



RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO

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Virginia "Ginny" Gregg

By Stewart Wright © 2002



Virginia Gregg was a unique lady. She was admired by audiences for her acting skills. Also, she was admired by her fellow performers not only for her acting skills, but also for her humanity. Whenever radio actors and actresses get to talking about their fellows, Virginia's name always comes up and is mentioned with a great admiration and very special fondness reserved for those very few Special People who come into one's life. We are indeed very lucky that so many of her fine performances are available for us to enjoy.

Radio Work:

Virginia did not start out in radio as an actress. Initially, she was a musician playing the double bass viol. For several years she was on staff at CBS and

Mutual as member of a group called "The Singing Strings" and also played for with the Pasadena Symphony.

Even though she was a successful musician, Virginia wanted to be an actress. She attended the Hollywood Academy of Dramatic Arts and worked at the Pasadena Playhouse and various little theaters in the Los Angeles area.

Ginny told John Dunning in a 1982 interview, "Music seemed to take off before the acting did. I was just so suddenly busy in music. I was also on staff at KHJ. I broke into acting there. I narrated one of our shows. Then they started using me on Johnny Nesbitt's *The Passing Parade*. If they needed a character, a voice, I did that. Then I did *Rise and Shine*, an early morning show with Jimmy Burton and Sam Pierce. I decided if I was going to do anything with acting I had to quit music. So I sold my bass the next day so I wouldn't be tempted to go back."

She had an astonishing ability to do virtually any dialect or accent and play any role from young children to demure sweethearts to calculating schemers to elderly dowagers and everything in between. In "The National Radio Artists Directory" Virginia was listed with an incredible voice age range from 8 to 70 and an equally impressive variety of accents, dialects, and character voices. Her accents and dialects repertoire included, but was not limited to: Cockney, Jewish, Swedish, Japanese, Chinese, Hillbilly, Mexican, Mid-Western, Black, Rural, Southern, French, German, and Italian. During the Dunning interview Virginia explained, "Actually I did a lot more than I thought I could do

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RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

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Reference Material:	Bill McCracken			
Logs & Scripts:	Fred Hinz	c/o RHAC PO Box 1908	Englewood, CO 80150	
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2002 Conventions

The 26th Friends of Old-Time Radio Convention Oct 24-27, 2002 Holiday Inn-North, Newark NJ
For information: Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514 (203) 248-2887, or email at jayhick@aol.com

SPERDVAC Convention: Nov 8 - 10 at Hacienda Hotel in El Segundo; details when available

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because of Jack Webb and Jack Johnstone. They would say, 'Next week you are doing 'Irish' or whatever.' I would say that Jack, 'I don't do Irish.' They would say, 'Sure you do.' So you do it. You learn it somehow."

If you would like to sample some of Ginny's versatility, you can do so by listening to two episodes of the series *Fort Laramie*. In the episode "Hattie Palfrey" she plays Hattie, a harder-than-nails old pioneer woman. She plays Raymond Burr's love interest, Miss Willa, in the episode "Goodbye Willa."

From the mid-1940's through the end of the Golden Age, Virginia Gregg's talents made her one of the busiest actresses in radio, frequently doing multiple shows in a single day. Virginia was so busy that she often had an actress stand in for her during rehearsals on *Dr. Kildare*, so she could fulfill other acting commitments. She was a member of both Norman Macdonnell's (*Escape*, *Gunsmoke*, and *Romance*) and Jack Webb's (*Dragnet*, and *Pat Novak For Hire*) "stock" companies of accomplished actors. Virginia had many featured roles in series including: *The Adventures of Ellery Queen* as Nikki, *Dr. Kildare* as Nurse Parker, *Let George Do It* as Claire "Brooksie" Brooks, *Lum and Abner* as Charity, *Have Gun Will Travel* as Miss Wong, *One Man's Family* as Betty Barbour, *Richard Diamond, Private Detective* as Helen Asher and *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* as Betty Lewis. During her radio career she only missed one job, an episode of *One Man's Family*, because she had the mumps.

Guest appearances abounded in series famous and obscure such as *The Adventures of Christopher London*, *The Adventures of Maisie*, *The Adventures of Philip Marlowe*, *Arch Oboler's Plays*, *Barrie Craig*, *Confidential Investigator*, *Broadway Is My Beat*, *Calling All Cars*, *CBS Radio Workshop*, *Confession*, *Crime Classics*, *Dr. Christian*, *Enchanted Cottage*, *Family Theater*, *Frontier Gentleman*, *Hallmark Playhouse*, *The Halls of Ivy*, *Hollywood Star Playhouse*, *Lux Radio Theatre*, *Mr. President*, *NBC University Theater of the Air*, *Screen Directors Playhouse*, *Six Shooter*, *The Silent Men*, *The Stan Freberg Show*, *Suspense*, and *Woodbury Playhouse*. Even after dramatic radio's heyday she was frequently heard on *Heartbeat Theater*, *Sears Radio Theater*, and *Midnight*.

Ginny Gregg believed in helping her fellow actors. Dick Beals tells how Ginny helped him get many kids roles on CBS radio. He had been told that

he should not waste his time trying to see CBS directors because the wife of Jaime Del Valle, the leading CBS producer/director, did all the kid's voices. When Dick explained to Ginny why he hadn't seen any of the CBS directors, she took Dick by the wrist, introduced him to every CBS director, including Jaime Del Valle and told them, "Do not use me for any kid's parts on your shows. Use Dick Beals.. He's better than I will ever be." Dick didn't know that Ginny Gregg was Jaime's wife.

Television Work:

Virginia easily made the transition to television and was a frequent guest star in several of Jack Webb's television series starting with *Dragnet*, and continuing through *Dragnet 1967*, *Adam-12*, and *Emergency*. She amassed an impressive resume of credits in television comedy and drama series from "A" to "Z" as seen from the following very small sampling of her series credits: *The Addams Family*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Bat Masterson*, *Bewitched*, *Bonanza*, *The Big Valley*, *Cannon*, *Daniel Boone*, *Empire*, *The Fugitive*, *Gunsmoke*, *Happy Days*, *Have Gun Will Travel*, *Hec Ramsey*, *Jefferson Drum*, *Klondike*, *Lou Grant*, *Mannix*, *Marcus Welby M.D.*, *Maverick*, *My Favorite Martian*, *My Three Sons*, *The Outcasts*, *Perry Mason*, *Rawhide*, *The Rockford Files*, *77 Sunset Strip*, *The Six Million-Dollar Man*, *The Streets of San Francisco*, *Trackdown*, *The Twilight Zone*, *The Virginian*, *Wagon Train*, *Wanted: Dead or Alive*, *The Westerner*, and *Zane Grey Theater*

In addition Virginia used her voice talents in many television cartoon series such as *The Great Grape Ape*, *The Herculoids*, *Speed Buggy*, *These Are the Days* and *Scooby-Doo Where Are You?* Virginia also had a featured role as the Colonel's wife - Maggie Bell, in the prime-time cartoon series *Calvin and the Colonel*, a series that featured many OTR actors. This series had the stars of *Amos and Andy*, Charles Correll and Freeman Gosden, play Calvin and the Colonel respectively. Other radio actors appeared in the series including Frank Gerstle, Gloria Blondell, June Foray, Paul Frees, Barney Phillips, and Frank Nelson.

Motion Picture Work:

One of Virginia's first roles in motion pictures was in the Alfred Hitchcock movie *Notorious*. More than a dozen years later she later worked for Hitchcock again in perhaps her most famous movie

role, a role in which she was heard, but never seen. Virginia did the terrifying voice of Norman Bates' dead mother in Hitchcock's original *Psycho*.

She also appeared in over 50 other feature and made-for television movies including Jack Webb's big screen releases *Dragnet* and *The D. I.*

Remembrance:

This article ends with thoughts from two of her co-workers that appeared in the Nov/December 1986 issue of the *SPERDVAC Radiogram*. Former editor Barbara Watkins supplied me a copy of the issue which contained a special tribute to Frank Nelson and Virginia Gregg who both died in September, 1986. The following is just a small portion of the sentiments expressed by her friends and co-workers and yet speaks so much of the esteem in which she was held as a human being.

from John Dehner

"I can never forget that she had been solely responsible for spurring my career as a professional actor in Hollywood radio. . . ."

". . . She decided to do what she could to improve my career. How lucky for me. She was already fairly well on her way to building her own name in West Coast radio. She began to make my name known to producers she regularly worked for, taking me around to their offices and introducing me here and there. Out of this it became my great good fortune that, one by one, these producers began to hire me. . . . Virginia did this."

"For what it is worth I take comfort in believing that she has taken something of me with her: my affection and my boundless gratitude."

from Art Gilmore

". . . But so many of her admirers never got know the other side of this great lady. Her generous heart was as big as all outdoors. Whether it was a cat, dog, or a human being, she loved them all and would take them in and love them. She was the kindest, most thoughtful person I know and a part of all of us went with her to her reward with her Creator."

"The angels are up there singing and our dear Virginia is making all of them happier by presence."

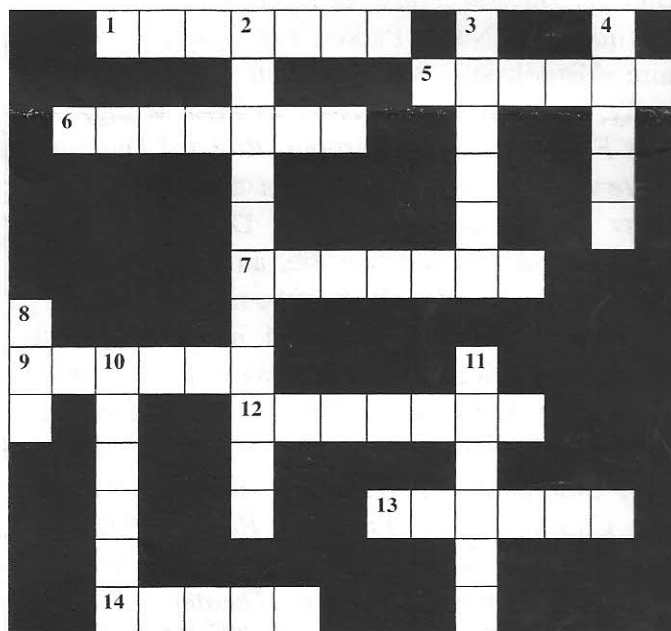
Author's Note: *Want to find out more about Virginia Gregg? Tapes 304 through 306 in RHAC Tape Library #1 contain interviews of Virginia by John Dunning.*

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Phil Harris / Alice Faye Crossword

By Jim Johnston © 2002

This month we have a crossword that's just a little bit different in format and we think you'll find it lots of fun. Jim Johnston has written an article about Phil and Alice in a way that lets you be part of the story. So, put on your thinking caps, sharpen your pencils and let's get started.



ACROSS

1. The Phil Harris/Alice Faye Show was written by _____ Singer and _____ Chevillat [pronounced "shev-uh-lay"], two of the finest comedy writers in the business. They also wrote and produced television shows for such leading comedians as Jim Backus, Bill Dana, Joey Bishop, and John Astin/Marty Engels of "I'm Dickens - He's Fenster". According to John Dunning's "On the
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person, a musician in Harris' orchestra.] His role was to discover Phil's latest problem and foul up the proceedings. His instigation would start with his tag line, "I know a guy ...". This directed Harris to an "expert" who would get him in deeper, cost him money, and in one or two episodes, got him assaulted. Frankie led Phil into wallpapering the bedroom and thereby covering the windows and doors, mixing the formula for the new drug, buying a live steer to reduce their food costs [the result was 100 pounds of meat costing \$700], doing the dishes in the washing machine, and sweeping out the chimney using Willie as the broom. Dunning has called Frankie the comedy performance of Lewis' life. It was, displaying timing and sarcastic delivery equal to the great Jack Benny or Harris himself.

Scariest Show Contest !!!

Well, here we go again. It's time for you to start thinking about all of the *"Ghoulies and Ghosties and Many-legged Beasties and Things that Go Bump in the Night"* that made you shiver and hide your head under the covers as you listened to your favorite OTR mystery and horror stories. Please try to think of ten OTR shows that you would rate as the scariest and/or spookiest stories you ever heard. You may submit either an individual show or an entire series. As with RWUN's Christmas Favorites Contest last year, we will take all entries and compile a list of the top ten all-time favorite scary shows. Winners will be determined by how many of the top shows appear on a contestant's list (our 1st place Christmas winner had eight of the top ten shows listed). The following are some suggestions for your consideration:

Individual Shows:

Quiet Please *The Thing on the Foible Board*
 Lights Out *Cat Wife*
 Quiet Please *Whence Came You?*
 Lights Out *Revolt of the Worms*
 Quiet Please *Let the Lilies Consider*
 Lights Out *Chicken Heart*
 Mystery House *The Thirsty Death*
 Escape *Three Skeleton Key*
 The Shadow *Death Rides a Broomstick*
 Suspense *Evening Primrose*
 Mercury Radio Theater *War of the Worlds*
 The Mysterious Traveler *Behind the Locked Door*
 Arch Oboler's *The Dark (a short promo piece about people turning inside out)*

Series:

The Witch's Tale	Quiet Please
Murder at Midnight	Nightmare
The Mysterious	Escape
Creeps by Night	Suspense
The Croupier	The Strange Dr. Weird
Dark Venture	Inner Sanctum Mysteries
Dimension X	The Shadow

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The Black Castle
 The Black Museum
 Black Night
 Adventures by Morse
 The Hall of Fantasy

The Sealed Book
 Lights Out
 The Haunting Hour
 The Hermit's Cave
 X Minus One

Feel free to add to this list as you wish. Entries may be sent via snail mail to: Carol Tiffany 1394 Golf Vista Ct. N.E. Palm Bay, Florida 32905 - Or via E-Mail to CTIFFANY@worldnet.att.net

If you submitted suggestions for this list, the suggestions can count as your entry or you may submit a new entry. Contest closes Sept. 20, 2002. The top ten shows and contest winners' names will be announced in the Oct. issue of RWUN. Good Luck!

New in the RHAC Library

by Maletha & Dick King

We have all wondered how the increase in postage would affect us. We find that the rate for our library has not gone up - yet. The cost of mailing our newsletters has gone up but we think it is better to go first class rather than bulk mailing and delays of several weeks at times for some of our members.

Our CD library is proving to be very popular and Ron advises that he has many orders that will have to wait until the return of CDs that are already out. We are offering more of the Damon Runyon theater this month and "The adventures of Frank Race". "The Lives of Harry Rimes" fill out the balance of this month's entries.

If you remember, shows on radio went from many westerns to the detective shows. The adventures filled in wherever the detective shows were a bit lean. We are sure that the shows offered this month will give our members many hours of pleasant listening

Answers to the Harris/Faye crossword puzzle

Air", the scripts were so funny that cuts of 5 minutes were not uncommon to allow for contagious laughter, which was boosted by placing microphones over the audience's head. Some laughs came from fluffs. Sheldon Leonard, playing his usual gangster role, delivered the line, "This makes my tringer finger itchy." Harris instantly shot back "Tringer finger? What exactly is that?", starting a wave of laughs that almost didn't stop.

5. Gale _____ played Mr. Scott, a senior executive with the show's first sponsor. Harris' sidekick, Frankie, needled him constantly, but "Scotty" would respond with a long, disdainful pause and then the single word "Yes". He considered Frankie to be "the worst musician in the world". In one particularly funny episode, Phil and Frankie tried to impress their sponsor by inventing a new drug, but instead invented a new explosive that blew Scott off the driveway.
6. Little _____, Alice and Phil's younger daughter, was played by Anne Whitfield, a microphone professional even at that age. In one episode, when her mother was considering changing the bedroom wallpaper, she responded, "Mommy, you'd better check with the head of the house." "It's OK with me," Harris said. Whitfield replied, "I mean Uncle Frankie!"
7. Harris really murdered _____. When his sponsor was revealed to be the largest drug company in America, Harris responded, "Well, you don't think Harris would be associated with anything infinitesimal, do yuh?"
9. Frankie's nickname was for Harris _____, a reference to his reputed use of hair waves. Confronting his wife with a bill for exotic cold creams, lotions, manicures, and hair salon appointments, he asked her if she objected to spending so much money. She responded No. "Good," Harris responded. "Being in the public eye, I need all them things!"
12. Willie, Alice's _____, lived with the Harrises and drove Phil crazy because he spoke like a sissy but was fierce in his denunciations of Harris' abilities as a husband, father, and musician. He had two tag lines. One was his greeting for Harris: "Gooooooooooooo morning, Philip!" The other was his insistent phrase, "Yes, I do. UmmmHMMMM!" [Phil would counter "One of these days, I'm gonna doowah his diddie!"]
13. Another burden for Harris was _____ Abbruzio, the boy who would arrive just as Harris and Frankie found themselves up to their ears in trouble, and anxious to help - get them in deeper, that is. In turn, they would suck him into their scheme, whatever it was, that usually involved him avoiding death or maiming by the skin of his teeth. In the

drug-inventing episode, they tried to get Abbruzio to drink their concoction. When it exploded, he yelled "Wait'll I tell my old man that you tried to make an active volcano out of me!" He was played with Brooklyn sarcasm by Walter Tetley, who also played Throckmorton Gildersleeve's wiseguy nephew, Leroy Forrester. Tetley has been described as a "white hot" talent. According to John Dunning's "On the Air", by the late 1930s Tetley had appeared 2,300 times in 150 series, and the balance of his work was still ahead of him, not only in radio but also television.

14. Frankie played the guitar in Harris' band, but even in that he was different. He was a _____.

DOWN

2. Tetley's character Abbruzio was a _____ for a grocery store. His timing was impeccable -- Just as Harris and Frankie needed a chump to test their latest scheme, the boy would arrive yelling "Where is everybody? I brung the groceries!" In one wonderful moment, as his role was being explained to him by Phil and Frankie, he wondered aloud, "Wow, what guys. One is a moron and the other is his 'yes' man!"
3. Alice Faye was a glamour queen in the _____ who quit a successful career to become a wife and mother. A running gag referred to her money. Returning from a tour on the train, Harris was asked why it arrived on time. "Had to," he replied, "Alice bought the railroad, and now it's called the Atchison, Topeka, and Alice Faye!"
4. Alice's namesake daughter was played by Jeanine _____, who later played in "It's a Wonderful Life". Dunning's "On the Air" records her delivery of the kind of lines the show was famous for. Told that Harris had lost his sponsor and would have to return to Jack Benny's program, she wailed, "Oh, you know there ain't no money connected with that job!"
8. With the departure of the drug company sponsor, the series was sustained from June 1950 until February 1951, when it was picked up by _____. During this time, a dispute with the real Frankie caused a change in the sidekick's name to Elliott, which Lewis described as "just not as funny".
10. The first sponsor, the _____ Drug Company, took a lot of kidding because it was written into the show much more strongly than other sponsors, and because Frankie, as usual, thought little of it. Told by a customer that the drug company had great products, Frankie replied, "OK, OK, but with 10,000 stores to choose from, why pick this one to annoy me?"
11. Elliott Lewis played Frankie _____, Harris's sidekick. [This character was named for a real