

RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO
1975

RETURN WITH US NOW...

Volume 20, Number 12

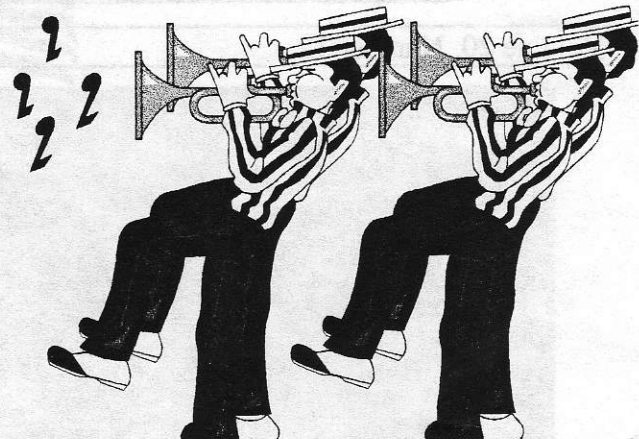
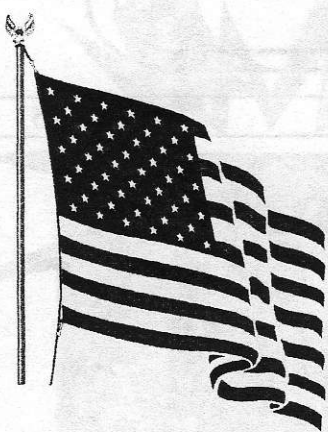
July 1995



Gale Gordon - Active in radio from the early thirties in *Big Town*; *The Great Gildersleeve*; *Johnny Madero* and more, he will always be remembered for *Fibber McGee and Molly* (Old Timer, etc.) and as Osgood Conklin on *Our Miss Brooks*.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: There will be a board meeting will be 7 p.m., August 3rd at Glenn Ritter's home. All members are invited.

There will NOT be a regular monthly meeting in July, 1995. There will be a picnic 2p.m., July 15 at Dick King's, 900 W Quincy Ave., Englewood CO (Rain date: July 22.)



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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 - CORRESPONDING SECRETARY: David L Michael (as above)

From the

King's Beest

Summer has finally arrived! We went from a day in the forties to Summer all within a twenty-four hour period.

We are working with the *Colorado Antique Radio Club* and radio station KEZW for a little presentation at the old country school house at Belmar Park on September 19th and followed by our regular club meeting on September 21st to remember our club's 20th anniversary. We have not yet invited guests to come to Denver but will do so in the near future. Rick Crandell of KEZW thinks he may have some young people that would be thrilled to have the opportunity to work with some of the people that made radio such a vital part of our lives. We hope that we will be able to introduce some newcomers to our pleasurable hobby.

We are not doing anymore fencing at our farm. That project is now finished and we were able to enjoy a pleasant ride this morning and top it off with a short visit by John and Carol Rayburn who stopped by just as we were putting the horses away. It has been a little over a year since we bought the bare ground and it has been almost ten months since we started our building and fencing projects. We are now ready to enjoy the results of our labors. We are not able to enjoy riding in Chatfield Park much because of the high water. Chatfield dam was built as a flood control dam after the 1965 floods, and although it seldom had more than a big recreation lake for people to enjoy, it is now performing as it

was intended, controlling flood waters from the melting snows in the high country. Can you imagine?! Skiing is still open on the regular ski runs - not glacier skiing!

We are through with this year's spring planting of trees and bushes. Altogether we planted 343 plants, but we did it the lazy way, using a posthole digger on the tractor to dig twelve inch holes for the plants. We have a water tank on a trailer to water them, but we have had so much rain that we will just be start-

ing the water project in July.

We will give you more information about the September activities next month, after we have a chance to make more plans.

WANTED: A member wants a copy of the last twenty-four hours of broadcast of KIMN. Any format: cassette, reel, video. If you can help, please phone Dick or Maletha King at 761-4139.

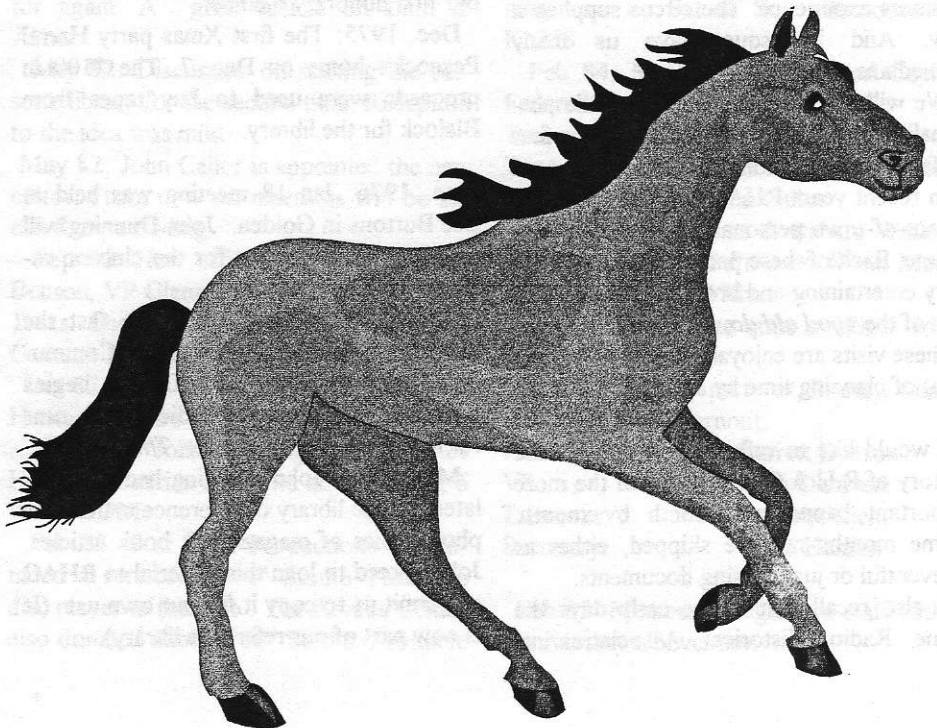
Although it really did not feel like picnic time when we planned it, July 15th will be a great time for our club picnic! We will have a little getting ready, but the members and their spouses all pitch in to make it very easy to have our picnic each year. We are looking forward to having you all as guests at our house on July 15th.

LET'S HAVE A PICNIC !

We will have...
fresh roasted Corn-on-the-Cob and Hamburgers.

You should bring...a covered dish, a place setting and beverages.

Picnic ! 2 p.m., July 15, 900 W Quincy Ave



R.H.A.C. at 20...

reflections on the early years

by John Adams

RHAC has attempted five old time radio conventions. None of these attempts resulted in any kind of financial profit, nor were they intended to be of financial benefit to the club. The idea was not to make a profit. Better, the idea was to meet the old time radio personalities. We have met many old time radio personalities and they are always fascinating.

RHAC has had guests from California and from the East Coast. Denver has also provided RHAC with many entertaining radio personalities from the past.

After having heard many personalities speak of their backgrounds, the most obvious observation seems to be that many people who have made careers in radio have either come for the middle-west or have spent much of their early years in the middle-west.

Radio people have come from all walks of life. Most commonly we have heard them describe very low pay in the beginning. Many began with stage experience and some came from families with show business experience. The circus supplied a few. And burlesque gave us many comedians.

We will not attempt to name all the personalities who have visited RHAC for fear of failing to name some.

In recent years RHAC has been bringing in out-of-town personalities one or two at a time. Each of these personalities has been very entertaining and brought us many stories of the *good old days of radio*.

These visits are enjoyable but they require a lot of planning time by a very few people.

I would like to reflect upon the life and history of R.H.A.C. and speak of the more important happenings month by month. Some months may be skipped, either as uneventful or just missing documents.

I also recall that in the early days the name Radio Historical Association of

Colorado was frequently mistaken as a group of collectors of old radio sets.

July 1975, Volume 1, Number 1:

14 people gathered at Harral Peacock's home in Northglenn, Colorado, for the first meeting. Each member was asked to bring one reel of his best old radio shows to the next meeting to form the beginning of a library from which members could rent tapes for 50 cents. Meetings would be each month at members homes.

It is *important* to remember that all these people in 1975 had been listening to John Dunning's Old Time Radio show on a local station, KFML. Peacock phoned Dunning on the air and an "on air" invitation was made for interested people to attend a meeting for the purpose of beginning a club. And it began!

Aug. 1975: Blalock donated copies of his rental library catalog for members use.

Sep. 1975: Radio Historical Association of Colorado was chosen as the name of the club.

President: Harral Peacock

Vice-President: John Adams

Secretary-Treasurer: Mary Peacock

Five dollars was assessed of each member to cover the cost of postage for mailings.

Oct. 1975: John Adams held the meeting at his home. 20 people attended. John Dunning was an invited guest and became our first honorary member.

Dec. 1975: The first Xmas party Harral Peacock's home on Dec. 7. The \$100 in proceeds were used to buy tapes from Blalock for the library.

Jan. 1976: Jan 18 meeting was held at Lee Burtons in Golden. John Dunning will do some book reviews for the club on radio & personalities.

Feb. 1976: Club growing so fast the meeting is held at the Thornton Community Center building. Tom Daniels begins an article on Network Radio which runs for months in the newsletter, *This is OTR*.

Mar. 1976: John Dunning had accumulated a large library of reference material in photocopies of magazine & book articles. John agreed to loan this material to RHAC to permit us to copy it for our own use. (It is now part of our reference library).

Apr. 1976: The meeting was held at Wyatt's Cafeteria in Cherry Creek. Jerry Appleman arranged for our first guest speaker, Bob Lee. 45 people attended.

Jun. 1976: A large newsletter of 18 pages marked the RHAC first anniversary. A great turnout greeted guest speaker Jim Hawthorne at the Wyatt's meeting. Harral Peacock wrote an RHAC historical review of year one.

Jul. 1976: John Lloyd takes over as editor of the newsletter. Meetings moved to St. Barnabas Church on Vine St. on Sunday afternoon. Orders were taken for John Dunning's book *Tune In Yesterday* for fall delivery.

Nov. 1976: John Lloyd joined with the Buffalo, NY, club for a 20-page newsletter titled *Radio News*.

Dec. 1976: 20 RHAC members volunteered to help channel 6 with their fund drive.

Jan 77: John Dunning was guest speaker and autographed copies of his book *Tune in Yesterday*.

Mar 77: RHAC meets at Tara Hills clubhouse in southeast Denver.

Apr 77: Dan Danbom becomes editor of newsletter. Public Service Co. helps with printing costs.

Jul 77: RHAC has its first summer picnic in the mountains but only a few show up.

Aug 77: RHAC moves meetings to Majestic Savings Bank on S. Colo. Blvd. at University Hills. Sep 77: RHAC dues increase to \$8. Dan Danbom gives notice to leave as editor.

Nov 77: RHAC meeting at Wyatt's. New officers elected: Pres. Irving Hale, VP Ernie Jesson, Treasurer Joe Madden, Editor John Lloyd.

Dec 77: Christmas dinner at Golden Ox, Denver Post writer Clark Secrest was guest speaker. Large attendance. RHAC helps channel 6 with fund drive.

Jan 78: Meeting at Majestic Savings. Guest speaker: Mary Vagel of radio station KFML (Dunning's station).

Feb 78: Rental fee increase for tape rental to \$1. Available for rental, 51 reels. Rod Button proposed establishing a

cassette library, discussed and approved. (Cassette library failed after six months).

Apr 78: RHAC meeting discussion proposing an exhibition at Villa Italia Shopping Center promoting new membership. Current membership about 100.

May 78: We had guest speakers from the religious radio station KPOF; significant is that KPOF is the oldest radio station in Denver, having begun in 1927, and they exhibited the original microphone used at the station. Plans were presented at the meeting to incorporate RHAC. Also announced that Dunning began his OTR show at KFML-TV in Mar.

Jul 78; Vol 4, No.1: Picnic in Wash. Park; turnout fair. John Lloyd has newsletter history of RHAC.

Aug 78: Pete Smythe was guest speaker at Bonanza Steak House. Great turnout for small room.

Oct 78: Following are new officers: Pres. John Lloyd, VP John Adams, Treas. Joe Madden, Editor Irving Hale. Irving presents his 12 Minute Cassette he made back stage with Vincent Price. Plan approved to sell the original tape library at one dollar a reel.

Apr 79: Board of Directors approved raising dues to \$10./Yr. Members did not object.

Jun 79: A new two page issue of RHAC By-Laws was issued and printed in the newsletter.

Sep 79: It took a lot of phone calls to raise 15 People to help on the channel 6 fund raiser.

Oct 79: New officers: Pres. Jack Richards, VP Barrett Benson, Treas. John Migrala, Editor Jim Vaughn.

Dec 79: Christmas Dinner was at Western Sizzler; big turnout.

Jan 80: Meetings at Majestic Savings. 16 volunteered for channel 6 fund drive.

Feb 80: Guest speaker: Jack Fitzpatrick. John Lloyd announced that correspondence with Anchor Hocking Glass had brought us the entire run of *Casey, Crime Photographer*. Help given by SPERD-VAC to copy the discs to tape. This brought library to 219 reels.

Apr 80: Guest at Wyatt's was Bob Petre. Editor Jim Vaughn moved to Calif. Jack Richards became temporary editor, for a month.

May 80: A running log of *Sears Radio Theater* begun in the Newsletter. Sears was changed to *Mutual Radio Theater*; log supplied by Jerry Appleman. John Lloyd takes over as Editor.

Jun 80: *Sears & or Mutual Radio Theater* covered shows in themes of Western, Comedy, Love, Mystery, & Adventure.

Aug 80: The last log of *Radio Mutual Theater* is published in Dec newsletter.

Dec 80: Christmas Dinner 14 people show up.

Jan/Feb 81: Meetings held at Allstate office building. Craig Anderson is new editor. Pres. Barrett Benson, VP Glenn Ritter.

Mar 81: New Home for RHAC is South West State Bank of Federal Blvd. (This location lasted for about 6 months).

May 81: Craig Anderson gave up the editorship, so faithful John Lloyd takes over for the fourth time.

Jul 81: Paul Anderson takes over as editor (not related to Craig).

Sep 81: A reprint of the by-laws was printed for members. The meeting was held at the Yum-Yum Tree.

Feb 82: Guess what? John Lloyd is Editor again. A great article on Lum & Abner.

Mar 82: Discussion on starting the cassette library for the second time. Reception to the idea was mild.

May 82: John Callor is appointed the new editor. From now on meetings will be social & tape trading.

Sep 82: New officers are Pres. Barrett Benson, VP Glenn Ritter, Treas. Dick Henry, Editor John Callor, Cassette Librarian is John Migrala.

Oct 82: Plans are for Christmas Dinner at Heritage Square in Golden.

Dec 82: John Dunning will air A 24 Hour OTR series of shows at Christmas, 6 PM to 6 PM.

Feb 83: Star West Productions has donated a serviceable 16" Studio Turntable disc player to the club. The Arvada Center also donated another 16" Studio Turntable

disc player but it will need some maintenance.

Mar 83: Slowly Reels have been added to the Tape Library, first 3 at a time, then 4, but now it is 8 reels at a time. Many Thanks to Barrett Benson for his hard work. Library now stands at 309 reels. Meetings were moved to Moore Realty in SE Denver.

Apr 83: Many thanks to Guy Albright it looks like RHAC has found s new home at the Church of The Master.

May 83: Thanks to John Dunning! He has donated to the club five reels of his interviews with guest celebrities whom he has interviewed on his radio show. Reed Hansen has been supplying great articles to the newsletter each month.

Jul 83: The second Cassette Library is discontinued for lack of interest and is donated to a local school for the blind.

Sep 83: New officers:
John Lloyd President
Guy Albright Vicee-President
John Migrala Treasurer
Reid Hansen Secretary
John Callor Editor

Nov 83: Speaker was Arthur Gaeth, newcaster who covered Nuremburg trials in 1945. Christmas party at Heritage Square Opera House. Weak attendance.

Jan 84: Meeting at SW State Bank. Dunning now on Sat & Sun afternoons on KNUS.

Feb 84: Meeting at Lakewood Capital Federal Savings.

Treasurer: John Licht
Tape Librarian: Elmer Westbrook
Membership: John Callor

Jun 84: John Adams & Babara Watkins interviewed in Feb 6 *Business Week*. Meeting at Church of the Master.

Sep 84: John Callor quits as editor. John Lloyd editor again.

Dec 84: Xmas party at Brandy Chase clubhouse, good turnout.

President: Barrett Benson
VP: Herb Duniven
Treasurer: John Licht
Secretary: Reid Hansen

Feb 85: Members assigned to staff 10th Anniversary Convention

The Radio Historical Association of Colorado

by Herral Peacock

"How would you like to start an old time radio club?", was Mary Peacock's question. "Yes I think that's a good idea" replied Herral Peacock. This conversation led to the beginning of the Radio Historical Association of Colorado. Mary followed through by having an announcement made on John Dunning's show on KFML on Sunday, June 15, 1975 that anyone interested in a club should contact her or Herral. The first responses were from John Adams and Dick Mullins who were already established collectors of old time radio programs. John Lloyd who was the only collector that Herral had traded with, and Dick Mullins met with the Peacocks prior to the first general meeting to discuss directions the club might take, if formed.

On Sunday, June 29, a meeting was held at the Peacock residence with 27 people present. There was agreement that a club should be formed. The first newsletter was mailed in July. Herral Peacock edited the first 5 newsletters with John Lloyd taking over the responsibility in January of 1976. At the second meeting at the Peacock's home the circulating tape library was started as an experiment. Ten reels of shows were donated by collectors and for 50 cent

service fee a member could sign up to have the tape for a week to copy it. The member was then to mail on the reel to the next person on the sign-up list. The experiment has been successful to the point that there are 95 reels now in the club's library. People attending the 3rd meeting in August were asked to complete a questionnaire about the organization of the club. Officers were elected at the meeting with Herral Peacock as President, John Adams as Vice-President and Mary Peacock as Secretary-Treasurer. The fourth meeting in September was the first night gathering and the first away from the Peacock's home. It was held at John Nicholson's residence and cassettes were added to the circulating library. After rather extensive discussion, the group voted the club's name be the *Radio Historical Association of Colorado*. Also at the meeting those who had contributed reels to the library used the accumulated service fees to order \$100 worth of reels from Blalock's recording service. The October meeting was at the home of John Adams. John Dunning was present and elected the first Honorary Member of the RHAC. There was no meeting in November. A party-style meeting was held at the Peacock's in early December. The January meeting was held at the Lee Burton

residence. The constitution of the RHAC received group approval at that time. It was also the last time cassettes were placed in the circulating library due to lack of interest. Three of the last four meetings have been held at the Thornton Community Clubhouse. The exception being the April dinner meeting at Wyatt's Cafeteria which featured guest speaker Bob Lee.

The RHAC has undertaken several worthwhile projects in its first year. Many members have recorded tapes and donated them to the blind. Some have also spent evenings at nursing homes playing tapes there. We have also corresponded with those radio stars who have given us such an enjoyable hobby. We want to let them know we enjoy them now as we did years ago.

We have been able to correspond with other old time radio clubs. We hope to be able to trade newsletters with them, thereby getting new ideas and hopefully giving them some ideas too. It has been a good year. We have a fine organization. We have grown and made good friends. Our second year promises to be even better, -since we will have new members, new ideas, new projects, and new tapes.

From *This is OTR*
(predecessor of *Return With Us Now*)
June, 1976

NOSTALGIC NEWSLETTER HOLDS SPOTLIGHT

by Walter Saunders

A reader called the other day to inquire about which broadcasting publications I study regularly. The first two named — *Variety* and *Broadcasting* — struck a chord of familiarity with the caller. The third — the newsletter of the *Radio Historical Association of Colorado* — brought a period of wondering silence.

Variety is the weekly "show biz bible" which covers, fact, fiction and fantasy about broadcasting and other areas of entertainment.

Variety is so special it even has its own language. For example, in *Variety's* news columns a broadcasting president (there must be at least 5,000 of them) is known as a prez. A network is a web. Thus a story about Robert Wussler, president of CBS-TV, would read "CBS web prez Robert Wussler said . . ."

Broadcasting is the official mouthpiece of the industry. This weekly magazine covers the business thoroughly and professionally. But to say *Broadcasting's* point of view is biased toward broadcasting is like saying Pope Paul's favorite religion is Catholicism.

But my favorite broadcasting publication remains the monthly newsletter of the *Radio Historical Association of Colorado*.

This newsletter is not in the circulation class of *Time* magazine. The newsletter's circulation is around 300, with most going to members of the association.

And the publishers, Mr. and Mrs. John H. Lloyd of Thornton aren't in the same class with *Playboy's* Hugh Hefner when it comes to graphics. In fact, pictures are non-existent.

The newsletter is typed, sent through a duplicating machine and then the pages are stapled together. But the content is pure joy.

The newsletter is not concerned with broadcasting problems of the present but rather with the nostalgic joys of radio's past.

For example, the August edition has a book list on old-time radio, compiled by John Dun-

ning, Denver radio buff who also is gaining national prominence as a mystery writer.

Also featured is a fascinating tale about how the character of Chester on "*Gunsmoke*" evolved from a character referred to as "townsman."

And what would a good nostalgia publication be without a "Whatever became of . . .?" column. This month's column featured Bret Morrison, who formerly played the "*Shadow*" (retired and lives in Palm Springs) and Eddie Rochester Anderson (he lives in semi-seclusion in Los Angeles following a heart attack several years ago).

The month's trivia quiz asked readers to match radio shows with their classical music themes.

Most of you "*I Love a Mystery*" fans know that eerie series featured Sibelius "Valse Triste." Another easy one: Rossini's "William Tell Overture" introduced "*The Lone Ranger*."

But what about "*The Shadow*?" That show's theme was "Omphale's Spinning Wheel" by Saint-Saens.

I also found out that Vicki Vola, who played Miss Miller on "*Mr. District Attorney*," was a recent Denver visitor.

As a bonus, the newsletter had a delightful, tongue-in-cheek story, "The Jack Armstrong Murders," contributed by Chuck Seeley of a radio club in Buffalo N.Y.

This wild, imaginative tale featured Jack Armstrong, Fu Manchu, the Shadow and Sam Spade. Today's TV can't match that cast.

I'm not in the business of selling subscriptions to this publication. But if you're interested contact the Lloyds at 2667 E. 99th Ave., Thornton, 80229

Better yet, you might want to join the association, which operates under the logical premise that Jack Armstrong was more fun than the Six Million Dollar Man.

Rocky Mountain News, August 13, 1976

Editor's Note:

Walter Saunders is and has been for many years the favorite Radio-TV columnist in Denver.

CBS Radio Mystery Theater

Marks 1000th Broadcast
From a CBS Radio Drama
NETWORK PRESS RELEASE

CBS Radio Mystery Theater celebrated its 1000th consecutive night of programming suspense and mystery dramas on Friday, October 1, 1976. "Seven nights a week, 365 days a year since January 6, 1974, we have presented one complete drama a night", says Himan Brown, producer-director of CBS Radio Mystery Theater. "This is unprecedented in the history of radio to program a drama series seven nights a week, but we have done it and received tremendous response from listeners. We are still going strong".

CBS Radio Mystery Theater is heard here in Denver on KOA (850 AM) at 11:07 p.m. Monday thru Saturday and at 4:07 PM on Sun.

This is OTR
(predecessor of *Return With Us Now*)
October 1976

I Remember Radio

by Herral Peacock

My grandfather's chair was the prime object with which I associate my memories of old time radio. Within the secure environs of that piece of furniture I listened hour after hour to the Emerson or other brand of radio set that resided on the nearby table. Before REA brought the miracle of light to that area, there was a car-sized battery under the table to power the receiver.

There were other locales in which I listened to the golden age of radio. In our own home my parents always had that indispensable box that brought the entertainment, the information, the world to one's ear. But, it was in the old farmhouse in Northeast Texas that it now seems I heard every show that brought joy to a young boy's heart.

My grandfather's chair was a lounge, but not the type in vogue over the last 20 years that smell of plastic and recline with a pop-up footrest. No, it was stuffed, padded, cloth-covered chair that had arms and if I lay on the seat of the chair, I could rest my feet on the old, tin family trunk that my grandfather always kept in front of him. He rested his legs and feet on it, too.

The shows that hold the earliest memories for me were the ones on between 4:45 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Central Standard Time. These were the juvenile serials but, after all, at the time I was definitely a juvenile. My recollection is the first show in this afternoon line-up was *Hop Harrigan*, followed by *Captain Midnight*, and then came *Terry and the Pirates*. Yes, I did send for the secret decoder rings, simulated cardboard Cockpits, autographed Pictures and the like, but I don't have them now and don't collect them. My favorite, *Jack Armstrong*, came on at 5:30 p.m. and was followed big *Tom Mix*, as played by Curley Bradley.

While I was still very young, I remember that *I Love A Mystery* scared me so badly that I would back out of the room to escape the sound of the eerie wolf howls. (This must have been some episode from *Bury Your Dead, Arizona*) although I was a "good boy", I relished hearing the antics of Baby Snooks and the misadventures of Henry Aldrich.

Later, but still during World War II years, I developed a fondness for *Fibber McGee and Molly*, *Red Skelton, Truth or Consequences*, and *the Judy Canova Show*. On Sunday afternoon the shows I never missed were *Martin Kane*, *Private Eye* and *the House of Mystery* and later on Sunday evening came *Amos 'n' Andy*.

You may ask, "How; did you spend so much time in your grandfather's chair?" Well, he was out and about the farm most of the time and usually went to bed about sundown. It was "his" chair automatically during news programs which he heard in the morning,

at noon, and around 6:00 p.m. The entertainment shows for which I relinquished the chair were *Lum and Abner* and while it was a serial, *Amos 'n' Andy*.

It was after the war, in my early teens that I developed an appreciation for Jack Benny, Phil Harris, Mel Blanc, Sam Spade, Richard Diamond and *Our Miss Brooks*. My mother and I stayed at my grandfather's place while my Dad was in the service. Therefore, many of these later named shows were not listened to in my grandfather's chair. By the time I was in high school about 1950, the only radio show that made much of an impression was *Escape*.

And then came TV. You know what happened to radio after that. We traded the box you heard for the magic box you could see and hear.

My grandfather's chair is gone.

My memories remain.

Thanks to the magic of magnetic tape, some of the shows remain.

RADIO NEWS,
(another RHAC newsletter name used very briefly)
November 1976

GEORGE BURNS

by John Wells, OTRCOB

Old Time Radio Club of Buffalo

Hollywood's latest rediscovery, George Burns, was born on January 20, 1896, in New York City. I say "rediscovery" because it was a 36 year hiatus between "*Hawaii*" (an MGM feature that starred George and his late wife, Gracie Allen) and "*The Sunshine Boys*", the movie for which he won a Best Supporting Actor Oscar.

Vaudeville in New York City was the start of George's career. He has often said that he would congregate with out of work vaudevillians on the street corners, smoking a cigar, something that made him fit in with the "talent". Now *he* is the one who is imitated.

Life was not exactly perfect; far from it. Then, in about 1923, George met Gracie Allen, who was perfect for him. He found that by writing all his own

material he was supposed to get all the laughs, but he didn't. Gracie soon fixed that. All George had to do was to ask her, "How's the family, Gracie?" and stand back and puff on the ever-present cigar while Gracie put the audience into hysterics.

On radio, George and Gracie starred in *The Robert Burns Panatela Program* along with Guy Lombardo. The show began in 1932 and was carried over the CBS network. The show was very popular, and its popularity was enhanced by Gracie's search for her "long-lost brother." Ads were run in the major daily newspapers, and Gracie popped in on many other shows, even on rival NBC!

Next it was *Burns and Allen*, sponsored by Maxwell House Coffee. The few shows from this series that I have heard are truly great, with the most outstanding character being Mel Blanc in his role of "The Happy Postman", who was anything but.

In the introduction to the biography, *Jack Benny: An Intimate Biography* by Irving Fein, George wrote "...in the entire fifty years I never walked out on Jack when he played the violin, and he never walked out on me when I sang a song. Now that's really putting friendship to the test." In recent months, "Sugarthroat" has been singing quite a bit. One I remember quite well was on the Grammy Awards when he sang a song. Marvin Hamlisch wrote for *The Entertainer*. Gracie was always trying to get George to sing, whether it be with James Melton or Bing Crosby. One Crosby show I have heard has Al Jolson as a guest and Gracie visits at the end of the program. She says, "Bing, I just want you to know that I think you're the second best singer in the world," making Jolson think he's number one in her book. The results are hilarious.

The Burns and Allen Show was on television for eight years and is enjoying a rebirth. A New York City station is carrying it at about two in the morning. In fact, over twenty TV stations are airing the show on a regular basis.

Sunshine Boys is about two old vaudevillians who are re-united after many years for a TV special. They still can't get along, but still they need each other.

As George said as he accepted his Oscar this past March, "It just goes to prove... if you live long enough, you become young again."

Yes, Nathaniel Birnbaum has become young again, making numerous guest appearances on television, doing countless ad campaigns, and now touring the country with Carol Channing.

George Burns, whose suave, sophisticated wit I and many others have grown up with, is an American institution, and we thank him for making our lives richer.

RADIO NEWS
(Newsletter name used very briefly)
November 1976

WATCHING OLD TIME RADIO

by Mary Jessen

Listening to a 1947 *Your Hit Parade* broadcast recently really triggered some emotions; my own voice is on the tape! I was 13 years old at the time, and on that Feb. 17th, like most Saturdays, I arrived at the CBS Vine St. Theater early in the morning even though the *Hit Parade* didn't go on the air until 6 p.m., and again at 9 p.m. It seems odd now; they did two identical live shows, one for the East and Central time zones and another three hours later for local reception at 9 PM. At least that's how it was done during my year in the *Russell Sprouts*, the Hollywood contingent of singer Andy Russell's fan club. He and Joan Edwards headed the cast at that time. Looking back, I can see that I joined the club more for the benefits than for admiration of Andy Russell (although I became more dedicated in time). The group had reserved seats in the first two rows for both of Saturday's broadcasts and knew how to get into other studios before and between *Hit Parades*. One girl I got to know was

related in some way to a CBS executive; she arranged for us to sit in on a recording session of *The Whistler*, in the sponsor's booth, no less! There was no audience, of course, but the Whistler, the person who did the whistling, was concealed behind a screen to keep his (or her) identity secret.

Actually, watching radio broadcasts began several years before membership in the fan club; my grandmother got me started, with *Art Linkletter's House Party*. Our big favorite was *Lux Radio Theater*. Tickets were hard to get; it was necessary to write to the network and take whatever was available. But it didn't matter; we lived twenty minutes away by streetcar, and in those days of modest income, a free live show with movie stars was our major form of entertainment. It didn't matter, either, if the actors merely stood and read from scripts, we liked it, and laughed and applauded on cue. However, of all the *Lux Radio Theater* plays I've seen, "*The Jazz Singer*", with Al Jolson, is the only one I can truly remember. He sang his songs to the audience, with his usual down-on-one-knee showmanship. After the broadcasts, a group of autograph collectors, including me, would form at the studio stage door exit by the parking lot. Most of the stars would cordially scribble in our books, but some took advantage of the time gap between their "Goodnight, Mr. Keighley" and sign-off to avoid that part of stardom and get to the Brown Derby, where the party was already in progress.

Back in the 40's, living in Hollywood and going to radio broadcasts was nothing special, it was just convenient, routine. Now, as a member of the RHAC, I wish I'd taken notes and pictures, and had kept my autograph book. At least I'm there on the *Hit Parade* tapes. If you have one from the Andy Russell era, play it, and listen to the screaming girls. One of them is me.

Return With Us Now, July 1978

FIBBER AND COMPANY

Tops for popularity among all week-day radio entertainers (just behind Sunday toplineers Jack Benny and Edgar Bergen), are the old-time, tank-town vaudeville couple from Peoria, who 15 years ago were considered washed up, Jim and Marian Jordan. By radio alias they were known as *Fibber McGee and Molly* of 79 Wistful Vista. This week they celebrate Fibber and Company's 5th season on the air for Johnson's Glo Coat floor wax.

Last week they made their debut in the dramatic big time, playing "Mama Loves Papa" (a Charles Ruggles-Mary Boland movie story) on CBS's *Lux Radio Theater*. They let the characterization pass, but no one minded.

A year ago Fibber and Company were metaphorically down among the acrobats in popularity. This season they were booked into a select spot in NBC's Tuesday night bill. The result has been as gratifying as a season at the Palace.

In post-war vaudeville, low slung Jim and Marian Jordan (He is 5'6", she is 5'4"), a married musical pair, never got near the Palace. They never got far in radio until they met a fat, frustrated but weary cartoonist named Don Quinn, who gagged better than he drew. Quinn devised a skit called *Smack Out*, in which Jim ran a grocery that was always "smack out" of everything but the proprietors tall stories. The program earned the Jordans and Quinn \$125 a week all together. Out of it developed Fibber McGee and Company.

To some 20 million radio listeners, Fibber's garrulous tarradiddles, the broguish come-uppances Molly metes out to him, dated didos of his numerous stooges, are as familiar as the pattern of the living room rug. Fibber is an incorrigible blowhard, but a game guy to boot. With nonpareil confidence he tries his luck at anything, from barbering to running an army.

On the air Fibber is always Fibber, but Molly plays many recurring script characters—Grandma, frustrated Mrs. Wearybottom, Teeny, a neighbors child famed for throwing Fibber for a minor loss every time she pops in.

Next to her, "Taint funny, McGee", the most reliable line in the weekly Johnson's Wax act is the "deef" old timers' topper for Fibber's gags "That's pretty good, Johnny, but that ain't the way I heard it....". The old timer, Mr. Depopolis (a restaurateur), and Horatio K. Boomer who acts and sounds like W.C. Fields in carnival pitch, are various voices of radio actor William Thompson.

The man who keeps the funny bones of Fibber and Company ribbing the customers in the old fashioned way is still Don Quinn. He and Jordan split the radio salary 3 ways, a weekly net of something like \$4000. As top-line radio salaries go, this is small potatoes. Tip-off to the Johnson Glo Coat bargain rate with Fibber and Company is that S.C. Johnson and son own the names Fibber McGee and Molly. Without these air-inflated cognomens, Jim and Marian Jordan might now be back in Peoria. As it is, they live on a Peoria scale. In Chicago, when they first crashed the four-figure level, they built a new house. But it was a duplicate in most respects of the \$70 a month house they had rented, and they built it on the next-door lot. In 1939 they moved to California for Molly's health, after a nervous breakdown at 40 which kept her off the air for almost 2 seasons. The California home is a modest eight room Ensenado bungalow with screen shutters, and rooms for the 2 young Jordans, Jim Jr., and Katherine. Out back, Jim Sr., now about 45, has a workshop and a vegetable patch, just like Fibber has at radio's 79 Wistful Vista. But off the air Jim Jordan is everything that Fibber is not. He is handy with tools, his garden produces, and on the side, he runs two lucrative, if Fibber-style ventures. One is a factory making sand-blasting

equipment. The other is the Kansas City bottling plant of Hires Root Beer.

TIME, April 22, 1940

NOSES COUNTED

Movie and Radio Guide, after quizzing 880,118 of its readers to find out what radio personalities made the deepest and most enduring impressions in 1939, this week published the results of its seventh annual popularity poll; elected:

Star of Stars: Baritone Nelson Eddy
(for the second consecutive year).

Comedian: Jack Benny (replacing Edgar Bergen and his mouthpiece CharlieMcCarthy)

Actor & actress: Don Ameche, Barbara Luddy
(First Nighter star replacing Claire Trevor)

Singers and singers of popular songs:
Bing Crosby, Kate Smith

News commentators:

Lowell Thomas, Dorothy Thompson

Announcer: Don Wilson (for Jack Benny and Jello)

Variety Program: NBC's Breakfast Club (replacing Chase and Sanborn's Bergen-McCarthy)

Children's Program: The Lone Ranger

Dramatic Series: One Man's Family

Sports Commentator: Bill Stern

Educational Program and Quiz:

Information, Please (replacing, in the first category, CBS's American School of the Air)

Dance Orchestra: Wayne (Waltz) King
(for the sixth time)

TIME, April 29, 1940

Reprinted in: *Return With Us Now*, July 1978

THE LADIES OF SUSPENSE

by Scott McCoy

"Starring the first lady of *Suspense*, Agnes Moorehead." So opens many a *Suspense* show as most OTR collectors know. The title was well deserved; no other actress approached the number of her performances. Ms. Moorehead starred in 34 shows during the 20 year run of *Suspense*, including eight exhaustive performances of the one-woman show "Sorry, Wrong Number." Her roles were varied and she wasn't always the helpless victim. In "The Thirteenth Sound" she murdered her husband while in "The Evil of Adelaide Winter" she preyed on the grief of the families of war dead. In a change of pace, in "The Death Parade," she played the part of a

bystander caught up in a situation where she tried to save the life of a potential murder victim, only to be the direct cause of the victim's death at the final denouement. With every performance, Ms. Moorehead displayed the virtuosity that earned her the title of "first lady of *Suspense*."

But what of the other ladies of *Suspense*. During the "star years" of the show (1942-54 and 1956-59) most of the reigning queens of Hollywood made an appearance on the show. Maureen O'Hara played a courageous, if perhaps foolhardy heroine in "The White Rose Murders." Barbara Stanwyck's shady lady character receive her just reward in "The Waffles of Sin." Judy Garland barely escaped with her life in "Drive In" as did Bette Davis in "Goodnight Mrs. Russell". Ethel Barrymore had to cope with Gene Kelly's mental instability (as Agnes Moorehead had to do earlier with Frank Sinatra) in "To Find Help."

Most of the roles offered a real change of pace for the actress. Typical of these were Deborah Kerr as leader of a theft ring in "The Lady Pamela," Eve Arden as a fugitive murderess in "The Well Dressers Corpse" and Merle Oberon working for the wartime underground in "Bluebeard of Bellac." The roster of stars reads on and on like a Who's Who of Hollywood stardom. Other feminine stars making a single appearance were Mary Astor, Jeanne Cagney, Olivia de Havilland, Margaret O' Sullivan, Lena Horne, Myrna Loy, Rita Hayworth, Lili Palmer, Ava Gardner, Ann Southern, Madeleine Carroll, Ann Blyth, Jane Wyman, Joan Fontaine, Martha Scott and Betty Grable. Others were Dorothy McGuire, Marlene Dietrich, Loretta Young, Ginger Rogers, Jeanne Crain, Linda Darnell, Dinah Shore, Ethel Merman, Rosemary Clooney, Mona Freeman, June Lockhart, Nina Foch, Ruth Hussey, Gloria Swanson and Lillian Gish.

Very few actresses appeared on the show more than once. The "two-timers" were Susan Hayward,

Margaret O'Brien, Lana Turner, Joan Bennett, Joan Crawford, Greer Garson and Mercedes McCambridge. Geraldine Fitzgerald, Fay Bainter, Virginia Duprez and Rosalind Russell each appeared three times. Dame Mae Whitty, Mario and Anne Baxter starred in four performances. Claire Trevor, Virginia Bruce and Margaret Whiting each appeared five times; Lucille Ball and Ida Lupino six times; and Nancy Kelly seven. Cathy Lewis appeared many times; at first in supporting roles but later receiving star billing of her own.

Then too, there were the female halves of the husband and wife teams. Harriet Hilliard appeared three times with Ozzie Nelson. Marian and Jim Jordan of Fibber McGee and Molly fame did two performances of "Back-seat Driver." Alice Faye, a star in her own right, appeared with Phil Harris in "Death on My Hands." Pamela Krelino starred with husband James Mason several times.

These then were the ladies of *Suspense*. Ladies of glamour, drama and comedy trading it all for murder, mayhem and terror for at least one night in "a tale well calculated to keep you in.....Suspense."

Return With Us Now, July 1978

TALES TO SCARE THE YELL OUT OF YOU!

by Stu Mann of OTRCOB

"Good evening, friends. This is Raymond your host, welcoming you in through the squeaking door to the Inner Sanctum. We have another tale to thrill you, and to chill you. Won't you come in and have a seat? No chair, you say. Why don't you try that black box over there? It's nice to hear someone here who really believes in black-magic, the supernatural, Zombies and Goblins. What's that? You don't really believe in those things? Well, our story tonight is about a man who didn't

believe in them either, but he found out that he was wrong— dead wrong. Ha-ha-ha-haaaa."

As host of *Inner Sanctum*, Raymond ushered us into an abode of mystery and a place of dread, but one where what you dreaded seldom turned out to be real. One week you might hear about a nice old man who seemed to be a vampire, but turned out to be just a nice old man or, at worst, a vampire turned out to be a deranged doctor with a hypodermic needle and a bicycle pump. Another week you might hear how a strange creature from the sea was killing off an entire shipful of men, one by one. But in the end it turned out to be the captain doing it all.

Himan Brown was the man behind Inner Sanctum's creaking door, whose ominous groan of massive hinges swinging, open to reveal the terrible chamber of shadows was the perfect opening for every show. Brown even used music as a sound effect. His organist was warned never to play a recognizable song, or, if he could help it, even an original snatch of melody. Brown's biggest trouble was in his methods of killing people. The Federal Communications Commission objected if he got too specific. Actually, anyone who followed Inner Sanctum in real life would soon be heading, not for the "Squeaking Door", but the green door at the death house. The plots which involved the supernatural were generally explained away to make you "believe the story could really happen".

At the end of the half hour, Raymond would reappear, stepping over and around the litter of corpses, and apologize for the puddle of blood on the floor, and invite us to read the latest "Inner Sanctum Mystery novel". Then it was time to close the "Squeaking Door" for another seven days. "Good night..and pleasant dreams....." Squeeeeeeeel-KA-THUNK!

The Hermit's Cave was another radio chiller, but differed from *Inner*

Sanctum and the programs that imitated *Inner Sanctum*, shows like *The Haunting Hour*, *The Sealed Book* and *Weird Circle*. *The Hermit's Cave* told stories of genuine supernatural horror.

The Hermit's Cave had for its occupant an elderly story teller, the Hermit. "Gho-o-ost stories! Weird stories: And murders too! The Hermit knows of them all! Turn out your lights, turn them out, and listen while the Hermit tells you!" The stories the Hermit would tell were perhaps less memorable than he was. They tended toward highly traditional ghost stories.

A much superior fantasy series was another syndicated transcription feature, "Stay Tuned For Terror", written entirely by Robert Bloch, who since the Alfred Hitchcock production of his novel "*Psycho*" has been fully recognized as a master of horror and fantasy.

During the time "Stay Tuned For Terror" was broadcast, other writers were doing horror series that achieved greater fame. "*Lights Out*", an NBC series from Chicago, offered an outlet in the thirties for the talents of Arch Oboler. The flashy showmanship of Oboler made "*Lights Out*" a byword in its time. The fame the series generated has enabled Oboler to issue a record album of stories from the program under the title "*Drop Dead*". Following a good reaction on the record album, Oboler revived a number of his "*Lights Out*" scripts in 1963 radio productions under the title "Arch Oboler's Plays". "You can turn them on now" the announcer said when "*Lights Out*" was over. But unfortunately, we can never turn the lights off again to achieve that purity of darkness, that blank slate of imagination.

Return With Us Now, October, 1978

A MEMORY COMES ALIVE

by Ed Fintak
of Milwaukee Area Radio Enthusiasts

I noticed that in the club library we have a copy of "*It Pays To Be Ignorant*" containing the question: "What is

a breadknife used for?" Last fall I obtained a copy of that show; it dates back to the mid-40's. When I listened to the recording, I was surprised to hear that one of the guests was a WAVE, Yeoman 2nd Class Vivian Weyland, of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. Imagine that, someone from Wisconsin, Wauwatosa no less, was a guest on one of my favorite shows. Wouldn't it be something if I could locate her and get her reaction to hearing her voice from over 30 years ago? I was bound to find out. But I had to find her first. Where would you start if you wanted to locate a then unmarried woman whose name you weren't sure how to spell and who could be married with a different name or even dead. Well I will tell you.

My first stop was the Milwaukee Library. There I looked up the name Whalen, Weiland and Walen. There were no Vivians listed in the Milwaukee or Wauwatosa city directories of 1940 or 1945. I questioned the older librarians at the Wauwatosa library to see if they remembered a family named Whalen whose daughter was a WAVE during World War II. No one remembered. Several months passed and I couldn't find any clues to former WAVE Vivian Weyland's whereabouts. Then, one day, I was talking to a man who was a professor of history at UWM (University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee). I found out he was from Wauwatosa. I asked him if he was a native of Wauwatosa. Yes, he was. Did he know a family named Whalen? No, he didn't.

I told him the story of the club, the radio program, and of Yeoman 2nd Class Vivian Weyland. I mentioned too that she attended Carroll College in Waukesha. This was the key I was after. At his suggestion, I called the Alumni Office at Carroll College. I explained to the secretary what I was after and why. She was very cooperative and told me where to find Vivian Weyland. I found the former Navy WAVE living today in Elm Grove as Mrs. Kenneth Rose. Mrs. Rose is a

successful businesswoman and former Wauwatosa also. The Roses met in high school prior the war and have been married for 27 years. They have raised a family of 4, and have one grandchild. Did the former WAVE remember the broadcast? "Oh yes". It was one of the two times she appeared on the show. Stationed in New York, Yeoman Weyland, as with thousands of other service men and women, could take advantage of free tickets to a variety of entertainment activity including movies, plays, and radio programs. Her question for the panel was: "Was Helen of Troy a man or a woman?" After the panel kicked the question around for 5½ minutes, Yeoman Weyland was awarded \$15 for stumping the experts.

Mrs. Rose was surprised to hear her voice after all these years, "I didn't know there were recordings of the old shows around any more". "There was a second time I was a guest contestant on "*It Pays To Be Ignorant*", would you be able to locate that one too? I told Mrs. Rose that there was a slim chance the other broadcast would turn up someday and if I found it, she would get a copy. Mrs. Rose spent 4 years in the Navy, leaving; the service in 1947 as a Chief Petty Officer. During her enlistment, she served in the Port Director's Office in New York where her assignment was the routing of the Atlantic convoys.

"*It Pays To Be Ignorant*" was only one of the many programs she attended. Among others were Bert Parks' show, and Milton Berle's radio show. So I spent a pleasant couple of hours with the Roses last fall, talking to the woman whose voice I heard as it sounded over 30 years ago. It was a lot of fun.

Return With Us Now, October, 1978

THE SHADOW

by Jim Vaughan

The Shadow, appropriately difficult to view clearly and distinctly, has two

slightly different forms, two back-grounds, two different methods of operation. One long and successful history of "The Shadow" is the version presented on radio. The other, equally popular, appeared in the pages of a magazine.

The Sunday night radio series was one of the most successful melodramas ever aired. The character made his debut in August, 1930, serving as the eerie-voiced, anonymous narrator of strange tales on the "Detective Story" program. His instant grip on listeners soon resulted in the series named after him, which ran until December 26, 1954. His role had been changed to the hero of the series, battling evil-doers for thirty exhausting minutes every week.

The show had an exceptional level of creativity and imagination, but it was at its best when the voice of the sinister Master of Darkness belonged to Orson Welles (1937-1938).

The Shadow Magazine was launched in the spring of 1931 with the featured novel, *The Living Shadow*. During the next eighteen years, 325 issues were published, each with a short novel recounting an adventure of the Shadow.

Several writers used the Grant pseudonym, but the author of the vast majority of the adventures is Walter B. Gibson, (282, including all the early ones).

A hero of the great depression, The Shadow has outlived his time. His adventures are frequently reprinted in paperback form today, the old radio programs are successfully revived in syndication, rare showings of the vintage motion picture and serials are filled to overflowing, and nostalgia buffs covet the fragile comic books, magazines, toys, games, radio premiums and books that are so avidly collected today at prices that numb the soul.

The Shadow has not lost his ability to cloud men's minds.

Return With Us Now, March, 1979

Women and Their Soaps

By John Adams, RHAC

Is your wife or mother an addict, a soap opera addict, that is? Today the three networks air about ten half-hour or one hour so-called soaps on TV.

In the days of radio, when women didn't have to sit glued in front of a TV set, there were hundreds of soaps on radio. There were four networks and each one ran 15 minute serials. Starting at 9 a.m. and lasting until 4 p.m., the housewife had her soaps to do the morning dishes, clean her house, and iron her heart away to *Stella Dallas*, *Ma Perkins*, *Vic and Sade*, *John's Other Wife*, and other such sagas. In those days the sheets, towels, and even your underwear got ironed whether you wanted them done or not.

The phone lines went quiet. The corner grocery store was empty. The housewife was following her soaps. Her house was her castle as she became involved with the lives of her friends on radio.

"Soaps" got their name from the fact that these serials were sponsored by the soap companies. There were Tide; Duz, Rinso, Ivory, and others. Each week the soap was "New", "Improved", or "Better Than Ever". Who else could the soap companies find to sell their product to better than the housewife? They had a captive audience. The housewife was staring at her own wash under the iron. Was it clean? Was it white? Did it smell fresh? These were all the things that the soap companies said their product would do.

The soap companies did not monopolize the entire market. The drug companies had their share. While the housewife listened to the serials she could do her hair with Toni's new

home permanent and follow the make-believe lives of her radio friends.

Many of these soaps ran on radio for years. Ma Perkins had a faithful following for a 27 year run. Many of the serials had the same actors and actresses for the entire run.

There were the evening so-called "Soaps" too, such as *One Man's Family* (which ran for 30 years), *Amos 'N' Andy*, and *Easy Aces*. These were not strictly catalogued as soap operas since they had such wide appeal for the entire family.

The fatal day came for the soaps on November 25, 1960. CBS, the last network to keep the soaps on canceled their full lineup of soap operas on that date. The iron had been stored away in the closet, only to be used for an occasional wrinkle. The radio had become an object for news and the top ten records on the charts. TV was the new family entertainment medium.

The soap companies made the switch to TV. This meant that the housewife had to sit in front of the TV to watch the soaps. She had an automatic dishwasher to do the day's dishes, the automatic washers and dryers which only took a few minutes to load with clothes and then back to the TV. The soaps were expanded to 30 minutes and one hour which cut down on the number telecast. Frozen foods and TV dinners came of age so the housewife could catch the last serial of the day before the kids got home from school and her husband pulled into the driveway.

Today there are just as many addicts as there were in the days of radio, but the fun is gone. Now you can see what each character looks like. You can't conjure up in your mind what *Ma Perkins*, *Stella Dallas*, *Vic and Sade*, *Rush* or *Willie* look like, or, for that matter, any other character on radio that the housewife got to know.

MOUNTAIN STATES COLLECTOR - July, 1980

Return With Us Now, August, 1980

A Trip to Pine Ridge and Guided Tour by Lum and Abner

Some day when you're touring through the Ouachita National Forest on the Western edge of Arkansas, slip over to Highway 88 (Lum and Abner State Highway) and head east from the Polk County Seat of Mena; twenty two miles out you'll turn off and find a tiny cluster of stores and a few homes. That's Pine Ridge. If you were to stop at Lum and Abner's Jot 'Em Down General Store, you'd probably find the boys smack in the middle of an "argument about a new hitchin rack fer out front". But they'd no doubt be glad of the opportunity to walk with you down Pine Ridge's shady Main Street and tell you about their small friendly town.

First off you'd probably be shown the Pine Ridge Meeting House just behind the boys' Jot 'Em Down General Store. They're mighty fond of the pretty little white clapboard church. "Somehow or another, the week wouldn't be brought to a fitten' close if it weren't fer going to the Meeting House on Sunday. There ain't hardly anybody here in Pine Ridge that air real bad folks, and nobody that air too good to stand a little spiritual breshing up now and then...and the Meeting House is the place to do it in."

You'd wander on down the board sidewalk to Luke Spear's Lunch Room, and there would probably be no peevishness attached to the explanation of their old friend Luke's business practices. Just a statement as to how things were:

"One thing we never been able to figger out about Luke's place is how he's always fresh out of most everything offered on that eating card. The minute you try to order anything that ain't baked beans or ham sandwich you're going to find out that Luke sold the last order no more'n five minutes ago! And right across the street from Luke's here, there in the park, you kin see

Lum's 'King of the Hogs' statue. Mighty purty too."

The corner that seems to be the important spot in Pine Ridge is bounded by Mose Moot's Caleb Weehunts Blacksmith Shop and Huddleston's General Store and Post Office.

"One thing for sure, whenever you got any politickin' to do, or you're looking fer a feller you can't find no other place in Pine Ridge, you'll generally find him right down here in front of Mose Moot's. Mose's is our Pine Ridge tonsorial emporium. Mose knows everything that goes on around these parts and he ain't tetchy about telling a feller, neither. And upstairs is our Lodge Hall. Besides being the only building that's an upstairs on, it's where our city councils hold forth on meeting day. Another thing the hall gets used fer is band practice by our Pine Ridge Silver Coronet Band. The band was first organized to help Lum out in the campaign for president.

"Now across the street south there is Caleb Weehunt's. When it comes to free and fancy weight-lifting, general shoeing or fixing up things, there ain't nobody in Pine Ridge can come up to Caleb, our blacksmith."

And our two guides would be generous in their praise of their competitor. "That over there is Dick Huddleston's General Store, and on top of runnin' about the best store in these parts, Dick is postmaster. Being hooked up with the government that way, Dick has got to know more about politicks than most any other feller hereabouts, and most everybody stops to talk with Dick about who to vote fer in any kind of an election. And ever once in awhile the givernment sends Dick a new batch of pictures and descriptions about fellers that's wanted. Dick could keep all those pictures hisself if he wanted to, and when one of these fellers comes along, Dick could collect the reward. But he don't do that. No siree, he plasters those pictures out in plain sight all over town"

"Wished you could see up the street to the new Pine Ridge School House.

When they first started at the same school the children had to set on seats made out of rough pine boards, and not them smooth maple slats the children use nowadays."

"Glad you came this way. Since last time a city feller was here, Abner was elected Mayor of Pine Ridge, and I, Lum, always has the best interests of the community at heart, so any way you look at it we're kind of a Chamber of Commerce for Pine Ridge."

A town was born—to old time radio followers of Lum and Abner, the little town in Arkansas named Pine Ridge is an astonishing place, akin in its homely, old-fashioned way to the fabulous country of Shangri-la, and just as mythical. The villagers get involved in amusing situations, but tragedy rarely appears. All in all, it's the sort of place you or I would like to keep in mind for spending our declining years—if such a place existed.

When Chester Lauck and Norris "Tuffy" Goff first hit upon their rural characters for the air, the village 22 miles from the county seat was known as Waters. But the value of publicity is not unknown, even in the remotest districts—and civic pride burns as brightly in the Ozarks as in the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce.

Five years to the day after *Lum And Abner* first hit the airwaves, dignitaries from all over Arkansas gathered at the crossroads of Waters and read a proclamation from the U. S. Post Office Department. By virtue of two garrulous old characters who didn't exist, the wheels of government turned ponderously—and Pine Ridge won its place on the map.

Lum and Abner were air headliners in their day because they were late for their very first broadcast! Lum and Abner's failure to follow Ben Franklin's pet maxim made them one of radio's top acts since their beginning on April 23, 1931.

In those days of the industry, seconds weren't so precious as today, and all the boys figured what they lost that afternoon in Hot Springs was their place in line for a benefit program. What they gained was a million dollar idea. When Lauck and Goff chugged over to Hot Springs from Mena for their first airing they meant to do a blackface act. But being not only conscientious but gregarious by instinct, they stopped to rehearse their act every time they met an acquaintance on the road. By the time they arrived the broadcast was underway. They sat down to listen.

A blackface act was at the mike. It wasn't very good. Chet and Tuffy looked at each other and called the announcer over.

"How many blackface acts you got booked today?"

"Four, confound it!"

Lauck and Goff turned a trifle green and began whispering. The announcer looked at his list. "What are you fellows doing?"

Chet hemmed: "we're gonna talk like two hill fellers—I think." (He hoped the field was open).

"What's the name of the act?"

Chet and Tuffy went into another huddle. Said Lauck: "Call me Lum." Chimed Tuffy: "I'm Abner (know an old guy at Waters named Abner)."

"O.K.," said the announcer, "I'll bill you as 'Lum & Abner'." Thus casually are history's pages sometimes flipped.

And how did that catch-all Jot 'Em Down General Store get in the picture? Well, that goes back to a mouse in the Goff Wholesale Grocery in Mena, and young Tuffy's weakness for the hunt. Tuffy's dad owned the wholesale house, so in the natural order of things, Tuffy was put to work doing odd jobs in the concern. Tuffy dutifully kept his sling-shot in his hip pocket and did very well until the morning a careless mouse strolled in his path. Out came the sling-shot, off went the mouse, bop! went the rock against the big

plate-glass window. And Tuffy was called into conference in the back room. The senior Goff saw that Tuffy's nature called for more elbow room than the wholesale grocery house afforded, so as soon as possible he sent Tuffy off visiting the retail grocers in the hills. Tuffy's first stop was always at the home of his pal, Chester, and the pair became familiar peddlers of the Goff wares—which were usually forgotten while they swapped yarns with the hill folks at the crossroads.

Their heads became crammed with the outlandish expressions, idioms, and humor of the hills, and when they looked for a locale for their radio counterparts, it was inevitable that they put the old codgers in a grocery store. And there they are today, preserved in the minds of their fans and in our tape libraries.

Return With Us Now, February, 1982

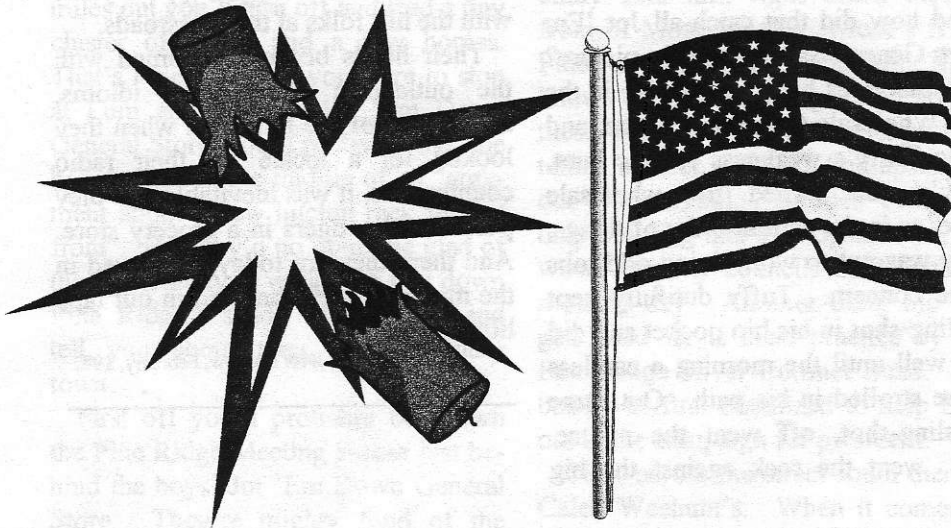
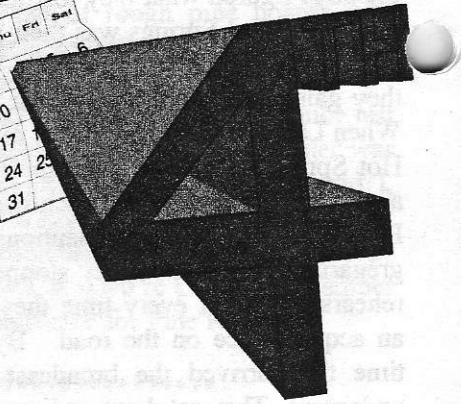
Crime

"Elanor Rigby had gone to Taos to steal a book." That sentence, with its curious reference to a character who fades away like a song, sums up all the treats in John Dunning's bibliomystery *THE BOOKMAN'S WAKE* (Scribner, \$21): peculiar people, exciting places and books, books.

The characters who cast the longest shadows over this dense, difficult narrative are Darryl Grayson and his brother, Richard, master printers who designed and produced exquisite limited editions until they died in 1969, in a fire that also consumed their print shop and all its precious contents. Keep your eye on the Graysons, because they are the key to the elaborate puzzle that the novel poses about a superlimited Grayson Press edition of "The Raven." The experts say these volumes never existed, but the collectors who own these nonexistent books are turning up dead.

Cliff Janeway, the Denver book dealer who does the brainwork in this smart series, catches Elanor Rigby but can't bring himself to turn in the young thief, a passionate book scout with close connections to the Graysons. With those credentials, she *must* be innocent. In the same way, Mr. Dunning can't resist writing lengthy, luxurious passages about the craftsmanship of the great print men. Strictly speaking, these eloquent lectures on the art of the printer and the beauty of the book get in the way of the action; but that shouldn't bother anyone who loves books—and their covers.

HAPPY FOURTH!



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