

RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO

Volume 21, Number 9

April, 1996



Fred Allen (1894-1956) Vaudeville and revue star who came to radio, with CBS, October 23, 1932. Here in 1937, a young lad had just played a difficult composition. Allen ad-libbed, "Just imagine, this young man can play a piece perfectly that Benny can't even attempt after practicing for 40 years." Thus began their feud.



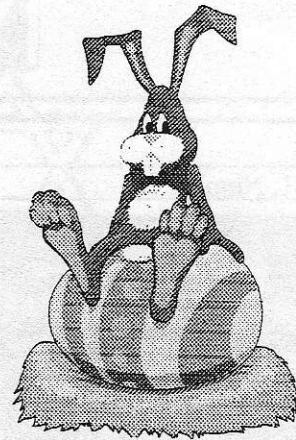
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: There will be a board meeting will be **7:30 p.m., April 4, 1996** at John Adams' home. All members are invited and encouraged to attend.



**Visit
RHAC
on the
INTERNET!**

at
<http://www.old-time.com>

**Contains a humungous
catalog of 70,000
or more shows...
the combined catalogs
of
RHAC and SPERDVAC
and more!**



Try it...you'll like it!



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.



Phone numbers are in the (303) area code except where indicated.

- PRESIDENT.....Dick King, 900 W Quincy Ave, Englewood CO 80110....email= rking@ix.netcom.com.....761-4139
- VICE-PRESIDENT.....Guy Albright, 786 S Quitman St, Denver CO 80219.....934-0184
- SECRETARY.Glenn Ritter, c/o RHAC, PO Box 1908,Englewood CO 80150.email= gvritter@ix.netcom.com.377-4798
- TREASURER.....Maletha King, 900 W Quincy Ave, Englewood CO 80110.....761-4139
- NEWSLETTER EDITOR.....Glenn Ritter, c/o RHAC, P O Box 1908, Englewood CO 80150.....377-4798
- R.H.A.C. HISTORIAN.....John Adams, 2811 S Valentia St, Denver CO 80231.....755-9185
- TALKING NEWSLETTER.....Mike Fields, 1207 Ruth, Longview TX 75601.....(903)758-6319
- REFERENCE MATERIAL.....Bill McCracken, 7101 W Yale Ave #503, Denver CO 80227.....986-9863
- MEMBERSHIP.....Dick King, 900 W Quincy Ave, Englewood CO 80150.....761-4139
- LOGS & SCRIPTS.....Fred Hinz, c/o RHAC, P O Box 1908, Englewood CO 80150
- TAPE DONATIONS.....Bill McCracken, 7101 W Yale Ave #503, Denver CO 80227.....986-9863
Herb Duniven, 4184 S Syracuse St, Denver CO 80237.....773-1142
- OPEN REEL TAPE LIBRARIANS: Dick & Maletha King, 900 W Quincy Ave, Englewood CO 80110.....761-4139
- CASSETTE TAPE LIBRARIANS:
 - #1 (1-499) Terry Hamilton, 9393 E Colorado Ave, Denver CO 80231-3006.....696-8196
 - #2 (500-999) Maletha King, 900 W Quincy Ave, Englewood CO 80110.....761-4139
 - #3 (1000 & higher) Dave Logan, 5557 S Sherman Cir, Littleton CO 80121.....730-1430
 - #4 (5001 & higher) Mika Rhoden, 3950 W Dartmouth Ave, Denver CO 80236.....937-9476
- DIRECTOR AT LARGE: David L Michael, 1999 Broadway, Lowery Suite, Denver CO 80202.....296-1456

From the

King's

Roost



March was indeed a busy month for RHAC! Dan Decker is no longer able to handle the cassette library. So the library was been moved to the King's home. A few days later we found a new home with Terry Hamilton.

For a long time we have realized that the cassette librarians for cassette libraries numbers one and two were getting too much of a load. Now we have a chance to divide those two libraries into three.

Cassette library #1 will now be for reels numbers 001 through 499. It is to be handled by Terry Hamilton. Please see **new order form in this newsletter.**

Cassette library #2 will now be for reels numbers 500 through 999. It is temporarily c/o Maletha King. Please see **new order form in this newsletter.**

WE ARE LOOKING FOR A NEW LIBRARIAN! Please phone 761-4139 if you can help. Your great reward will

be the nice notes we get from members telling us of how much they enjoy the tapes.

Cassette library #3 will now be for reels numbers 1000 and up. Dave Logan will continue to handle this library which has a lot of activity because it contains the new "much in demand" entries.

There is no change in the Contributor's Cassette Library except to change it's designation to **Cassette Library #4.**

Maletha King will continue to handle the reel-to-reel library, in addition to several other jobs.

We want to **emphasize to new members that it is important** to fill out your order forms **completely** including as many alternatives as possible as requested. Our membership has been growing and, as more members use the library, we often have to go to the alternatives in order to fill orders. The use of the libraries is as always only for members in good standing.

Please do NOT send orders to Dan Decker. Send them to either Terry or Maletha and, if you still have any boxes that are addressed to Dan, please send them to Maletha

King at 900 W. Quincy Ave., Englewood, CO. 80110.

Spring is indeed here. The crocuses are blooming and many another of the spring flowers are well on their way. Why is the ground still frozen underneath?

Member Roger Hill has opened a shop called:

Nothing's New Vintage Media

#23 Bayhill Shopping Center
San Bruno CA 94066.

Roger carries a wide variety of memorabilia: sheet music, records, posters, etc. If you're in the area, stop in and check it out. We hope all goes well for him.

We don't really understand how the mountains can have so much snow. While it is great for the skiers, the area around Denver is having drought conditions and high fire danger because of it.

Many people see snow reports and conclude that Denver is deep in snow. NOT SO! Only the mountains west of Denver have had the snow, averaging 150% of normal. Since that is Denver's source of drinking water, we are consoled that we will have adequate summer water. This year our only worry is paying the water bill.

Radio's Own Life Story

Edwin Howard Armstrong was born in 1890 in New York. His father was the American representative of the Oxford University Press. The family lived comfortably in a big house in Yonkers. When Howard was fourteen, his father brought him a present from England. It was *The Boy's Book of Inventions*. He read it, absorbed, and immediately began his career with the setting up of a shop filled with homemade wireless gear in his spacious attic.

Before he graduated from Columbia University he was ready to apply for a patent on the regenerative circuit. That jaw-cracking name is well worth remembering. It is the discovery that took wireless out of the crystal detector, earphone stage and made possible the radio we have today.

His patent was issued in 1914, and he became the sensation of the radio world. Dreary litigation, exhausting to both sides, was to follow when Dr. deForest's attorneys were to press the claim that the same ground was covered in his patent for the ultra-audion but that is not a part of this story. The important thing is to honor both men for great achievement, and to remember the name Armstrong because his later invention of the superheterodyne was to make possible the standard receivers we use today. His superregenerative circuit made possible our short wave communications. His frequency modulation gave us static-free high-fidelity FM sets—a stunning list of gifts to the world.

Take courage. The stage is almost set. The curtain is about to go up on the show.

In 1916, another very young man David Sarnoff, was dreaming of a completely new use for wireless, and he wrote a memo to his chief at the American Marconi Company about it. He wanted to bring music to individual homes by means of what he called a "radio music box."

Sarnoff's is one of the most fabulous of American success stories. He was to

play a vital part in the formation and operation of the first great major network, NBC, and was to become the president of RCA before he was thirty-nine, so his start is doubly dramatic.

He was born in Minsk, Russia. He was brought to this country in 1900 when he was nine years old. His father died when he was fifteen, and David became the main support of his mother and four other little Sarnoffs. He went to work selling newspapers. On the side he picked up much-needed extra cash as a messenger boy for the Commercial Cable Company. He became so fascinated with what he learned there of long distance communications that he studied Morse Code at night. When wireless telegraphy came along, he became an operator, first at a lonely station on Nantucket Island, then on an Arctic sealing ship, then in New York where he stayed on duty for seventy-two hours straight helping direct ships in the search for Titanic victims.

It is amazing how accurately he outlined the future of radio in his memo of 1916, though his plan was turned down cold as quite impractical. The company could make a profit on the sale of the music boxes, as he suggested. Certainly. But who would pay for the programs that would have to be supplied? Could they charge a monthly fee for the use of the music boxes as the telephone company did for its services? No, the radio music box would never replace the Victrola. Forget it.

So the memo was filed and forgotten by everyone but Sarnoff.

1917 came and in April we entered the war. The biggest movie stars of the day, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, toured the country for weeks making speeches for the Liberty Loan. They did not use the radio. There wasn't any. Contrast their demanding schedule and the comparatively few thousands of people that they reached with what Kate Smith achieved in one day in 1944 when she sold \$112,000,000 worth of War Bonds over the radio.

July 31, 1918, was a sad day for the hams. On that date the government banished all amateur stations from the air and took over virtually all commercial stations as a wartime measure. Except for this brief period, our radio has remained free. Stations were returned to private control a few months after Armistice Day, when crowds poured into the streets to wait for extras—the only way they could get the news.

In 1919, occasional scraps of music and talk were heard on the air, notably from the brand new Detroit News station, 8MK. But the real birth of broadcasting took place in Pittsburgh. The first disc jockey, too. He was the distinguished Dr. Frank Conrad, chief assistant engineer for the Westinghouse Company, makers of all kinds of electrical supplies. His specific job was to improve the sending of radio signals.

So that he could have an accurate check on his experimental broadcasts, he put one hundred hams on the payroll. They were spotted at different distances from his Station 8XK, and they were paid to listen and report.

As time went on, the hams grew vastly bored at listening to the same old test signals in Morse Code, and perhaps Dr. Conrad grew bored sending them. Anyway, he started to play records of new songs like "Dardanella," "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles," and "K-k-k-katy." Within a few weeks he had more mail than he could handle. Hundreds of hams beside those paid to listen began to request special records and more of them. Finally in self-defense, he settled down to broadcasting music regularly on Wednesday and Saturday evenings for twin hours, just as a goodwill gift to the amateurs.

And that was the very beginning of regular broadcasting.

The first advertising came out of these programs in an elementary sort of fashion when a Pittsburgh music store began to donate new records in return for an announcement on the air.

Dr. Conrad had no idea what he had started until an enterprising department store ran an ad offering radio receivers

"capable of picking up Dr. Conrad's popular broadcasts."

Westinghouse was delighted. Money was appropriated for a more powerful station—KDKA, a giant of 100 watts.

This same year, the Radio Corporation of America absorbed the American Marconi Company and David Sarnoff became Commercial Manager at RCA.

Immediately he began talking about his radio music box to his new bosses, but still without success. RCA was dedicated to the sound commercial enterprise of sending messages by radiogram and wireless telephone, and doing very well too. Nobody wanted to talk about selling music on the air. Too visionary and not practical.

1920 was the year the Eighteenth Amendment prohibiting the manufacture, transportation and sale of beverages containing more than one-half of one percent alcohol was ratified and became the law of the land. Later in the year the Nineteenth Amendment became law, too. For the first time women went to the polls all over the nation. The big movie was Charlie Chaplin and Jackie Coogan (five years old) in "The Kid" silent, of course. F. Scott Fitzgerald's "This Side of Paradise" was published, heralding the twenties as "the Jazz Age" and the young men just back from war as "the lost generation."

It was the year of the first big news broadcast which happened in a casual and unplanned fashion on Nov. 2.

President Wilson had come to the end of his second term a broken man. After his return from the Versailles Conference, he had made a grueling tour of the United States in a desperate attempt to tell the people his conviction that the League of Nations was the only road to permanent peace. Though he made scores of speeches, the tour did not reach enough voters and it broke his health.

What might have been the history of the world if he had been able to tell the nation over the radio what he so passionately believed?

The Republicans had picked Governor Warren G. Harding to run against Governor James M. Cox. They were jubilantly confident of victory. They had reason to be. The country was ready for a change—any change. Harding's promise of a "return to normalcy" was tempting.

The election news was the biggest thing in the restless country. Newspapers were braced for extras. Circulation crews were ready to grab the papers wet off the presses and rush out through the streets crying "Wuxtry! Read all ubottit!" . . . a cry that soon was to be heard no more.

Newspapers did not dream that radio ever would compete in the coverage of news. Amiably, the publisher of The Pittsburgh *Post* allowed the returns to be telephoned as soon as received by telegraph to Dr. Conrad at KDKA. He read them to his few thousands of listeners before the extras were off the presses and so newscasting was born.

KDKA is one of the great names in radio. Nearly every time its listeners tuned in they heard something new and wonderful. There was the KDKA little symphony, for instance, the first live orchestra on the air. It was composed of Westinghouse employees. They were not paid for playing, of course. Preposterous idea! Out of their concerts came an important discovery. During the summer they decided to play outdoors in a tent. The sound was suddenly much improved. Why? Was it the cloth walls? They promptly pitched the tent inside the studio, and there it stayed. Sound-proofing of studios had been invented.

KDKA was run on high-minded lines, but it has the dubious honor of being the first station where censorship was needed. It happened on the symphony program of all places. A singer taking a mighty lungful of air before a high note also inhaled a bug. First strangling sounds hit the air. Listeners thought it was static, but not for long. As he was being assisted away from the forgotten microphone, the singer expressed his opinion of all insect life,

freely and profanely—and censorship was around a not too distant corner.

This year marked the beginning of a brand new style of singing. Vaughn de Leath, known as "the original radio girl" was one of the early great favorites. She became enormously popular because she not only had a pretty voice, she had learned to pitch it so that it did not knock the station off the air.

That was a major achievement in those days because volume was controlled by moving the microphone nearer to or farther from the source of sound. An unexpected strong note would blast the temperamental equipment into silence. Miss de Leath sang cautiously, sweet and low. Soon she was getting fan mail on what was beginning to be called a "blues" voice.

Though there were only about fifty thousand sets in the whole country by the end of 1920, radio was beginning to have an effect on popular music. This bouncy rhythms of the Turkey Trot and the Bunny Hug began to give way to the dreamier melodies of such songs as "Avalon," "Japanese Sandman," and "Rose of Washington Square."

The great day of broadcasting for entertainment was at hand, though nobody knew it yet.

RADIO MIRROR, January 1950

...another Radio History

While the history of radio manufacturing has been a deliberate step-by-step process, the history of Broadcast radio has always been an evolving, living thing, going first in one direction and then another, reflecting the times and the moods of America, and above all, surviving.

In its earliest days, broadcast radio was struggling to be heard from attics, garages and even front porches all over America. Its first cries were mixed with erratic pops and squeals, barely received out of the neighborhood and on the air only when the mood hit the radio operator and the equipment worked—at the same time. And when

it worked, there was little control over it—what went into the microphone was “broadly cast” over the airways.

But the fascination and audiences grew and neighbors would gather to watch and cheer for those who dared to shout into those microphones, and soon the poor radio operator was expected to perform regularly and on time. As early as 1912, KQW in San Jose, California, was broadcasting regularly, and by 1916 election returns were broadcast to those with earphones and crystal sets to hear. But it was not until the 1920s that radio broadcasting matured from the backrooms.

In 1920 station KDKA in Pittsburgh became the first licensed broadcasting station. KDKA began its programming in the spring with regular broadcasts of “Victrola” music and was finally granted a license in time to report the presidential election results on election night.

After this there was no stopping broadcast radio. There were “firsts” virtually daily—first broadcast of a boxing match, first world series broadcast, first opera broadcast and, alas, the first political speech broadcast. By 1922 there were 200 radio stations regularly on the air, and America was in love with radio.

This love affair would push radio manufacturers to develop ways for the whole family to listen to the radio at the same time. Radio tubes and horn speakers soon replaced crystal sets and the practice of putting an earphone in a dish to amplify the voices. By 1923 professional comedians were competing with the amateur jokesters from Washington.

In 1924 the first coast to coast broadcasts was accomplished with the aid of long distance telephone lines. By 1926 NBC’s Red and Blue networks were started, and thanks to a new system of ‘paid’ commercials, performers could be hired. Prior to this time radios were primarily used to sell more radios, not other products.

Charles Lindbergh flew the Atlantic alone in 1927, but the radio was so

common that few other Americans had to be alone, ever. Programs were being broadcast according to a regular schedule, and more and more were using professional performers and announcers. Radio manufacturers developed radios that could be plugged into the house electrical circuit—no more expensive batteries to recharge and/or replace.

By 1929 America was immersed in the Great Depression, and many Americans had to ‘make do’ with radio for their entertainment. Programs like Amos ‘n’ Andy helped to take America’s mind off its problems and prepared audiences for the 1930s and the “Golden Age of Radio.”

Fred Allen, Jack Benny, Fibber McGee, Bing Crosby, and the art deco era were all born and nurtured in the decade of the 30s. Radio programs and radio stars developed avid followings and writers developed a radio world that was bigger than reality. Orson Welles’ “War of the Worlds” was so convincing that the nation shook with real terror until he pointed out it was all fiction.

Reports of the adventures of real heroes like Amelia Earhart and Admiral Byrd kept America glued to their radios with envy, excitement, and finally sorrow.

Hitler was not a hoax and America followed his terrors across Europe, guided by reporters like Lowell Thomas and Edward R. Murrow. President Roosevelt calmed and persuaded Americans that they were global citizens with his regular fireside chats and the 1930s came to a close with radio preparing to play its role in World War II.

Little noticed in this decade of contrasts was the death of Marconi (he was always just Marconi, not Guglielmo Marconi). He had lived to see his invention change the real world and create a new and exciting world of unreality that was being heard the world over.

Broadcast radio in America also played its part in the war effort. When

the war ended in 1945, performers returned from overseas to resume the golden age of radio, little knowing that once again radio would be looking at epoch changes in electronic technology and another prediction of its imminent death.

Although there were over 900 broadcast stations by the end of the war, they were not all the ‘old time’ AM radio stations. FM radio had been assigned air space in 1940 and was also awaiting war’s end to begin its own expansion. It would grow not only to compete, but also to provide its own revival of broadcast radio in the 1950s, assisted by the other new technology—transistors.

Red Skelton, Burl Ives, Groucho Marx, and Harry James were only a few of the stars of the 1940s, but radio shows that had been so popular in the innocent 30s seemed a little old-fashioned after a bloody world war. They would reclaim their old place in America’s society only until the new media of Television could come into its own.

During the 1950s AM radio became more and more of a niche market media, developing a documentary program format to compete with TV news programs sound bytes and rock and roll music stations to compete with the more sophisticated music of its FM radio counterpart. Transistor radios were in every pocket, and with this new technology and a varied programming format the broadcast stations were reaching out to an America where 96% of all families owned a radio! So much for its predicted demise.

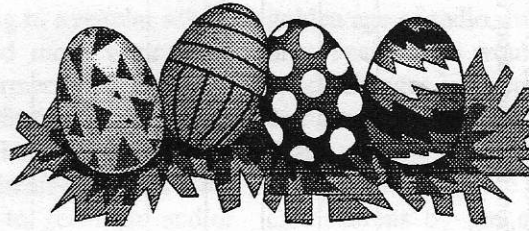
Thus, broadcasting remains today, ever changing but still America’s faithful love. Gone are the radio stars, and the drama shows have been lost to the television media; radio networks have expanded and contracted, and program formats continually change, but the world of radio, lives on, in a role best described as “America’s bulletin board and everyone’s music box.”

Wayne Gilbert, RHAC Member, 1996

This file including all text and images are from scans of a private personal collection and have been scanned for archival and research purposes. This file may be freely distributed, but not sold on ebay or on any commercial sites, catalogs, booths or kiosks, either as reprints or by electronic methods. This file may be downloaded without charge from the Radio Researchers Group website at <http://www.otrr.org/>

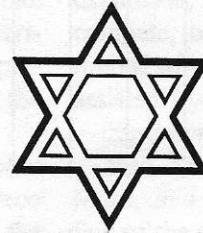
Please help in the preservation of old time radio by supporting legitimate organizations who strive to preserve and restore the programs and related information.

HAPPY
EASTER



and

HAPPY
PASSOVER



RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO, INC.
POST OFFICE BOX 1908
ENGLEWOOD, COLORADO 80150

FIRST CLASS MAIL

FIRST-CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
DENVER CO
Permit No.
2929

~~TOM BROWN~~
~~1402 S. KAHUNA DRIVE~~
~~SPOKANE WA~~
99212

09/01/1996