joked with everyone. Later joining us on the sidelines of the set, he sat down and wiped his brow. "Wish I could take a quick dip in my pool. But who doesn't?"

Usually sporting a deep tan, Phil is at present only a light brown because his picture commitments have kept him indoors. "Ah, but next month," he grinned, "Alice, the kids and I are going to take our first vacation in years."

Upon mentioning his wife, Alice Faye, and the "kids," Phil smiled lovingly and looked very much the devoted husband and doting father.

Having temporarily retired from the screen, Alice has just finished starring in her first picture since the birth of little one-year-old Phyllis. Alice Jr., is three.

"It's little Alice's third birthday tomorrow. But I won't be there for the party. I'm flying to San Francisco tonight for the Benny show. Gosh, I wish I could be with her," said Papa Harris looking very crest-fallen.

At home in Encino, Phil and Alice live a very quiet life. Things have changed since the days when they both were so active as night club entertainers. Now it is the two little girls who run the Harris way of living. After Phil's brief vacation with

his family, he returns to the airlines to fill *Kay Kyser's* vacated spot as head of the "*College of Musical Knowledge*."

Particularly anxious for this day's shooting to be finished, Phil wanted to rush home to his daughter. "The little one"—(one-year-old Phyllis)—"might still be up. And I want to wish Alice Jr. a very happy birthday. We usually spend an hour together at night before she goes to sleep."

"I wish you could see that kid. She's a little blonde-haired, blue-eyed doll. And what a ham! We think she shows talent—and no crack about her parents either—but it may be too early to tell. She loves to carry on telephone conversations and if we don't watch her she's always in big Alice's perfume."

Friends say the two little Misses Harris are perfect ladies. Maybe papa is inclined to spoil them a little but mama, who is a bit more practical, is always on hand to see that they maintain their equilibrium.

As for future plans for the two youngsters, Phil admitted he and Alice had none yet. "Of course, they'll go to school but their careers are their own."

As for his own plans, Phil intends to keep on wielding his baton on the summer Kaiser show and in the fall, again with Benny. Apparently wife, Alice, will return to the role of being a happy housewife and mother.

Breaking for lunch, Phil graciously invited us to share the hamper basket he had with him. "Much simpler this way. And so much better," he explained bringing into view a luscious chicken sandwich. "You see, Alice made it. She packs my lunch every day."

# On the Road With the Rover Boys

Sunday, 5:30 p.m., NBC

Peaceful family scenes, these. But not by mere air, rail, nor ship on the sea did Phil Harris reach this Paradise of Home Life after landing in New York with the *Jack Benny* troupe.

In London, while on tour with the gang last summer, Phil made a flashy purchase. A four-cylinder twenty-seven miles to the gallon, Triumph convertible, steering wheel on the right-hand side. This jolly British model was shipped across the Atlantic and was waiting for Phil when he docked. It was sheer love of adventure (and a brand-new toy) which decided our Rover Boys, Phil and guitar-playing Frank Remley (The Original), to make the last lap of their trip by open road.

We can't imagine many things so joyous as Phil and Frankie alone with a road map, in an English touring car, on the great highways of America.

When they arrived to collect the car at the New York agency, the boys behaved true to type. The agent carefully inquired if they knew how to drive it, and with grandiloquent gestures of "Sure! Sure!" Phil and Frankie roared out into traffic without the tiresome details of instruction. It was while they were wheeling around Central Park, after a happy afternoon of sightseeing, that the travelers noticed "she seemed about ready to boil." It developed the car had four gears, and that for twenty-five miles they had been running her in "first" instead of "fourth."

After this first mishap the boys drove with instruction book in hand, and at a speed close to thirty, all the way to Chicago.

They hit a cloudburst in New Jersey, with rain well over the curbs and uncomfortably close to the cars six-inch clearance. Frankie was at the wheel, and Phil reached over to

turn on the lights. The motor stopped dead. While traffic piled up on every side of them, the boys stared about in panicky exasperation. Their frantic fumbblings at the dashboard solved the case. Phil had hit the key instead of the light switch, and a quick flip of the wrist sent the travelers on their way.

Whenever they hit town, the boys became the center of attention. The crowds which gathered to admire the Triumph, lift its hood, poke at its trappings and run envious hands over its lovely aluminum finish, were so terrific that the boys had to eat their meals in shifts. "If one of us hadn't stayed with it, says Phil, "they'd have worn it out before we ever got here."

They had to change oil every 500 miles, and it was a problem to find narrow enough grease racks. In one garage, a colored boy stood by, gazing in amazement at the trim and tiny car. "Man," he finally observed, "they must have plucked that one before it was ripe."

Before Frankie began the trip, he'd exacted certain conditions... that they'd detour to visit his three home towns: Moorehead, Minnesota, Valley City, North Dakota and Fargo, North Dakota. "And you never saw a guy so popular as Frankie in every one of them," adds Phil. The car caused such a commotion, parked on the street, the fellows couldn't get any sleep, until the Wallwork Ford Agency in Fargo and Kerncamp and Johnson Agency in Valley City volunteered their show windows as storage spots overnight!

The travelers drove most of the trip with their top down, and have suntans to prove it. They went slowly, "because if something had hit us, there'd have been nothing for us to do but get on the train and come home." (Parts for the car are available only in New York and California.)

"They were driving along fine," through Montana, and remarking how cool she was keeping, when they were aghast to see that the temperature gauge had gone so high that "it was trying to break the glass and get out!" As Frankie says: "Gosh, neither of us knows anything about an

automobile, except that you put gas and oil in it and it goes," so they raised the hood and peered inside. In an anxious study of the motor, the travelers decided "It must be the fan belt" (which was flapping about in shreds).

They reached the Ford agency in Livingston, Montana, with their terrible problem, and to their great delight it was discovered that a Chevrolet piece fit! (As a precaution, the boys bought the agency's complete supply, and the back end of the car is now loaded with Chevy fan belts.) As Phil and Frankie prepared to leave, the shopman wrote out their bill. "Name?" he asked. "Phil Harris," said Phil. There was a great pause. "The Phil Harris who's on the radio? My gosh! Wait'll I get my wife on the phone!" The garage magically became Grand Central Station, a reporter from the local newspaper arrived for a "quote," and the travelers were celebrated until the last fond wave, "goodbye."

The rest of their journey, through Wyoming, Utah and Nevada, was comparatively uneventful, with the usual crowds collecting to admire the Triumph and ask questions at every stop.

"But I have to tell this one on Frankie," say Phil, "Whenever anybody asked me who I was, I'd tell them. Then I'd say, 'By the way, I want you to meet Frank Remley.' At the mention of his name they'd scream, like for Sinatra. But Frankie's a perfect gentleman, and he'd always add, 'Well, I'm the *real* Frank Remley, but my voice wasn't suited for the radio part, so a wonderful actor named Elliott Lewis plays me on the air.'"

"So, in this one little town, a very cute girl came up to the car, and when I introduced her to Remley, she said, 'Ohhhh! Frank Remley! Ohhhhh!' While she was still trying to recover, Frankie touched me on the shoulder:

"Phil' he whispers, 'do me a favor? I promise faithfully I'll tell her the truth, but please, just this once, can I stall it for and hour?'"

RADIO and TELEVISION LIFE, November 21, 1948

# Two Guys From N.Y.

By Evelyn Bigsby

Double-handedly, Dick Chevillat and Ray Singer write the weekly *The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show*. "All the jokes are 'ours,'" commented Ray when asked who did which on the scripts.

"Yeah, it's fifty-fifty," said Dick. "It must be, because I'm not getting any more money than Ray is." Just the kind of repartee you'd expect from two fellows who write such snappy stuff that they have to allow four and a half to five minutes on each Sunday's show just to take care of audience laughs.

Ray and Dick may be fifty-fifty on scripts, but they are as far apart personally as 0 and 100. Except for a few things. They were both born in New York and they both dislike New York. "We both like women," kidded Ray when we asked him what other likes he and Dick had in common. "And we agree politically," he added seriously.

"Dick's the calm, easy going type," pursued Ray. "Nothing bothers him and everything bothers me. Working and as people, we learn a lot from one another. Dick has taught me to relax and I've taught him to push."

Perhaps it is their difference in temperament and background that makes congenial and effective team-mates of Dick and Ray. Ray came from a show-business family, Dick didn't, but both of them arrived at radio scripting by devious methods involving such occupations as bridge builder (Dick), Wall Street runner (Ray), Paris travel agent (Dick), hosiery salesman, door-to-door (Ray). Perfect backgrounds for situation comedy like *The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show*, for one or the other of

the boys is sure to have had experience in almost any kind of situation.

The team of Singer-Chevillat keeps regular office hours in Hollywood's Taft Building. Ray and Dick take Mondays off, but every other weekday finds them at their desks from 9:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. They prefer such a schedule because they both are "family men."

Dick lives in Laurel Canyon with his wife and two boys, Bruce, eight, and Terry, three and a half. He has been in California since 1939 and first met Ray when Singer joined the Sealtest writing staff on which Dick was already engaged with three other scripters. Gradually the corps dwindled until only Dick and Ray were left and they wrote the show alone. "Went through four stars," quips Dick, "Vallee, Joan, Haley and Arden."

Chevillat started his radio work with the Marx Brothers and, immediately before going on the Sealtest staff, wrote for Bergen. He wrote his first radio script after listening to a Benny show. Benny liked it and bought five others for \$25 apiece, but Dick never heard them broadcast, so guessed they ended up in the vault or Jack's wastebasket.

Ray, who has a wife, a girl (Laurie, six years) and a boy (John, three) crashed radio-writing when he criticized Henny Youngman's spot in the Kate Smith show and was challenged to do better. Then he made up some material for the "The Zany Show," with Charlie Cantor, Mark Warnow, Barry Wood, Larry Marx and Vince Bogart. Through acquaintanceship with Allan Reed (Reed and Ray's father were in business) Ray landed on the old Phil Baker staff and then went on to Milton Berle's "Stop Me If You've Heard This One," Berle's "Three Ring Time," "Kraft Music Hall," and Bergen (one week, because the Sealtest offer came up). Dick and Ray have now been associated as a team for seven years. They have also done a few pictures together, the latest, "Neptune's Daughter," starring Red Skelton and Ester Williams.

Chevillat and Singer have a rather unusual way of writing the *The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show*. They don't assign each other different "spots," nor do they each do a complete story line and then combine the best of both drafts. They actually sit down together and dictate to their secretary. They are always about six ideas ahead on the story lines and a week ahead on the scripts. The boys do very little rewriting and usually have to cut only five or six minutes of their material.

They think their one definite contribution to the *The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show* has been the brother-in-law, "Willie" has made it possible for Alice no longer to serve as "heavy" on the show, and she has thus become a more sympathetic character in the process. "She has three children—two girls and a boy," Dick pointed out. "She really has four—two girls and two boys, one boy adopted, if you count Frankie," Ray added.

"We think Phil has to be a believable and lovable character on the show," Dick explained. "He couldn't play the same character on his own show that he did on Benny's, where he was a stooge. Frankie evolved because he was one of several characters who became important to the show. It's a natural, because nearly everybody knows the married guy who has a single friend who needles him the way Remley needles "Curly."

As far as Dick and Ray are concerned, they like best the show which they have done for two Christmases. Jack Benny is in it and it closes with a fantasy. The boy claim it made the two hard-boiled Benny writers cry.

Ray always keeps track of the laughs that their lines get on the air. He has his own private system of grading—one for a snicker, two for a yuck, three for a belly laugh and four for the lines that stop the show.

Both Dick and Ray like the way the Harris-Faye cast read those lines. Oh, yes. There's one more thing Dick and Ray agree on. They both like Phil and Alice.

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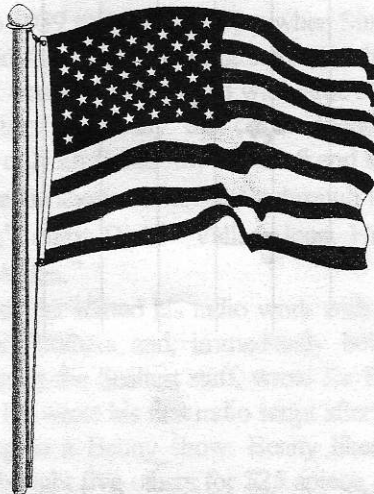
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