



RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO

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December, 1995



Dinah Shore (1921-1994). As early as August 23, 1939, *Variety* wrote, "Dinah Shore ranks with the best vocalists broadcasting has to offer." Dinah began her own radio show November 2, 1941, on NBC.

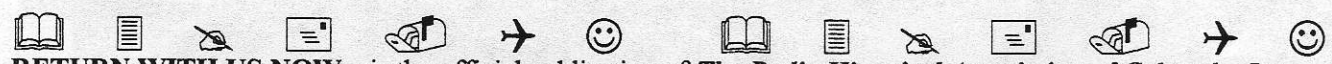
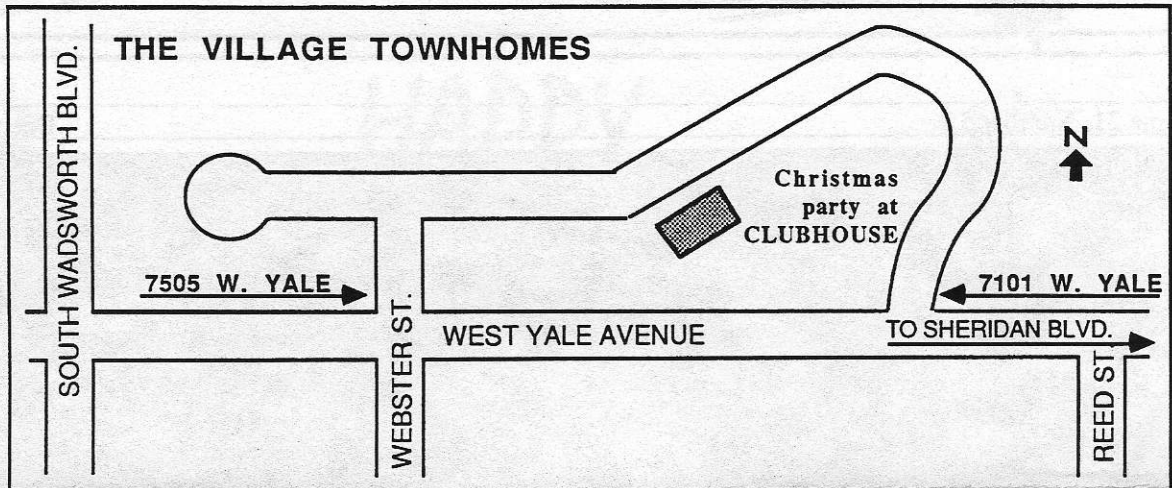
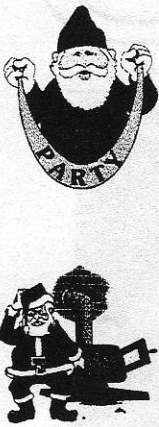
Dinah continued to sing and entertain in radio and TV for many many years.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: There will be a board meeting will be **7:30 p.m., December 7th** at Dick King's home. All members are invited and encouraged to attend.



There will be the annual yuletide gathering at the clubhouse at 7301 W. Yale Ave. on Saturday, **December 9th at 5 p.m.** Look for the map below.



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 Roost

We enjoyed the SPERDVAC convention and meeting old friends. But we were also glad to return home. We are trying to get caught up with tape orders. There are lots of personal collecting items that seem to pile up after a few weeks.

While driving to and from California we saw lots of road kill. Most of it was tire carcasses. I have often wondered why the tire manufacturers or recappers don't put out better products. Of course, during the early forties, three thousand miles was a good tire. So, things really have changed. It is just so easy to forget.

R.H.A.C. has lost a long time member. Dick Henry died in October. Dick was quite a collector of jazz music as well as old time radio shows. He had willed his collections to R.H.A.C. Hence, recently several club members were called upon to help remove Dick's

collections from the family residence.

Dick Henry had been an R.H.A.C. member for close to twenty years and had been in failing health recently. We certainly wish to thank the Henry family who helped in smoothing the transfer of Dick's collections to R.H.A.C.

Some great music shows from the fifties are being added to our Contributor's Library. "Serenade In Blue" is one of the shows which makes great listening while doing chores in the tape room.

While Dick has been doing most of the dubbing to cassettes, we manage to listen to a lot more of the shows. It certainly helps the time whiz by.

A year ago we were working on fencing out at the farm and holding our breath hoping the weather would hold until we finished. Today the weather is in the low 70's, the door is open, and in the mountains people are skiing.

Denver's weather is different than the weather in the mountains. The occasional snow storm during a Denver football game is the exception recently seen. Most frequently there many snow storms in the mountains while Denver remains dry. And, what they don't tell you on TV is, when Denver does have an inch or two of snow, it is most frequently gone in a day or two.

There are still a few library users making out checks to the

librarian. This makes the records keeping much more difficult for the librarian and for the treasurer.

Please, make all checks payable to R.H.A.C.

We notice also that many new members are using clear or brown tape for sealing boxes.

Please, also, when shipping a box of reels, use filament tape (the same type which was used in sending the tape) to seal the box.

Filament tape cleans off and peels more cleanly and thus helps extend the life of the cartons.

Of course we always hope you understand that, when unpacking boxed reels, one should peel off the tape rather than cutting it with a knife. Again, cuts in the wrappings of the boxes means that the librarians have to repair the damage or discard costly boxes.

Please, cooperate with the librarians...unpack and pack carefully with filament tape.

Cuts in the wrappings of the boxes just means more work for the librarians, who are volunteers (sorta like Santa's helpers) and need your help, rather than extra work.

**Happy
Holidays !**

Radio's Own Life Story

1936: Everybody was saying "Knock-knock, who's there?" The word "pixilated" came in with the two wonderful zany old girls in Gary Cooper's "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town." Trailers began to crowd the highways. *Gone with the Wind* was published and jumped to the best seller list. There was big news on the radio. The C.I.O. split away from the A.F. of L. The newly-formed United Automobile Workers started a new thing, the sit-down strike in a forty-four day demonstration. H. V. Kaltenborn covered the Civil War in Spain, and went so near the front lines that the crackle of machine guns was heard behind his words. Hitler marched into the Rhineland, and the largest radio audience ever assembled to that date tuned in to an international broadcast that started with the portentous BONG of Big Ben in London. It was Edward VIII's farewell to the Empire. In every quarter of the globe, streets were deserted and telephones were silent as the whole world waited by the radio. Who does not remember the high solemn drama: "At last I am able to say a few words of my own. I have found it impossible . . . to discharge my duties as King as I should wish without the help and support of the woman I love . . . and now we all have a new King. I wish him and you, his people, happiness and prosperity with all my heart. God bless you all. God save the King!"

Roosevelt, already nicknamed "that man," was re-elected by a landslide over Governor Landon of Kansas, sweeping all but two states, and the new wisecrack was, "As Maine goes—so goes Vermont." Radio took another vast step forward when the evening of the joint session of Congress was called at the unprecedented hour of nine p.m. so the nation could hear the President's report. This was the year that a vaudeville ventriloquist,

Edgar Bergen, took his dummy to the Lamb's Club one evening to put on a show for his fellow actors, never dreaming that the date was to change his whole life. Before this it had never occurred to anyone that a ventriloquist had a future in radio. What would be the point if you couldn't see the dummy? It would just sound like two actors talking, wouldn't it? What would be different about that?

Rudy Vallee was in the audience, and he had another idea. Six months after playing a guest spot for Vallee, Bergen had his own air show and he and Charlie McCarthy were on their way to Hollywood fame as well.

Edgar was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1903. His father was Swedish immigrant who ran a dairy farm in Decatur. When he was eleven young Edgar spent a quarter, earned helping around the farm, for *Hermann's Wizard Manual* and made life miserable for his family by impersonating all kinds of little men that weren't there. A sketch that he drew in a high school history book was used as a model by a Chicago whittler, Theodore Mack, who carved Charlie's head for thirty-five dollars. Charlie was so successful in helping Bergen earn his way through pre-medical courses at Northwestern University that his master abandoned the idea of graduating and went into Chautauqua instead.

They were just another routine act, getting none too many bookings, until Charlie began to cut up one night when the future looked black and he had nothing to lose. It was their last show at the Chez Paree in Chicago. The manager had not renewed their contract, and they did not have another. The few late customers were frankly indifferent until Charlie, made reckless by their uncertain prospects, reared back and sneered at his partner, "Who ever told you you were funny?"

Bergen attempted to quiet him, but Charlie refused to shut up. "You better go back to the farm," he snapped. "I'll get by, but you're all through, brother, all through." He followed this attack with some pointed personal remarks

about the audience. The more impertinent Charlie became, the better people liked it. The talk died down, the laughter built up. The manager came rushing around to extend the engagement, and a new star was born.

This was the year, too, that Fanny Brice made her big hit with Baby Snooks on the air and everybody went around saying "Huh-wy, daddy?" for a long while. Herb Shriner was getting his start as Harmonica Herb on a barn dance program, Hoosier Hop, in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He was seventeen years old and had a long way to go before he was chosen "the most promising young star of tomorrow" in 1949. Phil Harris, already famous as a dance band leader, joined Jack Benny's show. So did Kenny Baker, after winning Eddie Duchin's Texaco Talent Contest. Bob Burns was signed for the Kraft Music Hall, starring Bing Crosby, and stayed until he started his own Arkansas Traveler in 1941, adding many wonderful new characters to the colony of the air.

Robin Burns was born in Van Buren, Arkansas, in 1896. At six years he was playing the mandolin with a wild free grace. Lessons on guitar, fiddle, trombone, cornet and piano followed. By the time he was fifteen he had run out of new instruments to conquer and was forced to invent the bazooka. This inspired arrangement of two lead pipes and a funnel got him a carnival job at three dollars a week. From then on he was dedicated to show business, though Hollywood regarded him with a lack-lustre eye and so did radio when he knocked hopefully at the door. Not until Rudy Vallee gave him a break did fortune smile. After that one network spot, he was signed by Kraft and his tales of his Uncle Fud, Cousin Dud and the rest of his accident-prone relations took him to the movies.

On the soberer side, the Columbia Workshop, a sustaining show that ran until 1947, was to have an enormous influence on radio writing. It was set up at heavy expense by CBS to explore new dramatic forms and to encourage new talent. It served its

purpose brilliantly. Irving Reis, an engineer, was one of its first shining lights. He left his control room to write and produce, and brought a fresh new talent, uncomplicated by other literary styles, to radio drama. He also was responsible for a new and vivid use of sound effect. He is now a successful film producer.

Well known writers such as Archibald McLeish and Irwin Shaw did their first radio writing for the workshop. The most outstanding new author it developed was Norman Corwin, who joined it in 1938. His "Plot to Overthrow Christmas" had a big response, and after that he went on to write enough successful script to fill several books. Most memorable are his "We Hold These Truths," written at white heat after Pearl Harbor. It was heard on all four networks and reached the biggest single audience any playwright ever had—sixty million people. In 1945 his "On A Note of Triumph" was an even more memorable program to mark the end of the war.

We, The People turned a bright new spotlight on the human side of people in the news. It was the creation of the resourceful Philips Lord (Seth Parker). Some seven thousand people have appeared on We, The People to tell their experiences at the time they were making headlines—Joe Lewis, Ernie Pyle, Harold Stassen, Schiaparelli, King Peter of Yugoslavia, Connie Mack—an astounding run of the famous as well as hundreds of lesser known citizens who had a unique experience to tell.

Professor Quiz arrived and a new cycle began. (Its unknown announcer, Arthur Godfrey, made little stir though he heckled the performers in a mild fashion.) Quiz shows were not exactly new. So far as we know, KMTR in Hollywood has the distinction of doing the very first in 1927 when the *Do You Know* and the *Ask Me Another* books were a brief fad. KNTR took advantage of the fever by urging people to gather quiz parties around their radios and entertain each other by calling out answers before the announcer did. It didn't catch on. Professor Quiz

revived the idea and carried it a step farther by allowing audiences in his studio to compete for prizes. At the time, everyone thought it was just an inconsequential stunt, good enough to fill in for a few weeks until a better show was found. Who cared whether or not some strangers in a studio far away won some prizes? Who, indeed!

1937: Franco was attacking Madrid. Japan was bombing China in still undeclared war. Amelia Earhart took out over the Pacific and disappeared, though for weeks the radio bulletins carried a note of hope. Marconi died of a heart attack at the age of sixty-three, having lived to see his "ether telegraph" completely change the face of the world. George Gershwin died at thirty-eight but left the air alive with his music. *How To Win Friends and Influence People* was a run-away best seller. Pocket books, a failure when sold through book shops, this year went on sale in drugstores and changed the reading pattern of the nation. The big song novelty was "Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen." Joe Lewis won the heavy-weight title. The Big Apple was the new dance. The Old Gold Puzzle Contest started and the huge response to its bait of a fortune in prizes brought give-away shows a step nearer.

The thick air over the dust bowl blacked out the sun. "Oakies" began to pour into California. On May 12 the whole world listened as the new King George VI bravely, slowly, painfully told his people on the air that he accepted the obligation of Empire. His coronation was described by dozens of American air reporters—a dress rehearsal of the news coverage our radio soon was to pour out of Europe. President Roosevelt's second inaugural speech was the sober, "I see one-third of the nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished...."

One of the unforgettable moments in radio was the sobbing, shocked, half-articulate words cried out by an eye witness when the German dirigible Hindenburg burned at Lakehurst, New

Jersey. Herbert Morrison of WLS, Chicago, was the only radio man left at the scene as the big airship came in for the last few hundred feet of a routine flight over the Atlantic. He was not on the air. He was making a wire recording for later use on his home station. The other reporters had packed their gear and were leaving the field when a burst of flame roared five-hundred feet into the sky. Morrison's "Oh, oh, it's terrible, terrible, ladies and gentlemen, oh those poor people..." was rushed to the air by NBC, thus ending that company's ten-year ban against recorded programs. The disaster also ended the day of lighter-than-air-craft. The mooring mast so hopefully built at the top of the Empire State Building stands today as an idle monument to this dream.

Radio played an important part in another disaster early this year when the tributaries of the Mississippi turned ominously muddy as an unusually heavy snow melted in an unseasonably warm spring. Flood crest hit in February, inundating towns of the whole valley and swamping the delta. Radio's part in rescue work is given credit for saving thousands of lives. First the warnings went out on the air. As the waters rose, WLAC, Nashville, cleared all programs for six days to direct crews carrying food and water. WLAP, Lexington, Kentucky, was on the air four days and nights for the same purpose. WOPI, Bristol, Tennessee, was on for ten days and almost as many nights. WSAZ, Huntington, West Virginia, had to move equipment to the top floor as the waters rose but it stayed on the air as did dozens of other stations, its staff refusing to flee to safety. The Ohio flood crest of sixty-nine feet put the streets of Louisville deep under water but WHAS stayed on and on, manned by exhausted people who would not quit while there was still a job to do. The whole nation listened as they relayed messages from volunteers roving with shortwave transmitters to rescue crews, "Fifty children in a church. Waters rising above the pews. Aid is urgent"

...“Insane man at corner of Eleventh and Walnut. He has a gun” ...“Seven people marooned on top of a house. It is listing badly. Help needed fast” ...“Woman in childbirth. Take blankets if possible.” Unforgettable, those broadcasts so packed with reports of danger that all emotion was stripped from the tired voices.

“This is my problem, Mr. Anthony” became a catch-phrase following the start of The Good Will Hour this same year. John J. Anthony came to the air after some years of success as a consultant on marital problems. Some five thousand people whose wedded lives were not happy had poured through his office, so he was accustomed to startling confessions. He needed to be when he reached the air and began broadcasting interviews with people desperate enough to bare their souls in public. Names were not used on his program, but the variety of accents and the unmistakable emotion proved to all listeners that they were tuned in to real people at a moment of high stress. Again it was proved that human interest had an enormous drawing power.

Jean Hersholt's beloved Dr. Christian also used a form of audience participation in that his adventures were based on plot suggestions sent in by listeners. Big Town started with Edward G. Robinson as the crime-busting editor and Ona Munson as his girl reporter, Lorelie. Edward Pawley and Fran Carlton took over the roles in 1943 and are still hot on the trail of gangsters. Nancy Craig started a new kind of woman's show, interspersing news about food and new domestic gadgets with reports on shows, fashions and interviews and an impressive run of guests day after day. Her real name is Alice Maslin. How she got her professional name is interesting. Nancy Booth Craig was invented by an executive board because the initials were NBC. The Booth was summarily dropped when she was sold with the Blue Network to the company that was to become ABC, but Nancy Craig goes happily along, longest established of nationally-heard service shows.

Roy Rogers was emerging as a singing cowboy on screen after a slow start as a barnstorming radio singer under his own name, Leonard Sly. His start in show business began in 1932 when he took his guitar to an amateur contest in a suburban Los Angeles theater and won first prize—a lot of applause. However, The Rocky Mountaineers heard him and he joined them on a small station for five dollars a week. Bob Nolan, author of “Tumbling Tumbleweeds,” was added soon after the group began to taste success. Each member was raised to ten dollars a week! Recognition at last! They became successively The International Cowboys, The Texas Outlaws, The O-Bar-O Boys and finally The Sons of the Pioneers. It was a long pull before a contract at Republic Pictures brought Trigger into Roy's life and before the boy who had been glad to work for five dollars sent his program out over all 520 of the Mutual stations.

1937 was a year of many contrasts and many important developments in radio. One was the formation of the American Federation of Radio Artists, better known as AFRA. It is an autonomous union that takes in all radio talent except the musicians under the A. F. of L. A union of radio talent was curiously slow in arriving. Stage stars had been unionized for a long time. The White Rats (rats is star spelled backward) had been founded in 1901. It lost its strength through inner dissension, but was succeeded in 1913 by Actors Equity which became a powerful union after 1919, and has remained so ever since.

Of enormous importance to listeners was the formation of the NBC Symphony Orchestra. CBS has sponsored the great New York Philharmonic since 1930 in continuous broadcasts. Other great organizations like the Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland and Chicago Symphonies have been heard in air series at various times, but the NBC Symphony was the first created entirely for the radio. David Sarnoff built

a superb group and offered the conductor's baton to Arturo Toscanini, who was most willing to return to this country. He had persistently refused to perform the Fascist hymn in his native Italy even after Mussolini had tried to win him over. He also had cancelled his Bayreuth and Salsburg engagements when Hitler took over.

The series started on Christmas night with announcer Ben Grauer becoming Bennett Grauer in token of how dignified and important was the occasion. At various times the radio industry has been accused of money-madness. No doubt about the matter, radio is, in the main, a business. However it is only fair to remember that both CBS and NBC have poured staggering sums into the two wonderful symphonic programs that come to us free for the turn of a dial. Naturally the networks are happy when a commercial sponsor pays the bill, but, sponsored or not, these outstanding concerts have been kept on the air by their companies—a magnificent gift to the nation.

The end of '37 brought the beginning of the jitterbug, heralded by the music of Benny Goodman.

Radio Mirror, September 1950

**Coming in January, 1996:
1938!**

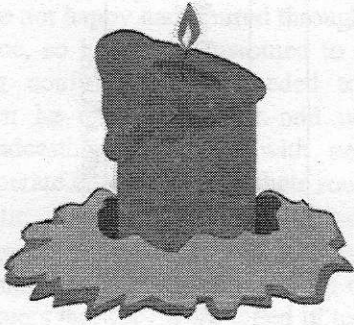
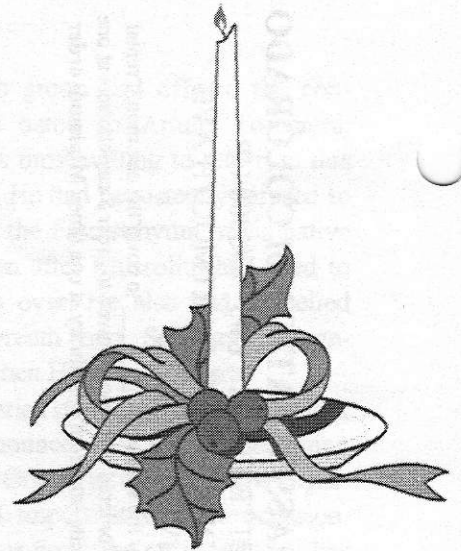
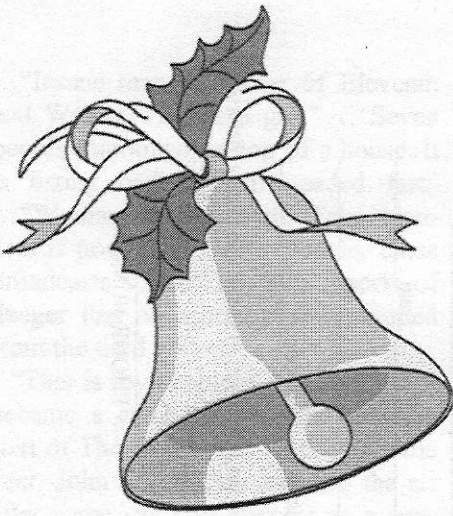
COLORODDITY

Don Wilson, Jack Benny's announcer for 31 years, got his start as a singer with a male trio on Denver radio station KFEL in 1924, only five years after graduating from North High School. The trio toured the mountain states until 1927, when Wilson moved to San Francisco. He started working with Benny in 1932.

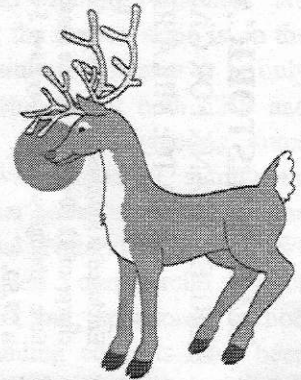
Rocky Mountain News, November 20, 1995

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HAPPY
HOLIDAYS



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